

## GRANIT MALE BUST

Egyptian, reign of Senusret II)

Granit

Height: 24.1 cm

Reference: 26790



This statuette, remarkable for its good artistic quality, was carved from a block of mottled brown and black granite. Much smaller than life size (it is about a third of the normal size), it represents an elderly man, as evidenced by the somewhat heavy facial features and by the flabby musculature of the arms and torso. Although the figure is perfectly sculpted in the round and in every detail, the frontal view is the most important, as is most often the case in the related statuary of the Middle Kingdom.

No inscription enables us to identify this figure or to specify his role in Egyptian society. Nevertheless, being able to afford a stone statue bears witness to the important social and professional rank of the commissioner.

While the bust is in a vertical position, it is impossible to determine whether the man was standing upright or seated; the absence of back pillar and the head tilted slightly forward argue rather in favor of the second hypothesis. The figure was likely depicted in the customary posture of the scribe, whose tradition can be traced back to the statues of the Old Kingdom. The position of the left hand, brought up and placed on the chest, is well documented in other contemporary images and appears to express respect. The man is bare-chested (no trace of a fabric or of a belt is visible, even at the waist); the muscles and other details are clearly marked, especially in the frontal view (pectoral muscles, neckline); at the back of the figure, the modeling is more discreet, despite the slight depression that indicates the spine. For better stability of the work, the arms are not detached from the body.

The face of the man is round, while his chin is broad and flat. The treatment of the eye area, the diagonal wrinkles below the nostrils and the hollowed corners of the mouth betray the age of the figure. His headdress corresponds to the common type of the Middle Kingdom; the thick mass of the wig covers the forehead and falls regularly to the

temples and shoulders; parallel incisions follow the outline of the face, indicating the locks, which, in the central part of the back, form a reverse V-shaped pattern.

A general description of the figure represented remains uncertain, but the typology of this statuette is well attested in Egypt from the early 2nd millennium B.C. This is certainly a variant and, at the same time, an evolution of the scribe statues widespread in the previous period; in the Middle Kingdom, sculptors introduced various modifications, creating figures seated on a stool or even on the ground, dressed in a cloak, a loincloth or a skirt, with the hands placed on the knees or, like here, an arm bent on the chest. At that time, statues of dignitaries and courtiers, most often smaller than life size, were no longer only deposited in the tombs but were also presented in the temples, where they would receive the offerings that the king made to the deities.

### CONDITION

Only the upper body is preserved, broken just above the waist. Surface in good condition, though worn and chipped. Nose broken, posterior fragment of the left arm now lost.

### PROVENANCE

Ex-English private collection; Sotheby's New York, December 7, 2001, lot 19.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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VANDIER J., Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne: Tome III, Les grandes époques: La statuaire, Paris, 1958, pp. 225 ff. (especially pp. 230 ff. for the statues of seated figures).