



MASTERPIECES
OF CYCLADIC ART
FROM PRIVATE COLLECTIONS,
MUSEUMS
AND THE MERRIN GALLERY



THE MERRIN GALLERY
724 FIFTH AVENUE AT 57TH STREET
NEW YORK CITY

ANCIENT ART—that very phrase excites one's sense of man's triumphal achievements over the millennia. And if communication of an idea, purity of design and spiritual power are important considerations in judging art, then the prehistoric sculptural abstractions from the Cyclades must be viewed as pivotal masterpieces in human history. I regard these sublime works from the third millennium B.C. as one of man's greatest achievements, inspiring nothing less than awe and veneration.

I wish to thank the collectors and museums who so generously parted with their treasures for our exhibition: Chris Bastis, David and Vivian Campbell, Rosemary and George Lois, Robin B. Martin, Judy and Michael Steinhardt, The Brooklyn Museum, and The Barbier-Müller Museum in Geneva. My very special thanks go to Harmon F.A. (Leonard Stern) who magnanimously loaned so many of his Cycladic masterpieces. Thanks, too, to Linda Schildkraut who made sense of the disparate pieces, organized the catalogue, and wrote the captions.

In honor of The Brooklyn Museum and its heroic devotion to the ancient arts, The Merrin Gallery presents these forms of profound purity and serene power. Cycladic art is surely a transcendent expression of the range and power of human creation.

EDWARD H. MERRIN

THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM has become, over the years, the loving home to a world renowned collection of ancient art. It has been a long, devoted quest. As early as 1902 the "Central Museum" of The Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (as it was known then) had already begun to acquire Egyptian, Classical, and Middle Eastern antiquities with the purpose of presenting the history of ancient civilization to the Museum's audience. Three decades later the institution, long-since renamed The Brooklyn Museum, began its transformation from a museum of everything, both man-made and natural, to an art museum. At the same time aesthetic value and, so to speak, the illustrated history of ancient art became the main goals of its acquisition and display of objects from the Ancient World. They remain the guiding principles for the growth of the collection as well as for the installation of galleries and special exhibitions of the Department of Egyptian, Classical, and Ancient Middle Eastern Art.

Those familiar with both ancient art and The Brooklyn Museum know it was the Egyptian collection that prospered most, thanks in part to the Museum's early involvement with archaeological expeditions bringing forth many fine objects, as well as to the donation of the heirs of American Egyptologist Charles Edwin Wilbour of his collection and an endowment for Egyptology in his memory. This endowment made it possible to establish a

curatorial department and to develop the collection into one that illustrates the scope and achievement of Egyptian artists from the Predynastic Period through Coptic art. Several significant individual gifts over the years have also added to the Egyptian collection.

As the history of the Museum's Classical and Ancient Middle Eastern collections includes neither archaeological fieldwork nor comparable endowments, they are smaller and less well known, although by no means insignificant. The Museum's collection of Ancient Middle Eastern art numbers almost 300 objects ranging in date from 4000 B.C. to the third century A.D. Thanks in no small way to the generosity of the late Hagop Kevorkian and the Kevorkian Foundation, the collection includes a number of very important works of art in their own separate gallery.

Due primarily to the generosity of a number of individuals beginning as early as 1901, Brooklyn's Classical collection includes significant works of Greek and Roman art in various media as well as some pre-Classical works from the Mediterranean World. Parallel to the important loan of a major second century A.D. sarcophagus from Asia Minor, we have recently reinstalled our own Classical collection as part of our general effort to bring the public's attention to our outstanding ancient collection and encourage its support and growth. In fact,

The Brooklyn Museum is one of the very few North American art institutions to have sought out and exhibited, prior to World War II, Cycladic antiquities, those hauntingly abstract marble figures and stone vessels. Today, Cycladic art is attracting special attention among scholars and collectors, as exemplified by this important and beautiful presentation at The Merrin Gallery.

