

APHRODITE / VENUS

Roman, 1st – 2nd century A.D.

Bronze, silver (eyes)

H: 27.5 cm (10.8 in)

Reference: 34851



The statuette represents a standing female figure of youthful appearance, she is completely nude, her attitude is full of charm. Her head is slightly turned to the left and her soft glance is directed upward. The weight of her body is supported by her left leg, while the right leg is slightly bent, the heel is raised, and only the foot's point touches the ground. Seen from the back, the statuette is characterized by the swaying marked by sinuous and sensitive form of her spine and buttocks.

The movement of arms is asymmetrical: the left arm is lowered along the body and placed in front of the hip in such way that the hand covers the pubis; the right arm is bent and put at the chest, where the hand partially covers the breast (contrary to the majority of comparable figures, it is only the left breast which is exposed). The fingers of her hands, very fine and long, are carefully modeled.

Despite the absence of precise attributes, the identification of this figure does not set any doubt: this is Aphrodite/Venus, the Greco-Roman goddess of love. Her attitude and the instinctive protective gesture of hands are full of feminine charm and almost coquetry, as if the young woman wished to invite a spectator to admire her revealed beauty.

According to the canonic iconography of the goddess of love, her naked body of sinuous profile presents the solid and voluptuous curves. Her fine oval face is idealized, it does not have any furrow. The eyes are inlaid in silver.

Her abundant and thick hair is arranged in long strands carefully incised; it is parted in the center and comes to the temples and then to the neck and shoulders. Above the forehead, the hair of the goddess is retained by a large diadem in the form of half-moon ornamented with the incised vegetal motif. Behind, it has an elaborate chignon

composed of four curled locks.

Despite its iconography which refers to the famous images of great artistic quality and large dimensions, this present statuette should have a decorative or votive function and used in a domestic context. The comparable bronze figurines were often placed in lararia, the domestic shrines in Roman houses.

As it is proved not only by decorative arts but large statuary, Aphrodite became one of the most popular divinities represented in the art of the Mediterranean world since the early Hellenistic period. She is represented alone or accompanied by Eros, dolphin or other figures, her image and character became more human, and she is involved with typical feminine activities: she sometimes holds her mantle and puts it on a vase, sometimes she ties or removes her sandal, or she is in a crouching pose lifting her long locks, or she looks at her reflection in the mirror, or she ties her bra. The important series of the Hellenistic images of Aphrodite started with the celebrated statue of the Cnidian Aphrodite sculpted by Praxiteles about the middle of the 4th century B.C. It soon became a prototype for large representations of the nude goddess and remained a notoriety in the Roman Imperial art. Indeed, Pliny the Elder was still describing her in the 1st century A.D. as she is superior of all art works, not only by Praxiteles, but in the whole world. A small circular temple where the statue was placed was opened from all sides in aim that the statue could be admired from any angle.

The general type was repeated in several variations of her attitude and attributes; it is presently known under the name Venus pudica (modest Aphrodite, a reference to the gesture of goddess who tries to cover her nudity). The present statuette belongs certainly to these series of general composition, the position of arms and legs make her close to two other famous statues, the Capitoline Aphrodite and the Medici Aphrodite which originals are dated to the Hellenistic period, 3rd-2nd

century B.C., but without being directly copied.

CONDITION

Complete except for the left foot and right thumb; very smooth and clean surface; a few dents in places; a few corrosion marks on the arms, buttocks, back, shoulder, and legs; cracks on the left knee; some wear on fingers.

PROVENANCE

Ex-N. Koutoulakis, acquired in 2016. "This object belonged to the collection of my father, Mr. Nicolas Koutoulakis (1910- 1996), who owned it since the late 1950's. He has acquired it in Paris, and it was always exhibited in the family salon. Since, it remained in my possession".

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