

# *Eclectic Antiquity*

*the Classical Collection of the Snite Museum of Art*



Compiled and edited by

**Robin F. Rhodes**



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## *Introduction*

In 2004 Keith Bradley, chair of the Classics Department, spoke to me about undertaking the publication of a catalog of the classical collection of the Snite Museum of Art at Notre Dame. We agreed that a catalog would make the collection more accessible to students and to the general public, and that such a publication could serve as another tool for making the classics more central to the university and community experience of Notre Dame and South Bend. He then went on to procure from the Dean's office of the College of Arts and Letters at Notre Dame the necessary funds for research of the objects and so set the wheels of this project in motion. The publication itself has been made possible by the following offices of the University of Notre Dame: the Henkels Lecture Series and the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, the Department of Classics, and the Patrons of the Snite Museum of Art.

The assemblage of classical art in the Snite Museum is not the result of a conscious strategy of collecting; instead, for the most part, it represents the unrelated gifts of various donors over the years. Thus the collection has grown eclectically and is somewhat random in its nature and quality; and it is small. It does not include the kind of celebrity pieces that demand purple-draped rooms with spotlights and champagne flutes. Yet the range of the collection is broad, both chronologically and geographically. From a charming little bronze horse of the Greek Geometric period to the marble fragments of a colossal Roman divinity, from a Luristan horse bit to a Roman table leg, from a fifth-century-BCE scene of Greek women harvesting fruit on a black-figured drinking cup to Late Antique funerary monuments of the Roman Near East, from stone and terracotta fragments of architectural moldings and sculpture to a painted funerary portrait from Roman Egypt, from various other portraits of Greek, Roman, and Etruscan public and private individuals to everyday vessels of glass and clay, the classical collection of the Snite



Museum encompasses countless artistic and cultural themes of sculpture, painting, architecture, religion, politics, society, and commerce. Strategically presented, it can provide an informative and fascinating overview of the classical world. Most of the classical objects in the Snite collection are illustrated with catalog entries here; the rest are listed at the end of the catalog and will be included as entries in the next edition. The organization is chronological and, with the exception of a single Luristan bronze that illustrates and clarifies important aspects of early Greek art, all of the objects are from the Greco-Roman world.

In the spirit of reaching the greater Notre Dame and South Bend community, the goal of these catalog entries is not only to present basic descriptions and vital statistics but also to use each object as a tool for engaging Museum visitors in the contemplation and appreciation of classical art, and as a key to examining one or more aspects of classical culture and contemporary scholarship. This is a teaching catalog, and it has been left to the initiative, creativity, and didactic goals of each of the contributors to choose and develop one or more issues or themes raised by each object. Most of these objects are presently in storage, but it is our hope that the publication of this catalog will help facilitate their further incorporation into the Museum's permanent exhibition, perhaps even as a separate display of classical art.

The ancestry of the catalog lies in an earlier project begun under my direction in 1998–99 by Carrie Tovar, then a Notre Dame Art History M.A. candidate and now a Curatorial Assistant at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu. At that point none of the objects in the classical collection had even been inventoried, and over the course of the project Tovar completed basic records for approximately one third of the objects. Wherever such a record exists, it has served as a valuable reference in the research for the catalog entries presented here.

Special thanks are due to Ann Knoll, the Associate Director of the Snite Museum, for her gracious and dependable attention to me and to the contributors as they visited the Museum to



study the objects. I am also grateful to the Museum staff members who made objects accessible for study by lifting heavy display cases and to the security staff who sat patiently with the contributors as they studied in the storerooms and exhibition hall. In addition, I express my gratitude to Christopher Stackowicz for serving as artistic director and graphic designer for this project. Under my direction he also photographed the objects for the catalog and prepared the images for publication. Finally, I thank Paul Broneer of Ancient Corinth, Greece, for his meticulous work as my editorial assistant in this project and Alexis Belis for checking the manuscript for format consistency.

For this project, a University of Notre Dame initiative whose primary goal is teaching, I found a perfect source of contributors: the crew of my ongoing Project for the Study and Publication of the Greek Stone Architecture at Corinth. The four crew members who contributed the majority of the catalog entries are presently pursuing or have completed Ph.D.s in classical art and archaeology; a fifth, the catalog's graphic designer and artistic director, earned an MFA in printmaking. Four of these studied with me as undergraduates at Notre Dame, another as a graduate student at Columbia University (she also recently served as my leave replacement here). Not only do I know and respect their work, but I also believe this catalog benefits from their ability as young professionals to mine relatively fresh memories of their own early engagement with antiquity as inspiration for the initiation of others into the mysteries. In these contributors, this project has been able to take advantage of a unique resource, and the undertaking has facilitated a reciprocal and direct reconnection between them and Notre Dame.

While not a student of mine, a contributor of two of the catalog entries is connected with Notre Dame through her spouse and is teaching art history at another university here in South Bend. Finally, seven recent undergraduate students of mine at Notre Dame have contributed part or all of a single entry.

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It has been my job to assemble the team, direct them in their choice of objects, provide them with working photographs, make suggestions of approach to the objects, supervise the rewriting of submissions, occasionally add text where I felt necessary, and complete the final editing of each entry. But it is they who have created the entries, and I thank them all for their long hours, hard work, and thoughtful insights.

