

Large Steatopygous Figure
Amlash, Ancient Iran

1st Millennium B.C.

Terracotta

H: 42cm

This magnificent idol is monumental in size and is an exceptional example of an Amlash clay sculpture. The Amlash culture of Ancient Iran takes its name from a small town in the north of that country, near which a wealth of extraordinary objects were unearthed – the legacy of a fascinating Iron Age civilization. During the first millennium BC, the area corresponding to the modern-day Iranian provinces of Gilan and Mazadaran constituted the lands of the Amlash people. Their culture remains mysterious: vessels and idols such as this piece remain among the most important sources for our knowledge of the rituals and aesthetics of this region and era. Spiritual artefacts are among the most common to survive, and the large number of votive idols and libation vessels which have been recovered would suggest that religion played a very important role in daily rituals. This graceful, sculpturally beautiful idol is one such spiritual artefact. Amlash artists are best known for their terracotta figurines. These pieces are remarkable for their abstract style, dominated by a sensitivity to form rather than an obsessive realism. There is a tendency towards exaggeration, as may be seen in the case of this figurine. The curves of the form are steatopygous with hips heavily emphasized. The figure is naked, the limbs stylized and rounded. The torso is flat and tubular with a long cylindrical neck, on top of which rests a stylized disc shaped head with a high polos headdress on top. The epic proportions, artistic form and remarkable state of preservation make this an outstanding example of its type.

Literature:

Phillips, London, 7 July 1989, 27768, lot 56.

David Aaron Ltd, 2021, No. 15.