

TELL EL-FARKHA

10-11. Boys

Tell el-Farkha. Western Kom

Early Dynastic (before the middle of the First Dynasty)

10. Sitting boy

H. 8.4 cm, hippo tusk

Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-638

11. Sitting boy

H. 5.2 cm, hippo tusk

Mendes (Tell el-Ruba), storeroom, R-639

Two figurines of small naked boys in seated position with knees pulled up to their chin, the finger of the right hand inserted in their mouths and the left hand laid flat on the knee. Both have large and protruding ears. The craftsmanship and meticulously rendered facial features deserve note. Despite representing the same motif and a general similarity between the figurines, they are quite different. The first one is slender with fine, delicate features, a noble expression of the large almond-shaped eyes, relatively small snub nose and not very wide mouth with narrow lips. The fingers of the left hand lying on the knees are long, narrow and well rendered. The other figurine is stocky with thick features: a large and crooked nose, wide mouth with fleshy lips, small amygdaloid eyes. The genitals are clearly marked in case of the second smaller figurine.

Representations of seated or standing boys with a finger of the right hand inserted in the mouth, executed of materials like bone, faience and stone, made their appearance in Egyptian art at the close of the Proto-Dynastic and in the beginning of the Early Dynastic; they remained popular until the decline of Egyptian civilization. In the early phase, they seem to have been connected exclusively with temple precincts (Elephantine, Hierakonpolis, Abydos). The figures from Tell el-Farkha are among the finest artistically that have come down to our times.

K.M.C.

