

SEATED STATUE OF INEFER

EGYPTIAN, LATE PERIOD, DYNASTY XXV OR XXVI
ASWAN GRANITE

HEIGHT: 32 CM.

WIDTH: 25.5 CM.

DEPTH: 11 CM.

PROVENANCE:

*SOLD IN A PUBLIC ANTIQUES SALE IN
1950-1960, LOT 41, ACCORDING TO AN
EXTRACT OF THE CATALOGUE.
ACQUIRED BY MARGUERITE BORDET
(1909-2014), VISUAL ARTIST. THEN IN A
PARISIAN PRIVATE COLLECTION FROM
1999.*



Sculpted from a single block of Aswan granite, our magnificent sculpture represents a man seated on a throne. Without a head, his

hands are resting on his thighs, the right one flat while the left is holding a piece of fabric. Our figure is depicted bare chested, dressed only in a masculine loincloth commonly called a schenti, a traditional ancient Egyptian garment worn first by peasants then frequently represented in sculptures of gods, pharaohs and individuals. The loincloth is made up of two superposed swathes and a triangular flap that goes down between the legs. Represented in a stylised, very symbolic way, the folds are depicted through straight lines as though squashed flat and follow the delicate curve of the pelvis, ending just above his knees, leaving them bare. The rest of his body is also bare, revealing powerful muscles. His torso has broad, square shoulders, his arms are impressive and his chest is proudly puffed out, abdominal muscles contracted, giving our sculpture an athletic, majestic appearance. Additionally, his lower legs and feet are represented in a manner that is both symbolic and monumental. The geometric austerity, both in the composition and in the sculptor's work, thus imbues our sculpture with a certain power and an unrivalled poise.

In ancient Egypt, when a figure was represented, the point was not to portray them in the modern sense of the term, but rather to depict a sublimed, timeless image



that followed canons elaborated in those very ancient times. Private Egyptian statuary offers an almost complete overview of the rich range of materials, from stone to ivory to wood, Egyptian sculptors used from the very first dynasties. With its dark colour, the speckled granite gives depth and majesty to our delicate statue. The light marks soften the hardness of the stone and add an unparalleled ardour and human warmth.



Two principles govern Egyptian art: aspectivity and frontality. The first is a concept whereby the artist represents the definition of the object and not its visible aspect; the second translates to the axiality and symmetry of the construction. The first is illustrated by the fact there is a mortise in the place of the neck, allowing for a head to be inserted. The statue could thus change heads and identities, illustrating the idea of

not representing the visible aspect, but an ideal that suited whoever wished to be thus identified. Moreover, not a single physical feature individualises our statue, revealing a universal physique. The second concept is illustrated by the perfectly symmetrical and frontal aspect of our work.



The Late Period is marked by a certain instability. It is a troubled period politically because of the rise in power of various kingdoms whose influence can be felt in the artistic production. Our sculpture can be dated more precisely to the dynasties XXV or XXVI. The last two dynasties, from 774 BC to 525 BC, were characterized by an intense intellectual and artistic activity that sought its references in the ancient forms of the past, particularly those of the Old and Middle Kingdom. These new artistic researches give rise to eclectic works that can be qualified as

archaizing—our sculpture being a perfect example. Indeed, at first glance, our seated statue of Inefer resembles works of the dynasty XII, taking up the rather schematic representation of the body that we find, for example, in works conserved in New York (ill. 1-2). However, certain artistic liberties taken lead us to believe that our statue is in fact later, especially from acknowledging the proportions. Thus, the body of our figure is more slender and elongated than the canons of the Middle Kingdom. In the same way, the style and way of representing the details of the limbs testify to this combination of styles and to the will of the artists of the time to create an eclectic artwork marked by the past. Fine examples of these diverse influences during the dynasties XXV and XXVI are preserved in Cairo today (ill. 3-4). The original head had to be either broken or removed from the body in ancient times. The head was attached by means of a mortise carved into the bust of the figure. A horizontal plane was carefully prepared for this purpose at the height of the neck so that a new head could be placed on the body.

While the body of our figure was painstakingly represented, there is also much delicacy and precision to be admired in the hieroglyphs adorning the stone. The seated position was an Egyptian tradition for more than 800 years. Its advantage was the flat surface it created for inscriptions, which were of a crucial importance to the Egyptians. The right side of the seat shows two standing figures, depicted in profile. The first masculine figure is depicted holding a sceptre in one hand and the same object our seated figure is holding in the other, difficult to identify. The inscription reads: *“His son who carries on his name, the divine father*