Thus, beginning with a few gifts as the twentieth century opened, The Brooklyn Museum has developed a world-renowned collection of ancient art. As the twentieth century closes, we look forward to the continued growth of our collections of art from Egypt, the Middle East and the Classical World.

ROBERT T. BUCK

Director

The Brooklyn Museum

5000 YEARS AGO! It was an age of astonishing discovery and aesthetic wonder. Bronze, seagoing ships, musical instruments, wine, magical new things. During this era, before there was written language, sculptors whose names are now lost gave birth to Greek Art in a cluster of islands in the Aegean Sea named the Cyclades. (The Greece of the Parthenon and Plato and Aristotle, the Greece where democracy was born, came 2000 years later!)

A crest of submerged mountains, from volcanic Thera in the south to the granite peaks of Andros in the north, the Cyclades are comprised of hundreds of islands, few habitable.

This prehistoric culture had been buried and forgotten until the last century when Cycladic farmers working their fields unearthed a wealth of mysterious objects, encrusted in cramped graves. To the surprise of the modern world, it was evident that a vigorous culture had taken root on these primeval islands 5000 years ago! These caches yielded tools and implements of bronze, graceful vessels of marble and clay, jewelry and...curious statues in human form, many tiny, others two or three feet in length, a very few life size.

Who were these people? Their homes had vanished, with no written record, no oral tradition. And fully 2000 years before Christ, they were gone.

Each Cycladic island, craggy or hospitable, contains one source of wealth—marble. Gouged and chipped by the elements and burnished by the incessant stroking of the waves, the natural beauty of smooth hunks of marble lying on the beaches caught the eye of the artisan.

Those polished pebbles surely inspired the master craftsmen of the third millennium B.C. (as they still inspire the present day vernacular architecture of the islands of the Aegean).

As if it were a part of their very being, severe simplicity and flowing form dictated the contour of these precisely shaped idols, but the striking achievement of these artists was their ability to abstract the human body in its most pure, pristine, compact and essential form.

Connoisseurs have collected Greek antiquities since the Renaissance. This powerful and enduring fascination sprang from a reawakened concern for the humanities...and sheer wonder at the dazzling form and grandeur of classical Greek architecture and objects.

But adoration of the stylized form of idealized Greek naturalism blinded those who first saw those strange figurines brought home by European travelers. "Small monsters made of bits of marble," "ugly," "barbarian" were common derogations in 19th century archaeological literature.

At the beginning of our century, a few *enfants terrible*, bent on change and struggling to create new *isms* of art, were simply dumbstruck by these brilliant, exquisitely simple, pristine abstractions. Picasso, Matisse, Brancusi, Arp, Giacometti, Epstein, Modigliani, Moore...collected and placed these iconographic idols in their studios, constant reminders of the perfectly compact visual metaphor, magically spiritual and emotionally stirring. Their talent, imagination and ambition drove these modern pioneers to transform the spiritual intensity of these Neolithic forms into fresh, modern art.

Picasso said, "They are magical objects...better than Brancusi. Nobody ever made an object stripped that bare."

These sublime objects must have served some ritual purpose. The shapes and designs were repeated over hundreds of years, yet the genius of many individual artists is easily recognized.

They seem to have been meant to be viewed lying on their backs, arms folded, perhaps as comforting companions for the afterlife, exerting supreme power. Were these objects of devotion symbols of fertility? Is this the earth mother, buried in prayer to the gods that more of this industrious species would spring from the earth? Whatever their purpose, they define a culture whose adoration of sensual shape was so clearly irrepressible, particularly in the overwhelming presence of death.

Remarkably, present day villages in the Cyclades convey a graceful sculptural quality that echoes their ancestors' art of so long ago. The first sight of a present day Cycladic town leaves one gasping and gaping.

