

DAVID AARON



Statue of Bes

Large Statue of Bes

Circa 664-30 B.C., Late Period-Ptolemaic Period, Egypt

Limestone

H: 50 cm, W: 24 cm

A large freestanding statue of the ancient Egyptian god Bes in his canonical form as a stocky dwarf. His face is highly expressive, with large, teardrop-shaped eyebrows drawn into an exaggerated frown over the small, deep-set eyes. Large round ears protrude on either side of the head. Below the broad nose, the tongue extends from the wide-open mouth. A long, curled beard hangs on either side of the head, obscuring the neck completely. He wears an animal skin over his shoulders and a belt around his waist, but is otherwise nude. His hands rest on his hips, and his broad legs appear slightly bowed, as is typical for images of Bes. A long tail extends from the pronounced buttocks at the rear, down to the base of the statue.

Bes was worshipped as a protector of households, especially mothers and children. With his wild beard, lion's mask, and loud instruments, Bes was believed to ward off evil spirits. He was thus seen as a protector of women during labour, alongside the goddess Taweret. Later he became the defender of all that is good, and the god of music and merriment. Unlike other Egyptian deities, images of Bes were kept within the home as apotropaic devices. He was depicted in full face portrait, rather than in profile, even when in relief. Worship of Bes spread as far north of Syria and as far west as the Balearic Islands in Spain, and continued into the Roman and Achaemenid Empires.

Exhibitions

Égypte-France, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Pavillon de Marsan, Paris, October-November 1949, no. 69.

Galerie d'Eendt, Amsterdam, 22 May-15 July 1967, no. 79.

Literature:

Égypte-France, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Pavillon de Marsan, Paris, October-November 1949, exhibition catalogue, no. 69.