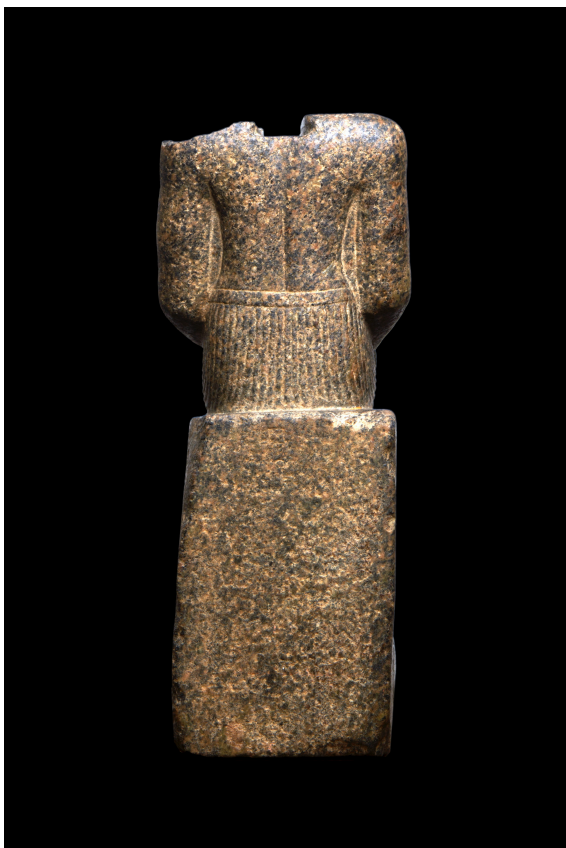
and prophet of Amun in northern Heliopolis, Aatj, son of the divine father Inefer, son of the divine father Imes”. The second figure represents a woman whose inscription reads: *“The mistress of the house and musician of Ra-Atum... daughter of the prophet, divine father and governor of Heliopolis, Aatj, son of Tjanefer”*.



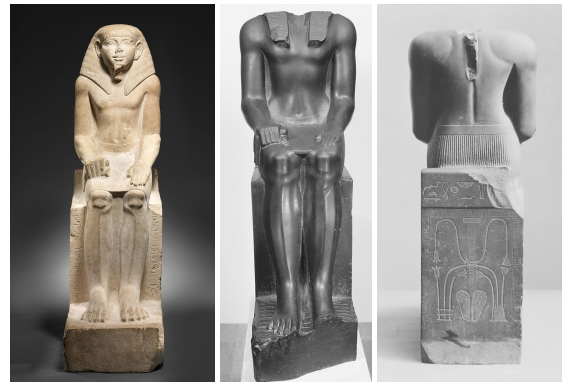
The left side of the throne is decorated with four seated figures, the first two of whom bear inscriptions. The first man is accompanied by the caption: *“The divine father and prophet of Amun in northern Heliopolis, Aatj”*, while the second is inscribed: *“The divine father Inefer”*. It is interesting to note that this side is partly eroded, yet the inscriptions follow the surface perfectly and have not suffered the same alterations. This shows that the inscriptions are later additions.

The identity and parentage of the person represented is indicated through two inscriptions along the belt of the loincloth and at his feet. The first states: *"It is the divine father Inefér"*, and the second: *"It is the divine father Inefér, son of the divine father Imes, son of the divine father Inefér"*. The hieroglyphs are finely engraved, contrasting with the monumentality of our statue. This type of statue would have been placed in the tomb of the deceased, where the family could leave offerings and say prayers.

Our magnificent sculpture was part of the collection of the visual artist Marguerite Bordet (1909-2014), who acquired it at auction between 1950 and 1960. The extract of the French catalogue thus refers to it as lot 41: *"Grey granite statue of a seated figure, dressed in a folded loincloth [...], Middle Kingdom, H: 0m32"* (ill. 5). It was then added to a Parisian private collection from 1999.



Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Seated Statue of the Steward Sehetepibreankh, Egyptian, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty XII, reign of Amenemhat II, limestone, H.: 94,5 cm. The MET, New York, inv. no. 24.1.45.

Ill. 2. Seated Statue of King Senwosret I, Egyptian, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty XII, greywacke, H.: 103,5 cm. The MET, New York, inv. no. 25.6.



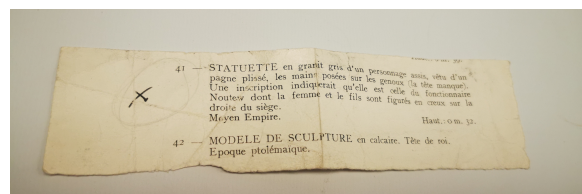
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Ill. 3. Seated statue of Horouda, Late Period, Dynasty XXVI, reign of Wahibre Psamtik I, limestone, H.: 78 cm. The Egyptian Museum, Cairo, inv. no. JE 37403.

Ill. 4. Seated statue of Padiamenope, Late Period, Dynasty XXV or Dynasty XXVI, reign of Wahibre Psamtik I, calcite, H.: 97 cm. The Egyptian Museum, Cairo, inv. no. CG 48620.

Provenance:



Ill. 5. Extract of the sales catalogue.