

# **Standing nude female figure with folded arms**

*Lapis lazuli*

*H. 8.9 cm (3½ in.); W. 2.5 cm (1 in.); Thickness 1.8 cm (¾ in.)*

*Egypt, Hierakonpolis*

*Archaic Period, ca. 2900 B.C.*

*Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford E.1057, E.1057a*

This figurine depicts a nude female standing with her hands on her stomach. The breasts are small and placed low in relation to the wide shoulders. The pubic triangle is indicated by dots. Her legs are straight and separated by a line. There are no feet, and it is possible that the figurine never had them but was fitted to another object at the bottom of the legs. The subject appears much more naturalistic in the side view, which reveals rounded buttocks and slightly indicated knees, than from the front. The head and body, which were made (and found) separately, are held together by means of a peg.<sup>1</sup> The eyes are hollowed out for inlays. The most distinctive feature is the stylization of the hair, which represents tight little curls close to the head.

The piece is significant because of its material, lapis lazuli. Two varieties of the stone, which would have been imported to Egypt from Afghanistan, are used. The body is made from a mottled type, while the head is carved from the rarer, deep blue kind. The juxtaposition was either deliberate or the result of an accident that required a replacement head or body. It has been suggested that the figurine was made not in Egypt but in an area close to the Afghan lapis mines.<sup>2</sup> However, the distinctive gesture of the hands, with the right laid over the left rather than clasped or held apart as on other ancient Near Eastern nude female figures, and the stylization of the hair are characteristic of contemporary art made in Egypt.

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1. Quibell and Green 1902, p. 38; Garstang 1906, p. 135.

2. Porada 1980.