As the revelation of the Cycladic vision exerted profound influence in liberating the literal mind, today, with retrospective modern sensibility, these great works force us to refocus on the lasting and inspiring possibilities of art...on its humanism and its divine power. To possess one of these Cycladic masterpieces transports a collector to a spiritual level far beyond the possession of a 20.7 million de Kooning! Picasso, the greatest artist/inventor of our time, said it best as he held one of his "Mother Goddess" idols in his hands: "There was once a little man in the Cyclades. He thought he was making the great Goddess, but what he made was not a God, but a piece of sculpture. Nothing was left of his life. Nothing was left of his kind of God. But this is left. Because he wanted to make a piece of sculpture. A kind of magic power."

GEORGE LOIS

MASTERPIECES OF CYCLADIC ART



1.
CYCLADIC
FEMALE 'VIOLIN' FIGURE
EARLY CYCLADIC I
CA. 3000-2800 BC
WHITE MARBLE
(ACTUAL SIZE)
HEIGHT: 7 1/4 INCHES
(18.5 CM)
COLLECTION:
MUSÉE BARBIER-MÜLLER
GENÈVE

2.
CYCLADIC
MALE FIGURE
PLASTIRAS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC I,
CA. 3000-2800 BC.
ATTRIBUTED TO
THE DOUMAS MASTER
WHITE MARBLE
(ACTUAL SIZE)
HEIGHT: 5 1/4 INCHES
(13.4 CM)
(N.B.: THE ANCIENT
REPAIR HOLES)
COLLECTION:
MUSÉE BARBIER-MÜLLER
GENÈVE





3.
CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
PLASTIRAS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC I,
CA. 3000–2800 BC
ATTRIBUTED TO THE
METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM MASTER
WHITE MARBLE
(ACTUAL SIZE)
HEIGHT: 7 1/4 INCHES
(18.3 CM)
(N.B.: THE ANCIENT
REPAIR HOLES)
COLLECTION:
MUSÉE BARBIER-MÜLLER
GENÈVE



4.

CYCLADIC BEAKER
EARLY CYCLADIC I
CA. 3000-2800 BC
WHITE AND LIGHT GRAY
MARBLE
HEIGHT: 7 1/4 INCHES
(18.5 CM)
DIAMETER: 5 1/4 INCHES
(15 CM)
THE MERRIN GALLERY



5.
CYCLADIC KANDILA
(COLLARED JAR)
EARLY CYCLADIC I,
CA. 3000–2800 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ INCHES
(22.2 CM)
MAXIMUM DIAMETER:
8 $\frac{1}{4}$ INCHES (21.3 CM)
COLLECTION:
THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

6.
ANATOLIAN
ABSTRACT FIGURE
VARIANT OF
THE KASURA TYPE
THIRD MILLENNIUM BC
WHITE MABLE
(ACTUAL SIZE)
HEIGHT: 5 1/4 INCHES
(14.9 CM)
THE MERRIN GALLERY





7.
ANATOLIAN
"STARGAZER"
KILIA TYPE
CHALCOLITHIC OR
EARLY BRONZE AGE,
CA. 3000–2500 BC
WHITE MARBLE
(ACTUAL SIZE)
HEIGHT: 6 1/4 INCHES
(17.2 CM)
EX-COLLECTIONS:
NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER,
LOANED TO THE
MUSEUM OF PRIMITIVE ART
(62.33);
PRIVATE TEXAS COLLECTION;
COLLECTION:
HARMON F.A.
(LEONARD STERN)



8.

CYCLADIC PLATE
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2700-2200 BC
WHITE MARBLE
DIAMETER: 20¹/₂ INCHES
(52.1 CM)
HEIGHT: 2¹/₄ INCHES
(7 CM)
COLLECTION:
JUDITH AND MICHAEL
STEINHARDT



9.
CYCLADIC
PEDESTALED CUP
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2700-2200 BC
WHITE MARBLE
WITH SOME BANDING
(ACTUAL SIZE)
HEIGHT: 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ INCHES
(5.3 CM)
DIAMETER: 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ INCHES
(10.3 CM)
EX-COLLECTION:
HARMER JOHNSON
THE MERRIN GALLERY



