



Clown Figure or Phallic Dancer

Date

ca. 300 BCE-300 CE

Primary Maker

Colima

Medium

pottery and slip paint

Description

Male figurines from Colima with exaggerated sexual organs have generally been labeled as Phallic Dancers. While the actual meaning of these figures remains obscure, given how rarely they have been discovered in an archaeological context, the strong visual emphasis on the erect phallus points to ritual connotations associated with fertility and inversion. Clowns were important on many ritual occasions in ancient Mesoamerica and often reinforced cultural norms through ridicule. This figure portrays a priest or a shaman wearing a ritual costume. His face is covered by a mask with enormous rounded eyes, pointed nose, and menacing teeth. A miniature ceramic vessel forms the spout on top of his head. The figure wears a tight shirt or vest and a girdle with a large phallus attached. On each leg he has a pair of disc-shaped ornaments. As in most Colima human representations, the

hands and feet are absent and the limbs have been reduced to their basic conceptual form.

Dimensions

Overall: 21 1/8 x 9 1/2 x 6 3/4 in. (53.7 x 24.1 x 17.1 cm)