Welcome to the classical collection.

Robin F. Rhodes

Associate Professor of Art History and Concurrent Associate Professor of Classics

University of Notre Dame

June 2010







### **Geometric Horse Figurine**

Greek, ca. 750–725 BCE

Bronze

H. 0.057 m, L. 0.076 m, D. 0.016 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1967.018.006

#### *Description*

Small bronze horse stands with legs straight and tail curving to right side of body. Solid-cast figurine in good condition, with no visible cracks or breaks. Tiny hole at crown of head. Surface well preserved with greenish brown patina. Small light green incrustations on snout and legs. No incised surface details.

Individual features of horse reduced to abstract geometric shapes: cylindrical snout and body, round eyes, triangular neck, rectangular legs. Proportions stocky. Open mouth on long snout indicated by deep incision at front of snout. Small raised bumps represent eyes and ears. Low-set ears do not reach top of head. Short, flat neck distinguished from body by strong diagonal ridge from chest to back. Mane not specifically articulated. Long, thin barrel-shaped body carries prominent male genitalia. Hocks and fetlocks rendered by prominent projections on front of front legs and back of back legs. Top of each hoof articulated by small notch at back of leg. Tiny knob present at inside of three hooves, perhaps indicating original attachment to another object, possibly handle of cauldron. Or, perhaps more likely, they represent casting flaws.

#### *Discussion*

The Greek Geometric period (ca. 900–700 BCE) is named after a style of pottery decoration characterized by painted geometric motifs: circles and semicircles, check patterns, triangles, meanders, zigzags, chevrons, and so forth. Many of the bronze figurines of the period exhibit a similar geometric character in the reduction of the body into recognizable shapes and in their two-dimensional conception.

The Snite horse figurine represents an important type among Greek Geometric bronzes: small animal votives that were made in large numbers from the middle to the end of the eighth





century BCE. Bronze figurines are seldom found in a secular context. Rather they appear in Panhellenic sanctuaries, particularly at Delphi and Olympia, where large caches of them have been uncovered. At Olympia, figurines—both terracotta and bronze—form by far the most common type of offering. Many were found in what may be the remains of the great ash altar to Zeus described by Pausanias, a traveler of the second century CE.<sup>1</sup> These would have been dedicated by local worshippers, travelers visiting the sanctuary, and contestants in athletic games. Human-shaped figurines, whether male or female, may represent either deity or dedicator; bulls, goats, stags, and other animals may serve as substitutes for real sacrifices; and horses may allude to the status of the wealthier votaries. The horse, as a possession confined to members of the aristocracy, was a marker of class distinction in Greek society. In the second half of the eighth century, the number of bronze horses dedicated at Olympia (as well as at Delphi and elsewhere) increased significantly, possibly indicating heightened involvement of the upper class. At the same time, the general quality and quantity of votives increased, and elaborate and expensive new dedications appeared, most importantly bronze tripod cauldrons. Bronze horse figurines then served not only as independent votives but often as decorative attachments on the rims or ring-handles of these cauldrons.

Though they are similar in basic conception and structure, stylistic variations among the horse figurines at Olympia have allowed the identification of several regional types. The majority of the bronze horses come from the Peloponnese, the large southern peninsula of Greece: about two-thirds appear to be from the area around Olympia, while the main non-local types are from the Argolid (main city: Argos) and Laconia (main city: Sparta), with a smaller number coming from the Corinthia (main city: Corinth).<sup>2</sup> Horses from the Sanctuary of Hera at Argos are characterized by long legs, a tall neck with a flattened mane, and a horizontal muzzle. Hocks and fetlocks are marked on the best pieces, and the modeling throughout is rounded and



three dimensional. Laconian-style bronze horses from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta resemble the Argive type in their tall legs and truly three-dimensional body, but the neck and body are shorter. Horses from Corinth are more heavily hammered and therefore more two-dimensional in appearance. The only parts with volume are the cylindrical body and head. The legs and broad, curved neck are hammered flat.

The variety of regional styles of the small bronze horses found at Olympia and Delphi suggests that its festivals attracted participants from all over the Peloponnese. At Olympia, it seems that such figurines were mainly fashioned on-site.<sup>3</sup> The range and quantity of figurines could easily have been produced in simple temporary kilns erected by a few itinerant craftsmen for short festival periods. Requirements for casting small figurines are few: a metal supply (either locally available or brought to the site), a simple mud-brick furnace, and tools. Pouring equipment (crucibles or channels) could have been brought to the site or cut into the ground. Simple finishing tools could have been transported easily. Most of the figurines were simple and could quickly have been made in quantity. In the simplest kind of bronze casting, a wax figurine is carved and covered with clay, the wax melted out, the bronze poured in, and the clay mantle broken off. Such figurines were probably produced at Olympia by local individuals and by itinerants from the major metalworking centers: Corinth, Argos, and especially Sparta.

While many bronze horse statuettes were cast in one piece with a solid or openwork plinth, the Snite piece, like most of the horses found at Olympia, has no base but rests squarely on its own feet. The style of the Notre Dame statuette is similar to that of Laconian horse figurines found at Olympia and dating to the second or third quarter of the eighth century BCE.<sup>4</sup> It may well have been made at a workshop at Olympia by Spartans or under Laconian influence sometime before 700 BCE, by which time Laconian influences at Olympia had waned.