10.
CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
PRECANONICAL GROUP
EARLY CYCLADIC I-II,
CA. 2800-2700 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ INCHES
(29.5 CM)
EX-COLLECTION:
ORPHANIDES
(SAID TO BE FROM
THE SAME SOURCE AS
THE HARP PLAYER
IN THE COLLECTION
OF THE METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF ART,
ACQUIRED IN 1947)
COLLECTION:
HARMON F.A.
(LEONARD STERN)

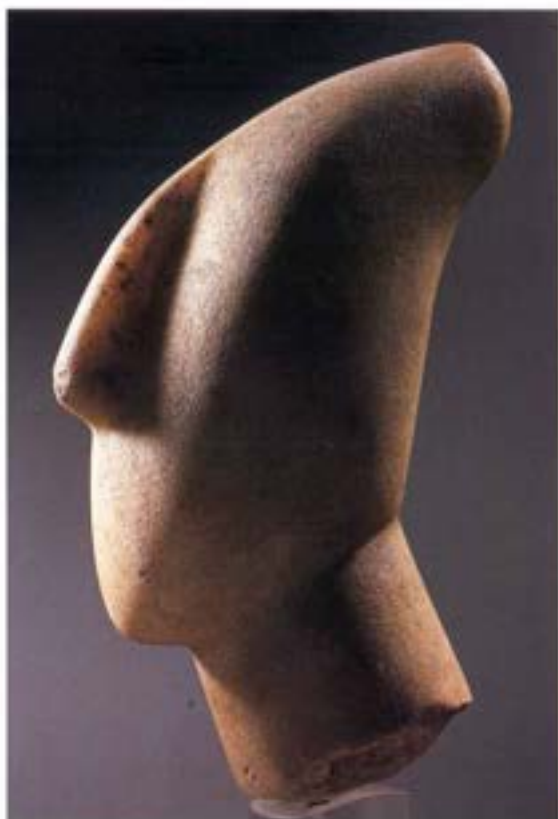


11.

CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
KAPSALA/
EARLY SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2700-2500 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 10 INCHES
(25.4 CM)
COLLECTION:
HARMON F.A.
(LEONARD STERN)

12.

HEAD OF A
CYCLADIC FIGURE
EARLY SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2600-2500 BC.
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ INCHES
(17.5 CM)
COLLECTION
HARMON F.A.
(LEONARD STERN)





13.
COLOSSAL CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
EARLY SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2600–2500 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 52 INCHES
(132 CM)
EX-PRIVATE
BELGIAN COLLECTION
COLLECTION:
HARMON F.A.
(LEONARD STERN)

14.

CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
EARLY SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2600-2500 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 9¹/₁₆ INCHES
(23.2 CM)
COLLECTION:
VIVIAN AND
DAVID CAMPBELL





15.
HEAD OF A
CYCLADIC FIGURE
EARLY SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2600–2500 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 9¹/₄ INCHES
(23.5 CM)
COLLECTION:
HARMON F.A.
(LEONARD STERN)

16.
CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
EARLY SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2600–2500 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 10¹/₁₆ INCHES
(27.1 CM)
THE MERRIN GALLERY





17.
HEAD OF A
CYCLADIC FIGURE
EARLY SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2600–2500 BC
WHITE MARBLE WITH
RED AND BLACK PIGMENT
HEIGHT: 8 1/4 INCHES
(22 CM)
EX-COLLECTION:
MR. AND MRS. A. LEUTHOLD
PRIVATE COLLECTION

18.

HEAD OF A
CYCLADIC FIGURE
SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2600-2400 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 4 INCHES
(10.2 CM)
COLLECTION:
HARMON FA.
(LEONARD STERN)





19.

