

My Choice

A Geometric Warrior

By Jean-David Cahn

This bronze statuette of a warrior from the Geometric Period makes a monumental impression. The figure has been pared down to its essentials, the outline of the body clearly delineated. Our gaze follows the long, muscular legs up to the slim waist and from there to the breast rendered as a broad triangle and along the vigorously raised, multiply angled right arm. Captured in this remarkable gesture is the instant at which the warrior thrusts the lance originally held in his drilled-through hand. His helmet is an Illyrian helmet of the first type. His hair and beard are rudimentarily articulated; the nose and chin project out from the face and the expression is one of fierce, almost aggressive, determination.

The lowered left arm is only partially present and the feet, too, are missing. This raises the question of whether they have been lost – in which case the left hand perhaps held a shield originally – or whether they were never executed at all, but rather deliberately left as stumps. After all, there is no sign of breakage on the left arm and legs, which on the contrary have rounded termini.

The size of the bronze is unusual, as statuettes of this kind are normally about half the size of this one. These statuettes were made in centres of production near the Pan-Hellenic sanctuaries of the 8th century B.C., where they were purchased by visitors and subsequently consecrated. The position of the arms, the drill hole through the hand and the style of our figure link it to a statuette from the Acropolis in Athens (21 cm high), which is now in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (inv. no. 6616). Our statuette probably adorned a bronze tripod or a cauldron originally.

I am drawing your attention to this important early bronze because pieces of this size and quality so



STATUETTE OF A WARRIOR. H. 18.3 cm. Bronze. Greek, Geometric, ca. 800–700 B.C. Price on request

rarely turn up on the art market. Most representations of humans from this period are found in vase painting; those made of terracotta are rarer and those in bronze rarer still. This particular object comes from a major private collection built up by the book printer Henri Smeets (1905–1980) of Weert in the Netherlands and was published in 1975 (E. Godet et al., *A Private Collection*, Weert 1975, cat. no. 146).