



Figure

Date

ca. 600-300 BCE

Primary Maker

Olmec

Medium

slate and specular hematite

Description

This figure exhibits the iconography and attributes of other similar late pre-Classic pieces found at sites under late Olmec influence such as Izapa and Kaminaljuyu. Images such as this one provide an excellent example of the continuity and evolution of styles and themes that linked the artistic production of ancient Mesoamerican societies through time. The figure wears a mask, perhaps representing Chahk, the Maya god of rain and lightning. He stands in an impossible posture, with the head and legs in profile while the torso faces front, a convention which served as a precedent for the later Maya style of portraiture. The clothing and ornaments are simple though elegant. The figure wears a waist band with knots and protective pads in the legs and wrists. The knotted pieces at the ankles have associations with bloodletting and self-sacrifice. The lines on arms and legs indicate tattoos or body scarification. Everything on this image's attire and posture highlights its character as an enactor of a ritual practice.

Dimensions

Overall: 17 3/4 x 6 1/4 x 5/8 in. (45.1 x 15.9 x 1.6 cm)