1. Paus. 5.8.8–11.

2. Herrmann 1964 effectively distinguished the stylistic characteristics of Corinthian, Argive, and Laconian geometric bronze animals. See also Heilmeyer 1979 and Zimmermann 1989.

3. This assumption is based on the evidence of finds of miscastings and casting debris: see Heilmeyer 1969, esp. fig. 2, the head of a miscast horse. See also Heilmeyer 1979, 52–53; Born and Moustaka 1982; and Heilmeyer, Zimmer, and Schneider 1987.

4. Heilmeyer recognized that types similar to the Snite horse found at Olympia were local products made under Laconian influence: see Heilmeyer 1979, 242, pl. 73, nos. 560–61. For additional Laconian examples, see Zimmermann 1989, pls. 34–38; and Herrmann 1964, 20–24, figs. 1–4.

#### *Comparanda*

Heilmeyer 1979, pl. 73, nos. 560–61.

Kozloff 1981, 88–89, no. 71.

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*A.M.B.*







### **Horse Bit with Sphinx Cheek Plates**

Near Eastern, Luristan, 800–600 BCE

Bronze

Left cheek plate: H. 0.135 m, W. 0.124 m; Right cheek plate: H. 0.136 m, W. 0.120 m; Bit: L. 0.209 m, D. 0.014 m; Scroll: D. 0.030 m

Gift of Mr. J. W. Gillon

1970.010.010

#### *Description*

Solid-cast horse bit and cheek plates. Complete except for one missing curl of hair on sphinx face of left cheek plate, apparently result of casting flaw rather than break. Some weathering over entire surface. Shiny dark brown patina.

Cheek plates carry nearly identical representations of mythical creatures, quadrupeds with grotesque semi-human head, segmented feet and tail of lion, and wings: sphinxes of Luristan type, beardless and presumably female. Each wears horned headdress, indicating divine status. Facial features formed by bulbous protrusions: wide cheeks, prominent nose, protruding mouth and chin, large circular eyes. Eyebrows formed by V-shaped ridge centered on bridge of nose and incised lines to represent hair. Pair of curling sidelocks of hair on either side of face, though one now missing from left cheekpiece. Wings rise from shoulders and back, feathers suggested by inscribed lines. Long, thin lion's tail touches ground and ends in curl. Thin metal bar forms ground line on which each sphinx stands.

Cheek plates cast with exterior in relief, possibly in closed molds. Inner side slightly hollowed, with small lip at outer edge. Each plate has two loops on inside (one at hip, another at back of head) for attachment to horse bridle. Small prong, probably goad, appears on either side of circular hole where bit passes through cheek plate. Bit takes form of cylindrical bar with hammered open scroll at each end, spiraling in opposite directions. Reins attached through open center of each scroll.

#### *Discussion*

This type of cheek plate is a common form of horse trapping from Luristan, a region in western Iran. In general, Luristan horse bits are characterized by cast figured cheekpieces and by a rigid bit (as opposed to a snaffle bit of two joining pieces) consisting of a bar whose ends spiral in opposite directions. Such cheekpieces seem originally to have developed in Iran,







and more examples survive from Luristan than from any other area. The majority of the types of Luristan cheek plates are animals, both real and fantastic. While not as common as horses, winged sphinxes often appear on the cheekpieces, and some closely resemble the Snite examples in overall form and detail.<sup>1</sup>

The Snite piece can be compared to similar representations of horse trappings on Assyrian reliefs from the time of Sennacherib (704–681 BCE)<sup>2</sup> and to actual examples of Assyrian adaptations of Luristan bits and cheek plates found at Nimrud, Lindos, and Samos.<sup>3</sup> Provenanced original Luristan horse trappings, however, are extremely rare: not a single Luristan object, including horse pieces and trappings, has been excavated anywhere in the Near East outside of Luristan. Moreover, cheekpieces have been excavated at only four sites within Luristan, and only one of these carries figures.<sup>4</sup> Most examples reported to be Luristan horse trappings, including the Snite piece, are without known provenance, coming as they do from private collections or dealers.<sup>5</sup>

It is not certain whether Luristan horse bits were manufactured for practical use or only for funerary purposes. Unconfirmed reports by local inhabitants claim that bits were found in graves, placed under the heads of the deceased. Others suggest that they accompanied horses that were buried together with humans.<sup>6</sup> Near Eastern horse trappings found in Greece, often decorated with typical Near Eastern motifs, were certainly not employed by the Greeks for practical purposes, appearing only as dedications in sanctuaries. However, several Luristan examples seem to show wear, and almost all have prongs that could have been used as goads, suggesting that they were of practical as well as funerary use.

