



Standing figure

On display

Title/Description: Standing figure

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Serpentine

Measurements: h. 148 x w. 62 x d. 46 mm

Accession Number: 606

Historic Period: Formative (middle) period (900-600 BC)

Production Place: Mesoamerica, Mexico, Tabasco, The Americas

School/Style: Olmec style

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1975

As with much of Olmec sculpture, the head of this standing anthropomorphic figure is emphasised by its relative proportion to the rest of the body and degree of detail on the face. In some cases, such as the Kunz celt in the American Museum of Natural History, or the British Museum celt (Bernal, 1969: pl. 49), the head constitutes one-half of the body. In this figure, the head is only a third of the composition, but it shares with the other figures a lack of detailing in the treatment of the rest of the compact body. The arms are rendered close to the body, with the hands curled under in front of the chest. The lower body has a vertical and a horizontal cut to indicate the legs and feet.

The head shares iconography attributes with a large sculpture at the Centre (692). This so-called 'were-jaguar' imagery of the face includes a down-turned mouth with prominent incisors, a broad, flat nose and deep-set eyes emphasised by carved crescentic details above and below. A vertical crest with horizontal striations runs from the bridge of the nose to the top of the head. There are two circular impressions on the head, one above each eye, and another oblong impression on the central crest. These may have been created for inlays.

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of James Woods Bliss, Dumbarton Oaks.

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from Edward H. Merrin Gallery, New York in 1975 out of funds provided by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury.

