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Egyptian Limestone Fertility Figure



An ancient Egyptian limestone plaque depicting a nude woman in relief, lying on her back with long slender arms and legs, on a bed with red painted lattice decoration. The red, diagonal lines on either side of the figure represent the lattice work of the of the bed. The foot end is designed at a ninety-degree angle to the tall back and its black, reticulated design is in imitation of a wooden foot board characteristic of ancient Egyptian beds. The female figure's long hair is highlighted in black, a perfume cone on top of her head, the base with two painted figures representing children holding a large mirror, with extensive polychrome decoration remaining.

New Kingdom,
Ca. 1570 - 1070 BC.
Height: 6 1/2 in. (16.5 cm).

This type of bed figure was introduced in the New Kingdom. It is thought they may have been used in childbirth rituals and assisted with fertility and a protective birth. These votive bed figures have been found dedicated in temples and shrines. For a full discussion of the subject cf. C. Rose, "Childbirth Magic," Expedition Magazine, Penn Museum, (2017), 58.3. For a terracotta figure with bed dating to the 18th Dynasty, cf. A. Capel & E. Markoe (Eds), Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven, Women in Ancient Egypt, Cincinnati Art Museum, (1997), no.16b, p. 67.

cf.: similar fertility figure can be seen in archaeology collection of Foundation Gandur Pour L'Artcf.:another similar fertility figure in B.T. Trope, Excavating Egypt: Great Discoveries From the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, (Georgia, 2005), no. 65.

Formerly in an Edinburgh, Scotland private collection.

inventory number: 8353

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