The Luristan bronze at the Snite Museum is the kind of easily portable object that helped to inspire a renaissance in Greek art in the late eighth and seventh centuries BCE. Renewed contacts with the Near East after an extended cultural “Dark Age” inspired new mythical



narratives, a new repertory of artistic representation, and new techniques for the reproduction of figures and designs. Near Eastern motifs so dominated Greek art of the time that the seventh century BCE in Greece has been designated the “Orientalizing Period” by modern scholars. The foreign motifs and styles were imported by traders, travelers, and mercenaries in the form of small bronzes, ivory carvings, furniture revetments, and so on, and were often presented as dedications in the sanctuaries at Samos, Olympia, and Delphi. They were then reproduced through the new technology of terracotta molds (also a Near Eastern import) or adapted to Greek painted pottery and disseminated throughout the Greek world. Representations of snakes, lions, griffins, and other fantastical creatures were directly borrowed from the Near East and quickly adapted to the specific decorative and religious requirements of the Greeks. Even the sphinx, an Egyptian invention, was adopted by the Greeks in its Near Eastern form (that represented on the Snite bronze): winged and standing, with a frontal face and profile body. Similarly, when sphinxes, lions, and other animals first appeared in Greek art, they were shown not in the specifically narrative contexts so characteristic of later Greek art but in the repetitive processions of Near Eastern tradition or as symbols. Near Eastern imports similar to the Snite’s Luristan horse bit made a profound and permanent impact on the character of Greek art and culture.

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1. Examples, including some variants, are Padgett 2004, 110–11, no. 2, identified as a human-headed bull (Princeton University Art Museum); Moorey 1971, pls. 20–21, nos. 125–26 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford); Potratz 1966, 148–49, figs. 63a–d and pl. 57, nos. 140a–b; Carter 1957, 117, pl. 25b (Metropolitan Museum of Art); Bussagli 1956, 83, no. 112 (Louvre); Gadd 1941–50, 58–59, pl. 25b (British Museum); Carless 1965, 29, figs. 5–6 (Cincinnati Museum of Art); and Buhl 1968, no. 184 (National Museum, Copenhagen).

2. For example, see Porada 1965, pl. 21 (British Museum).

3. These cheekpieces are in the more common form of a horse. See Herrmann 1968, 23, figs. 17, 19; Calmeyer 1969, 114; and Jantzen 1972, 64, pl. 61, here called North Syrian but identified as Assyrian by Muscarella in his review (Muscarella 1973, 236).



4. Muscarella 1988, 155–56, provides a list of the excavated sites.

5. For this reason, the evidence can often be problematic, as there is a great variety of forms and styles and a lack of excavated material. One must consider the possibility of forgeries or of such objects having been plundered from somewhere other than Luristan. See Muscarella 1988, 86–91, nos. 147–49, and 160–63, nos. 253–54; and Muscarella 2000, 111–15, 414. The same is true of objects other than horse trappings reported to be from Luristan.

6. See Muscarella 1988, 156–57, for a summary of the scholarship concerning this debate; also Moorey 1971, 107.

#### *Comparanda*

Bussagli 1956, 83, no. 112, pl. 10; 84, no. 115, pl. 10.

Carter 1957, 117, pl. 25b.

Muscarella 1988, 164, no. 256.

Padgett 2004, 110–11, no. 2.

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*A.M.B.*





### **Cup-skyphos with Women Harvesting Fruit**

Greek, Attica, 480–450 BCE, attributed to the Haimon Group

Ceramic

H. 0.110 m; Diam. 0.189 m, 0.269 m (with handles)

Gift of Mr. Paul Manheim

1963.018

#### *Description*

Black-figured cup-skyphos. Entire body intact and in excellent condition. Interior of hemispherical bowl black except for thin red band at rounded lip. Two canted horseshoe handles. Horizontal pictorial field contains identical black-figured scene on both sides: long-branched central tree symmetrically framed by standing woman and basket on either side. Women's arms extend toward round objects hanging from branches. Two large palmettes flank scene at handles. Ground line indicated by thick black line. Body rests on wide ring foot surmounted by low black fillet with thin red line at top and bottom. Top surface of foot black, face red with black band at bottom. Underside of foot decorated with concentric black circles and central dot.

#### *Discussion*

The cup-skyphos was a popular type of drinking vessel in ancient Greece. Its shape is a composite of two more standard shapes, combining the sturdy foot and canted horseshoe handles of the cup, or kylix, with the deep bowl of the skyphos.

The intricate decoration of the Snite cup-skyphos was achieved through a firing technique that produced the red and black color scheme so distinctive of painted Greek pottery. After the pot had been thrown on a wheel and allowed to dry, the painter applied a gloss to those areas of the vessel intended to appear black<sup>1</sup>—in this case, the figural decoration and most of the body. This liquid gloss was made not from paint or other pigment but from the same clay as the vessel. Special additives such as potassium or iron oxides caused it to turn black during the complex firing process. Greek vessels were fired in a wood-burning kiln in which the oxygen supply could be closely regulated. First, an oxidizing (well-ventilated) atmosphere was introduced in the





firing chamber, turning the whole pot red, including the gloss. A reducing (smoky) atmosphere then turned the glossed part of the vessel black. The unglossed parts of the vase remained red. Success with this process required great precision in timing the reducing stage, and the slightest miscalculation could result in imperfect coloration (note the slightly mottled color of the baskets).

Two major painting techniques emerged from this firing process. The earliest, black-figured, was invented sometime around 700 BCE and was the technique employed in the Snite cup-skyphos. Here the gloss was used for the figural decoration, which, after firing, appeared as black silhouettes on a red background.<sup>2</sup> All interior details of the figures, such as folds in the clothing or facial features, were then incised with a sharp point, or stylus, scraping away the black gloss and exposing the red clay beneath.

