

# Studio Saturdays: Protective Figures



*Standing Female Figure*  
Unknown Artist

300-400 C.E.

Ceramic

6 1/2x3 3/4x 3/4 in.

In Memory of Janet Angelin, 2020.9

## MATERIALS

- Air Dry Clay
- Pencil
- Water

Small figures like this one were often used as votive statues by many cultures around the world. A votive statue or votive figure is an object, usually of a person, used as an offering to a deity. A deity is another word for a god or goddess. The votive statues were put in religious places, like temples or churches, to stand in for the person who put them there. This was done in hopes that the deity the statue was offered to would bring good things to the person. Some people would even have artists make the statues to look like them. Small statues like this standing female figure were also used by many cultures as protection.

The protective figures were believed to be magic and were made for different purposes. Some protective figures were dedicated to goddesses who were known to protect mothers, and carried around by women who wanted to have a baby. Others protected children, and those would be put in cradles or pouches that a child could wear around their neck. This practice today is not always religious; a protective figure can just be something you carry around for good luck.

**Today, we will be making our own protective votive statues out of air-dry clay! Your statue can be for any purpose you want, and can come in any form you want, too—it doesn't have to look like a person! Think about how the statue's purpose can be shown through the form you create. Maybe you want to make a protective figure to watch over your dog; you could make a small wolf or a small version of yourself to protect them. Get creative and feel free to try lots of different ideas—you can always reform the clay if you make a mistake.**

## THINK LIKE AN ARTIST

- 1) What purpose will you create your protective figure for?
- 2) Will you create a human, animal, or monster for your figure? What special protective powers will that form have?

# INSTRUCTIONS

1. Start with a base for your figure. This will be different depending on what kind of figure you're going to make! If you'd like to start with a sphere, you can make one by taking a lump of clay and rolling it around between your hands with a little water to make it round and smooth. Or, if you want a taller or longer figure, you can roll it back and forth along your hands to make a long tube shape.
2. Once you have your base, you can start making your figure's arms, legs, and head. To make clean edges for your limbs, you can use a butter knife to cut the clay. You can attach the limbs by sticking them on the base and using a little water on your fingers to smooth the limbs onto the body.
3. For longer or more complicated limbs like a long tail, you can try using the wire from a paper clip to make a base, then build clay on top of the wire.
4. To make details like the figure's face, you can use a pencil to poke dots for eyes and make lines for a mouth.
5. When your statue is complete, leave it for at least 24 hours to air-dry. Once it's dry, you can paint it, draw on it, or leave it bare. Then, you can place your little creation where it can do its protecting!