

	Object:	Cycladic Figure
	Museum:	Szépművészeti Múzeum Dózsa György út 41. 1146 Budapest
	Collection:	Antik Gyűjtemény
	Inventory number:	ANT_4708

Description

The most distinctive works of art from the Early Bronze Age or Early Cycladic Period on the marble-rich Cycladic Islands to the east of mainland Greece (Naxos, Paros and Amorgos) are the marble figurines. Most of them represent naked women with folded arms and outstretched feet. This is the “canonical” type. The statue in the Collection of Classical Antiquities is representative of the Spedos variant of the canonical type, named after a cemetery in Naxos. It is made of greyish white large-grained marble, and covered with yellowish grey patina. The patina is missing from part of the face; it was removed some time after the discovery of the figure to make the white surface of the marble visible. The most striking features of the figure are its flat modelling and the disproportionately large, upwardly-tapering, oval head. Some details, like the fingers, toes, hips and the bend of the ankles, are marked by incisions, others, like the nose and the knees, are indicated by carving. The fingers and the hips are irregular in outline, and the carving of the knees is asymmetrical. In the V-section groove separating the legs, marks of the stoneworking tools are clearly visible. The simplicity of the Cycladic figures and their smooth white surface place them among the most appealing works of prehistoric art for today’s taste. They inspired several 20th century artists, including Brancusi, Modigliani and Henry Moore. However, some details of the smoothly polished surface were once decorated with vividly coloured paint, softening the white rigour of the marble. On the face of most statues the only projecting detail is the carved nose. The eyes, the hair and the mouth were indicated, if at all, solely by painting. On the Budapest figure, the protruding curve of the almond-shaped eye to the right of the nose immediately stands out of its surroundings, almost as if it had been carved. In fact, this eye was originally painted. The protruding part shows the original surface of the marble, which was protected by the – now completely vanished – paint from the damaging effects of the environment. The curve of another eye, similar in size and shape, is also faintly visible above the right eye: originally the figure must have had four painted eyes. The protruding, once also painted, stripe bordered by a pair of horizontal lines on the forehead may be interpreted as a hairband or diadem. Paint was also used to indicate hair on the back and sides of the head. Under the nose, shielded from wear, the curved lines of a trapezium-shaped area may bear traces of dark paint still visible under the patina, in a position implying that this was the mouth. What makes this figure special is its size and

richly painted ornamentation. Figures above 60 cm are relatively rare among Cycladic statues usually measuring only 20–40 cm in height. Based on its painted attributes – the “all-seeing”, double eyes and the diadem endowing the statue with power – it does not simply represent a mortal being, but a deity with supernatural capabilities. Following JUDIT LEBEGYEV and ANDRÁS MÁRTON

Basic data

Material/Technique:	marble / carved, once painted
Measurements:	61 cm

Events

Created	When	2700-2400 BC
	Who	
	Where	
[Relation to time]	When	2700-800 BC
	Who	
	Where	

Keywords

- Sculpture