The application of the gloss in a second technique, called red-figured and invented around 520 BCE, is a reversal of the black-figured. In this method, the background (not the figures themselves) received the gloss. Thus, once fired, the background appeared black and the figures red. One of the advantages of red-figured was that the details of the figures no longer had to be incised with a stylus but rather could be painted on with a brush before firing. This resulted in more fluidity in the linear detail and allowed the painter to vary the intensity of color by diluting the gloss.

The black-figured Snite cup-skyphos depicts two identical scenes of women harvesting fruit (apples or quince?) from a tree with vine-like branches. In fifth-century-BCE Greece, vase painters became increasingly interested in genre scenes, or scenes of everyday life. Women at their work were an especially common theme of this period. Such scenes, however, were almost always set indoors and depicted women performing domestic chores such as spinning, weaving, and caring for children. These activities reflected the primary concerns of Greek women for most



of their lives. In fact, respectable women from Athens (where this cup-skyphos was likely made) were largely confined to the home, rarely leaving except in the company of a male relative and during religious festivals.

Two notable genre scenes in which women are represented outdoors include harvesting scenes, as on the Snite cup-skyphos, and fountain-house scenes. Both seem to contradict what we know of women's lives in ancient times. In fountain-house scenes, women gather, unaccompanied, in a public setting. It is often thought that they are either slaves, very poor, or enjoying some temporary freedom afforded them by a religious occasion. Women depicted in labor-intensive outdoor activities, as on the Snite cup-skyphos, are probably working on family property, thus avoiding the social taboo of public appearance. However, the original meaning might have been altogether different. Perhaps, for instance, such scenes depict humorous reversals of gender roles, jokes now lost on the modern viewer.

Unlike the larger masterpieces of black-figured technique, this cup-skyphos reveals few incised details in the figural silhouettes. Only a few folds of the himation, or tunic, and minimal facial features are articulated, often with sloppily executed incisions. Other features, such as the hands, are rendered very schematically or not at all.

By the fifth century BCE, the red-figured technique of vase painting had largely superseded the black-figured as the premier painting style in Athens.<sup>3</sup> Several painters continued to use the black-figured style well into the fifth century BCE, but almost all of them worked exclusively with smaller pots. One of these painters, called the Haimon Painter, is known to have worked in Athens during the second quarter of the fifth century BCE. His work is characterized by repetitive scenes with little or no incision and is mostly found on skyphoi and lekythoi, both of which were produced in mass quantities in Athens at this time. Two cup-skyphoi attributed to the manner of the Haimon Painter (now in Geneva, Switzerland, and Nauplion, Greece) are painted with harvest scenes very similar to those of the Snite piece.





1. The gloss is sometimes (inaccurately) called a glaze. Boardman 2001, 282.
2. The specific color of the background depends on the makeup of the clay, which can differ significantly from region to region. Athenian clay turns a reddish orange when fired. This color was sometimes modified by the application of a thin slip, which produced a deeper red after firing. Boardman 2001, 283.
3. Exceptions are the Panathenaic amphorae (prize vessels filled with oil and given to athletic victors), which were painted in the black-figured style as late as the second century BCE. In this instance, the older black-figured technique was continued for the sake of tradition. Folsom 1975, 128.

#### *Comparanda*

Beazley 1956, 566, no. 620 (Archaeological Museum, Nauplion, 529).

Bruckner 1962, pl. 67.5 (Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, H235 1889).

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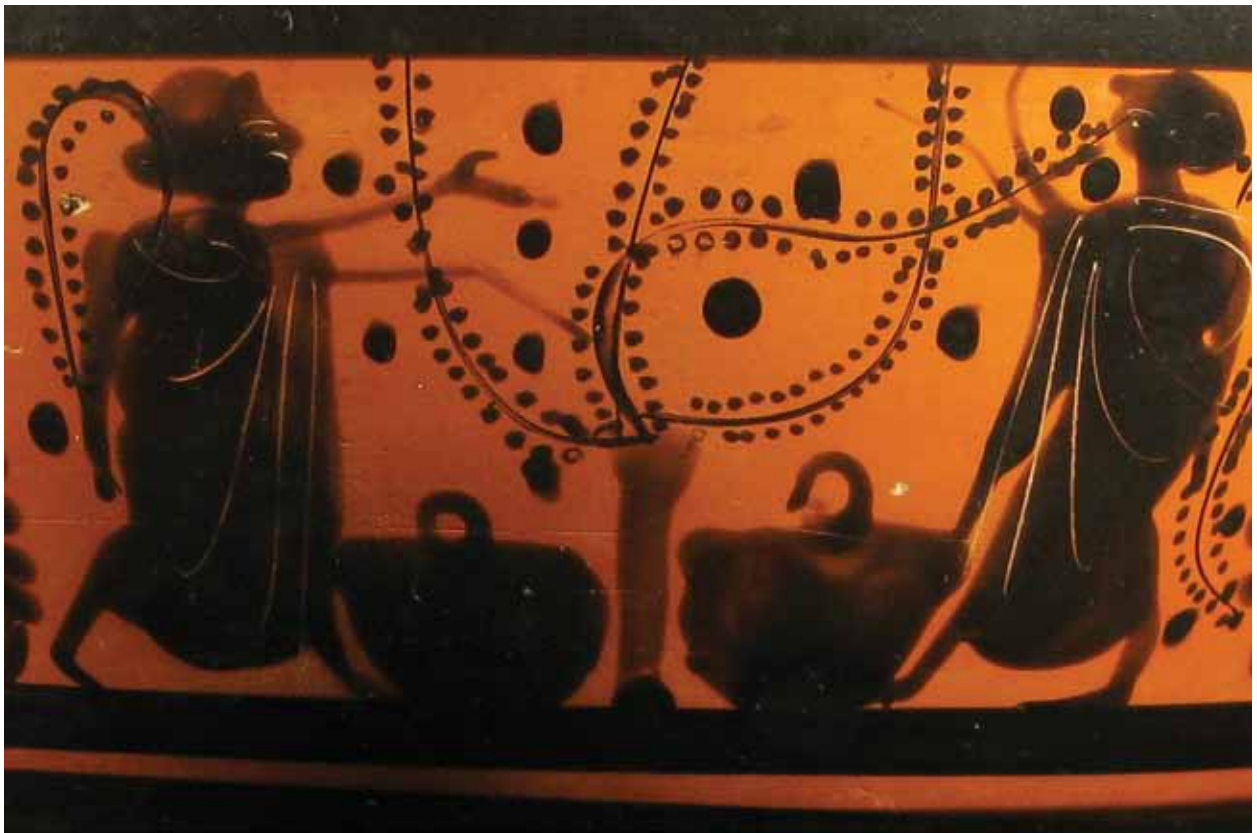
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### **Terracotta Lekythos**

