



Woman From Willendorf
Austria. c. 24,000 BCE. Limestone, height 4 3/8".
Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna

Discussion of Form

- Carved from limestone and originally colored with red ochre, this sculpture's artist/sculptor intentionally gave it exaggerated female attributes by giving it pendulous breasts, big belly with a deep navel, wide hips, dimpled knees and buttocks, along with solid thighs. The characteristics of this sculpture were intentionally made in a small yet light form therefore allowing facile hauling from one location to another, that is if migration of such were to be undertaken.

Analysis of Iconography

- By attentively observing the sculpture, we can assume that the artist's intentions were to express health and fertility; fertility which could have ensured the ability to produce strong children, thus guaranteeing the survival of the clan. In addition to that, this sculpture could have been used as a fertility idol amongst clan members.

Cultural Context

- This sculpture's origin dates back to the Paleolithic Era. Thus being discovered in 1908 by Josef Szombathy near the town of Willendorf, Austria, the sculpture's lack of face can be interpreted in such way that women may have been regarded as an anonymous sexual object rather than a person. Given in fact that so many sculptures of such kind were produced, we can assume that they were used as Stone-Age dolls rather than fertility idols. (Stokstad 4)