

Hamangia- Prehistoric Figurines. Douglass Bailey
1950s Cernavoda cemetery.

“The Thinker” sits on a low, four-legged stool.

The Seated Woman sits on the ground. Similar in proportion.

Long necks, Oval heads, round mouths

Unclear if they eyes are open or closed

On a figurine head from a nearby area, 6 small circular impressions run
across the forehead, three over each eye

Bailey cannot imagine holding the position of their faces

There are other, more common, but less realistic Hamangia figures

Almost none depict a face or head

Almost every Hamangia figurine has an unnaturally long neck, most often
triangular in section

Appears to be sliced straight off with a knife

Leads Bailey to ask if there is something missing?

Shoulders, torsos, hips, entire bodies are wide and full.

Arms often tightly tucked up across the chest or under pointed breasts

Sometimes unclear whether clay depicts breasts or forearms and hands

Most hands have no fingers, arms end in “mittenish abstractions”

Some have recognizable fingers. Some only have three fingers. Others have
four fingers but no thumbs

What could this possibly mean? (opposable thumb?)

There is often a belt, or possibly some sort of ligature.

On some, a “sort vertical incision” is placed in the middle of the bottom
line. Depict labia or penis?

Some have a simple line drawn that separates legs

Some have legs slightly apart, with one leg in front.

Little attention to ankles or feet, often tapering into stubs

Sometimes a kink or pinch of clay defines ankles from feet

Almost all are highly burnished, smooth and shiny- reflective. They are all
bulky and feel over-inflated

These are abstractions

“One senses stylistic rules and canons. Are these the symptoms of constraint
imposed (or inherent) in the Hamangia way of modeling the human body in
miniature or is there information on offer here about corporeal similarities
and difference that worked within negotiations of human identities?”

The vast majority are made of clay. A few are made of marble, fewer of stone, and fewer of bone

Most are made of fine clay, highly burnished, and evenly fired.

Type A- numerous, standing

Type B- less numerous, seated, and generally more massive

Type C- fewer in number and defined by “maximum realism”

Figurines of all types were made throughout the Hamangia phases.

Clay figurines, similar to those found on settlement sites were also deposited as grave-goods, though they were not frequent finds.

Some graves even contained lumps of ochre

Hamangia figurines are unusual in the context of the Balkan Neolithic as they are found both in domestic and funerary contexts.

“Does the lack of specificity in figurine appearance fit in the general looseness of rules over what should happen where, of the ephemeral temporality of settlements and use of cemeteries by different groups? Can the essence of Hamangia existence, the mixture of rootedness in the past with forward-looking behaviour? The general patterns... do not offer conclusive evidence. Perhaps a clearer understanding can be found by looking at each figurine’s archaeological context, its exact find-spot and associated finds.”

Cenotaph burials as well- replacement of body?

“Is there an important distinction between standing and seated figurines, then what is it? What meaning might a sitting position contain? Is the seated individual in a subservient position, placed below and under a standing figure? Or do sitting, chairs and stools represent leisure, ease and dominance in the way that thrones and the modern western term ‘chair’ do?”

New questions:

What is the significance of the absence of heads and/or specific identities? It is more than mere abstraction.

What special status does the head and face have that would make its exclusion meaningful or important?

How does the absence of a face affect its ability to perform in expressions of identity, if indeed figurines were part of a community expression of identity?

What is the significance of similarity among body form of figurines?

Are we looking at one specific perception of the general understanding of the human body, or at one particular human body that is produced again and again?

Why are the figures not covered in decoration, why is it so rare?

Why is the body over-inflated?

Read Bailey p.65

Anthropomorphism: Dolls, portraits and body parts

1. How does human representation work in other non-ceramic material in non-Neolithic cultures?
2. What other media of anthropomorphism teach that will help us understand Neolithic figures?

I. Dolls

Hierarchies of Power

Play powerful roles in children's unconscious understanding of their positions within power hierarchies.

Playing with dolls becomes an unconscious education in scaled perception, an indirect introduction to the hierarchies of power.

Anatomical Dolls and Police Interviews

Empower child sex abuse victims

Children reluctant to talk about abuse (fear, embarrassment, limited vocab)

They are less toy-like and more sexually explicit

Includes adult dolls and child dolls

Size is important. What's comfortable for them to handle.

The adult doll is only 25% taller. This empowers the victim, it moves them up the hierarchy of scale.

Facial expressions are neutral so that it does not suggest emotion to the child

Dolls and Identity

Work powerfully within the process by which identities are created and manipulated

Barbie Doll

Standard-bearers for girls' appearance and career aspirations.

Dolls, appropriate behavior and appearance

innocent, dependent, content, silent, mass-produced and compliant

Some claim Barbie represents a strong, modern woman, not tied down by marriage, domesticity or children, nor even restricted to the monotony of a single job for life, the perfect role model for the young women of the world.

Others attack Barbie as a stereo type, a prototype of bimboism, a woman-made-object: purchasable, undressable, controllable

Barbie website

She documents the emotive power that a miniature anthropomorph can have in influencing our opinions

Dolls in the Art World

Why are artists drawn to dolls in their artwork?

- a. communicate social information
- b. reproduce cultural roles
- c. replace innocence with the dark and ironic.

Hans Bellmer The poses are startling and the photographs suggest violence and abuse, sadism, fetishism. Horrify, excite, illuminate, intrigue. Uncanny, combine real with imaginary.

Don't inhabit the world of Barbie, or mother and child domestic world.

Dolls are props with a drama already built in.

Cindy Sherman's dolls

Read other quote