Greek, Attica, ca. 470–450 BCE,

Ceramic

H. 0.199 m, Diam. 0.069 m (at shoulder)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Goodman

1964.004.015

#### *Description*

Cylinder lekythos. Light-buff colored clay, worn on all surfaces, pitted on shoulder, with deep scratches on body. Black calyx-shaped mouth with traces of red pigment on top surface. Tall, concave neck with traces of red pigment; nearly horizontal shoulder. Irregular black tongue pattern at base of neck; black rays on shoulder. Single strap handle with black gloss on outer surface and sides, red on underside. Single black horizontal stripe at top of body above tall pictorial field (now largely blank) with streaked, whitish ground and several small specks of black gloss. Second thin black stripe appears at bottom of pictorial field. Lower part of body is black and tapers sharply to foot. Two-degree disk foot concave above and convex below (torus); black gloss and some added red pigment.

#### *Discussion*

Greek vases were produced in standard shapes designed for the distribution, consumption, transport, and storage of both liquids and solids. Unique in ancient Greek pottery was the lekythos, a shape ideally suited for storing and dispensing perfumed oils or unguents. The lekythos has a thin (and sometimes long) neck and small aperture to ensure that the costly oils flowed slowly and evenly out of the vessel. The wide, cuplike mouth served to catch the liquid in a small pool in which a finger could be dipped. Unused oil could then run safely back into the vessel when it was placed upright. Many lekythoi were small in size, designed to carry only a little oil. Larger lekythoi, like some perfume bottles today, were sometimes constructed with false inner walls, making the amount of liquid the vessels could contain much smaller than suggested by their outer appearance. Lekythoi can be roughly dated according to their shape,





which changed significantly over the centuries. The Snite lekythos is of the dominant fifth-century-BCE type, the cylinder lekythos, named for the almost cylindrical shape of its body.

Scented oils were used in a wide variety of everyday activities in ancient Greece, including bathing and exercising, making the lekythos a ubiquitous vessel in daily life. The lekythos is best known, however, for its role in funerary rites. In ancient Greece, the body of the deceased was washed and anointed with perfumed oils for its ceremonial laying out, or *prothesis*. At the gravesite, mourners also poured out oils as a liquid sacrifice (libation) and placed the lekythoi in or near the tomb as grave-offerings. Ancient Greek vase paintings that depict funerary scenes often show lekythoi resting on grave markers, and archaeological excavations have confirmed this practice. Because of its prominent role in Greek funerary rituals, the shape of the lekythos itself came to signify death and burial. In fifth- and fourth-century-BCE Athens, large stone replicas and stone relief sculptures of lekythoi were used as grave markers (see p. 29).

Although the decoration of the widest part of the body, the pictorial field, of the Snite lekythos is no longer preserved, streaks of a whitish substance on the surface are probably the remains of a painting technique called white-ground. Found primarily on lekythoi, white-ground paintings were prepared by adding a slip of specially prepared clay to the pictorial field before firing. This produced a white background on which black-figured or polychrome decoration was applied. Unlike the gloss used in black-figured and red-figured techniques, the slip used for white-ground decoration is highly perishable and flakes off easily. It and the decoration it carried are often very poorly preserved. Several black flakes still adhering to the surface of the Snite lekythos indicate that this white-ground lekythos carried black-figured decoration. The use of black figures on a white background began in the late sixth century BCE and was abandoned in Greece around the middle of the fifth century BCE.<sup>1</sup>