HEAD OF A
CYCLADIC FIGURE
EARLY SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
2600–2500 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 12 ¹/₁₆ INCHES
(31.2 CM)
EX-COLLECTION:
ALASTAIR B. MARTIN
COLLECTION:
ROBIN B. MARTIN

20.
HEAD OF A
CYCLADIC FIGURE
SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2600-2400 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 6 1/4 INCHES
(16.2 CM)
COLLECTION:
HARMON F.A.
(LEONARD STERN)



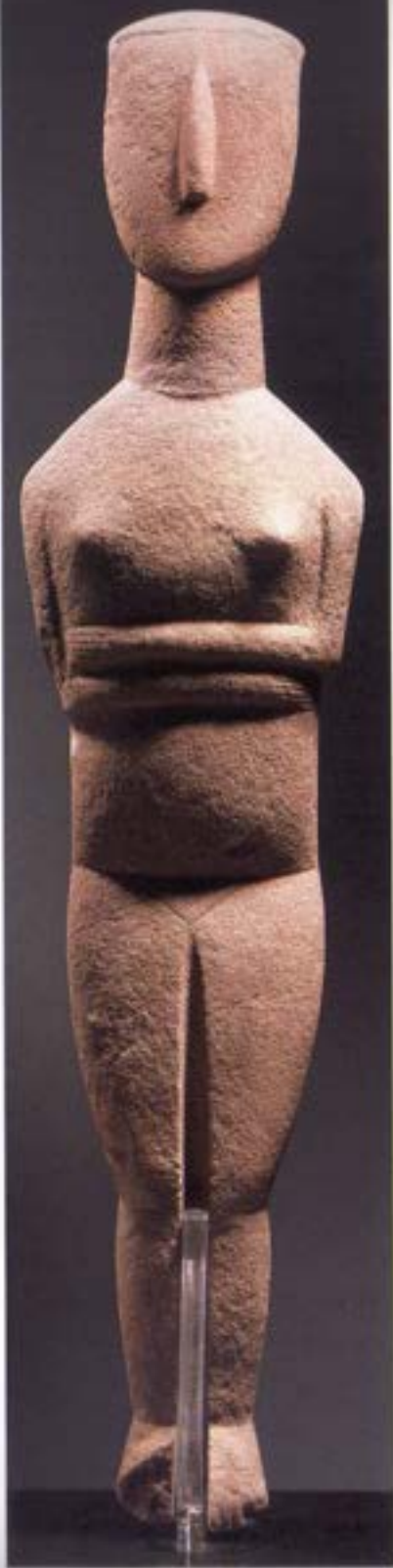


21.
CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2500 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ INCHES
(32.1 CM)
THE MERRIN GALLERY

22.

CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
LATE SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
2500-2400 BC
ATTRIBUTED TO THE
GOULANDRIS MASTER
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 16 1/2 INCHES
(42 CM)
COLLECTION:
ROSEMARY
AND GEORGE LOIS





23.
CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
LATE SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
2500–2400 BC
ATTRIBUTED TO THE
GOURANDRIS MASTER
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT, 24 1/2 INCHES
(62.2 CM)
COLLECTION:
CHRISTOS G. BASTIS

24.

CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
DOKATHISMATA VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2400-2300 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 17 INCHES
(43.2 CM)
COLLECTION:
HARMON FA,
(LEONARD STERN)



