

Basic Detail Report



Figure

Date

ca. 1500-400 BCE

Primary Maker

Olmec

Medium

jade

Description

The use of jade, the most prized stone in ancient Mesoamerica, to create luxurious portable objects in a great variety of styles and dimensions began during the Olmec period. This skillfully-carved, miniature figure represents a highly abstracted hybrid of human and zoomorphic attributes. The lower portion suggests the legs and torso of a male human figure. Though highly simplified, the proportions accurately imitate correct anatomical form. The upper portion depicts a zoomorphic head, with a long snout and a drilled hole at the center. Two elongated arms hold the upper part of the sculpture,

suggesting a mask or headdress. The combination of human and animal forms in order to represent supernatural beings was an important convention within Olmec art, and the representation of humans wearing animal masks was used throughout Mesoamerica as a symbol of animistic ritual practices. This image might represent a shaman wearing the mask of his animal companion.

Dimensions

Overall: 2 3/4 x 1 x 1 5/8 in. (7 x 2.5 x 4.1 cm)