Although the original composition of the pictorial field is impossible to reconstruct, the



size, shape, added red pigment, and neck decoration of the Snite lekythos are consistent with a group of lekythoi associated with Athenian workshops of the second quarter of the fifth century BCE. A lekythos from the Athenian agora is very similar in shape and neck decoration. As with the Snite lekythos, most of the color of the pictorial field on that example has worn off, though a small section of a black ivy pattern bounded by latticework remains. Several better-preserved lekythoi now in Copenhagen are also very similar to the Snite lekythos in shape and neck decoration. Some are decorated with the same ivy-latticework patterns observed in the Athenian lekythos, while others display a palmette motif bordered by meanders.<sup>2</sup>

These lekythoi are all attributed to the Beldam workshop, which produced massive quantities of small white-ground lekythoi from around 470 to 450 BCE.<sup>3</sup> Called pattern lekythoi, these vessels followed a standard scheme of palmette or ivy designs in the pictorial field. Pattern lekythoi from the Beldam workshop were exported in large quantities to other Greek cities such as Corinth, where many examples of Attic imports and local imitations have been discovered in fifth-century-BCE tombs.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Oakley 2004, 6–7.

2. Blinkenberg and Johansen 1924, nos. 15–18. Lekythos no. 15 (see *comparanda*) is especially close to the Snite lekythos in shape.

3. Haspels 1936, 170–91.

4. Graves 340 and 343 from the North Cemetery produced examples very similar to the Snite lekythos (Blegen 1964, Blegen 1964, pl. 52, grave 340 no. 6; pl. 54, grave 343 no. 4).

#### *Comparanda*

Blegen 1964, pl. 52, grave 340 no. 6 (Corinth Excavations [North Cemetery] T2800); pl. 54, grave 343 no. 4 (Corinth Excavations [North Cemetery] T1167).



Boulter 1953, pl. 28, no. 21 (Athenian Agora P 21362).

Blinkenberg and Johansen 1924-, pl. 112, no. 15 (Musée National, Copenhagen, inv. no. ABc 1031).

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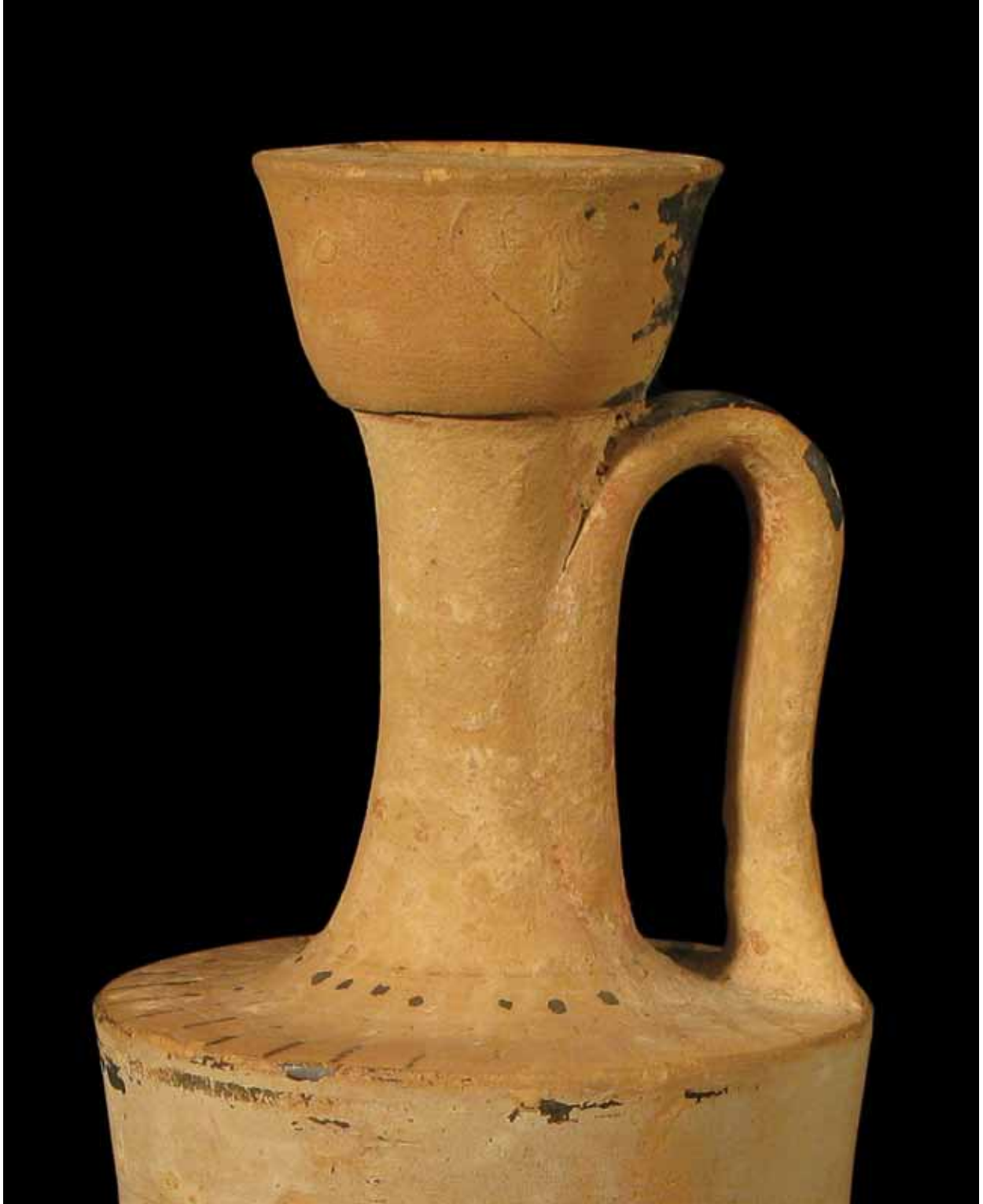
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*G.P.H.*