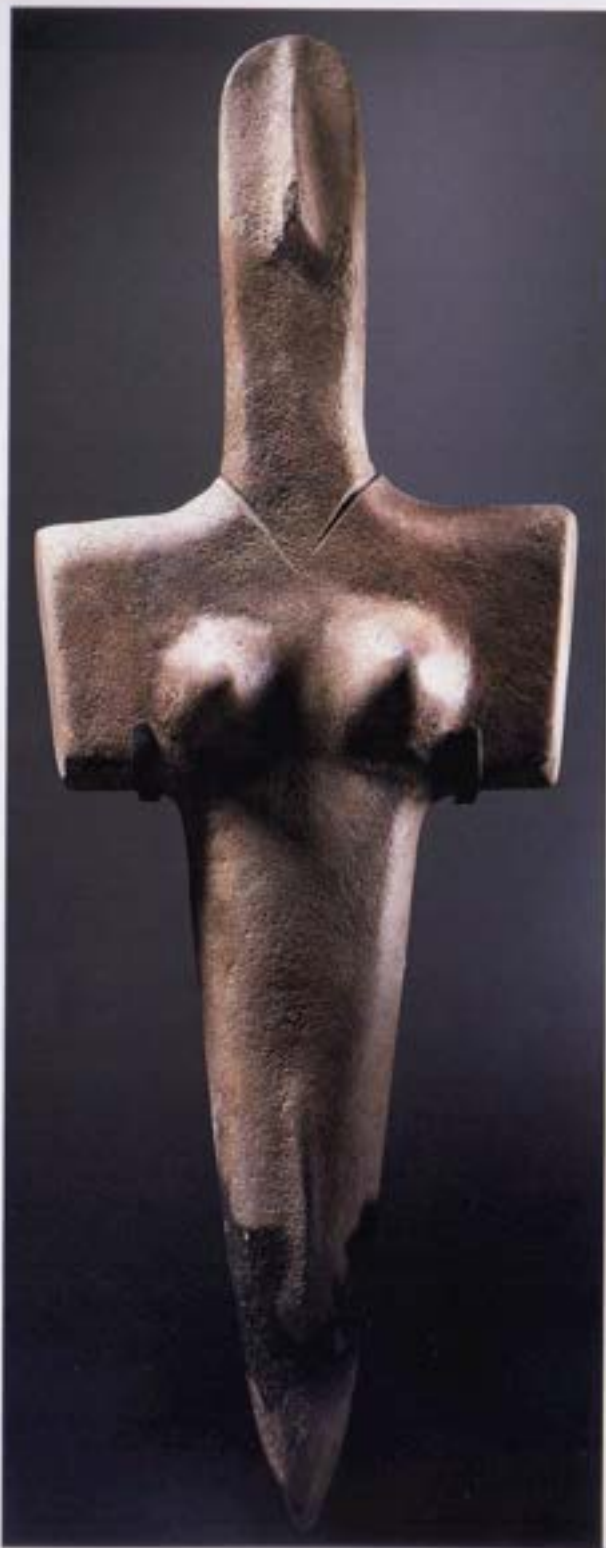


25.
CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
LATE SPEDOS/
DOKATHISMATA VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2500-2300 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 10¹/₁₆ INCHES
(26.8 CM)
THE MERRIN GALLERY

26.

CYCLADIC
FEMALE FIGURE
LATE SPEDOS VARIETY
EARLY CYCLADIC II,
CA. 2500-2400 BC
WHITE MARBLE
HEIGHT: 11 1/4 INCHES
(28.6 CM)
COLLECTION:
HARMON F.A.
(LEONARD STERN)





27.
SARDINIAN
FEMALE FIGURE
OZIERI CULTURE
COPPER AGE, CA. 2000 BC
MARBLE
HEIGHT: 13 3/4 INCHES
(35 CM)
COLLECTION:
HARMON F.A.
(LEONARD STERN)

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION:

CHRISTOS G. BASTIS
VIVIAN AND DAVID CAMPBELL
HARMON F. A. (LEONARD STERN)
ROSEMARY AND GEORGE LOIS
ROBIN B. MARTIN
PRIVATE COLLECTION, NEW YORK
JUDITH AND MICHAEL STEINHARDT

THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM
MUSÉE BARBIER-MÜLLER, GENEVA
THE MERRIN GALLERY

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2.

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[ANN ARBOR, 1987] PLS. 14: [4], 15: [4];
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[SEATTLE & LONDON, 1987] FIG. 24A;
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7.

"THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME"
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INDIVIDUAL AND TRADITION IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM B.C."
[ANN ARBOR, 1987] FIG. 25C.

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JUNE 1983, J.L. FITTON, ED.
[LONDON, 1984] FIGS. 3.2, 14-16(b);
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