

**Northern Cardinal Figure**

H: 16 cm

Wood statuette on unbaked clay base

Egypt

Circa 1428-1397 B.C., Reign of Amenhotep II, 18th Dynasty, New Kingdom,

A wooden figure of a man in striding pose, with true left foot forwards and arms held straight by his sides. The figure wears a short loincloth and a long tripartite wig. The rounded face is carved with a broad nose and mouth; the eyes with extended cosmetic lines and the eyebrows are outlined in black paint. The large ears protrude on either side of the face, in front of the wig. The body is modelled softly, with a pronounced curve inwards at the waist, subtly suggested pectorals and slightly rounded stomach. The figure is mounted on a rectangular base of unbaked clay, which is painted with white hieroglyphs on the upper side and black hieroglyphs on the front, forming a prayer for Outkaou, the owner of the tomb in which this figure was placed. It is unusual for a wooden figure of this time to have been carved out of one block of wood, as is the case for this example – this demonstrates a high level of skill from the craftsman who made it.

Wooden figures such as this were interred within tombs and burial shafts throughout ancient Egyptian history. The white hieroglyphic inscription identifies the figure as a personification of the North, as part of a known but uncommon practice of placing statuettes embodying the four cardinal points within the burial chamber. Such figures have been found both on top of the coffin and on the floor surrounding it. Although most popular in the Middle Kingdom (2040-1782 B.C.), wooden models were still in use in the New Kingdom – Tutankhamun's tomb held 35 wooden boats and associated figures. The proportions of the figure, with the emphasised waist and shorter torso, are consistent with the proposed 18th Dynasty dating. The intact unfired clay base rarely survives from antiquity, due to its delicate

material, making this a rare example of its kind.

**Literature:**

Collection A. Raifé. Antiquités, Monnaies & Médailles, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 18-25 March 1867, p. x, Lot 316.