

## 3020

### *Female Figure*

**Edna Russmann:** This statuette of a woman is about 5,500 years old. That makes it one of the oldest statuettes in this Museum. It dates to the earliest part of ancient Egypt's history, before the Egyptians even had writing, and for that reason we know very little about this statue. We don't know why her head has been reduced to a small, almost birdlike, beaky head—quite naturally she's referred to as the Bird Lady.

We don't know who she was, whether she was a goddess, whether she was a priestess—or since the figure was found in a tomb, she might even have been a mourner.

**Lisa Bruno:** If you look really closely on the lower half of the figure, you should be able to see plant material. And that's an indication that this is an extremely low-fired piece. Because if it was fired at a higher temperature, the grasses would have burned up and would have been left as voids. Plant grasses were mixed with the clay to make the clay more sticky and more easily worked.

**Edna Russmann:** The most surprising thing about this statue in comparison with almost all ancient Egyptian statues is the sense of movement. She's making this huge gesture upward with her arms. We don't know whether she is displaying her power, or maybe dancing as a priestess, possibly wearing a mask. Or it might even be a gesture of mourning. I personally see her also turning as she moves her arms upward. It's a very striking figurine, and it's one of my personal favorites in the whole Museum.