**Marble Lekythos Gravemarker Depicting “Leave Taking”**

Greek, Attica, 4th century BCE

Marble

H. 0.365 m (center), 0.0338 m (outside edge); W. 0.238 m (bottom), 0.290 m (top); D.

0.071 m (bottom), 0.083 m (top)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1987.035.040

*Description*

Marble relief with convex profile. Relief side covered almost entirely with light brown patina. Where patina is missing, identical tool marks indicate original surface and patina chiseled away. Original base, top, and back missing, but vestiges of narrow neck at preserved top. Relief figures intact, though face of seated figure worn. Scratches and nicks everywhere, concentrated on left side of relief.

Three figures—two females on left, one male on right—all carved in low relief. Woman on far left seated on a *klismos*, or low seat; second stands in background with bowed head. Bodies of both heavily draped in himations, hair covered with veil and fillet. Both barefoot. Seated woman extends right hand to grasp that of male figure. Male similarly draped. Carved details of male figure well preserved, including small circular indentations indicating wavy hair and beard.

*Discussion*

In its present condition, with its flat back and roughly rectangular shape, this piece resembles a carved stele. The profile of its sculpted surface, however, which is convex both horizontally and vertically, suggests something very different, and its surface treatment indicates that the form of the monument was altered subsequent to its original use: wherever the surface is finely smoothed, the marble’s tan patina (acquired by long exposure to the elements) is present; however, along its two vertical edges, its upper edge, and its back, the patina is missing and the surface is very roughly worked, often preserving deep grooves left by a kind of claw chisel or multiple point. Though fragmentary, the preserved form of the marble is consistent with that of carved lekythoi (for the shape, see p. 23), in its convexly curved body, relief figures, and vestigial remains of a narrow neck.





From the middle of the sixth century to the end of the fifth century BCE, Attic graves were increasingly furnished with white-ground lekythoi, terracotta perfume jugs with round feet, cylindrical bodies, long thin necks, flaring lips, and polychrome paintings on backgrounds of white slip. They became the most popular grave gifts in Attica. Archaeological evidence suggests that these lekythoi were not only used as simple grave goods, deposited in or on the grave, but also burned on funeral pyres.

From about 430 BCE, the traditionally terracotta lekythos began to be made in marble, and near the end of the fifth century BCE, the production of white-ground lekythoi came to a halt. Terracotta vessels continued to be used in graves as offerings, but the durability of marble made the new lekythoi ideal as grave markers, in the tradition of marble relief stelai that had stood on Attic graves since at least the early sixth century BCE. Like stelai, these marble lekythoi regularly bore figures in low relief. Without question, the Snite lekythos originally stood on a grave, but the absence of an identifying inscription above any of the figures in the relief indicates that it did not serve as the principal marker for its grave but as a secondary monument in a larger funerary grouping. This subsidiary use of marble lekythoi became much more common after 350 BCE and might suggest a general date for the Snite piece. The practice of producing marble grave reliefs continued into the later fourth century BCE, until Demetrios Poliorketes, the governor of Athens from 317 to 307 BCE, put an end to these lavish displays with a sumptuary decree.

The low-relief scene on the front of the Snite piece depicts three figures positioned on a clearly delineated ground line. The figures are separated into two distinct groups: a standing female and a seated female on the left, and a standing male on the right, facing the others. The two groups are connected by a handshake (*dexiosis*) between the man and the seated woman. Here is an example of the most common type of representation found on marble lekythoi of



Attica: a scene of “leave taking,” in which the living bid farewell to the recently deceased or, perhaps, two parties separated by death are reunited.

In this type of scene, the distinction between the living and the dead is ambiguous. Both wear similar clothing and behave in familiar ways. Only when an inscribed label is preserved can the figure of the deceased be identified with certainty, though it can be assumed that it is a foreground figure. Often the seated figure is identified as the deceased, but not always. Thus, on the Snite piece, either the seated woman or the standing man (her husband?) might represent the deceased. In fact, the strict omission of any distinguishing features between living and dead suggests the intentional blurring of lines between the two states of being. The handshake further stresses the link between the two by physically binding them.

The relief scene on the Snite lekythos reflects basic human concerns about death and transition, and seems to acknowledge both the facts of death and the need for reassurance. Its “leave taking” was perhaps intended as assurance of the successful transition from life to death: a loved one has departed this world but continues to exist in the hearts and minds of those left behind.

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*Comparanda*

Boardman 1995, fig. 131.

Comstock and Vermeule 1976, 50, fig. 73 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 96.700).

Friis Johansen 1951, fig. 79.

Ridgway 1997, pl. 41.



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*E.C.K.*

*M.A.Y.*







### **South Daunian Funnel Krater**

Italian, Daunia, 425–375 BCE

Ceramic

H. 0.215 m, 0.150 m (body); Diam. 0.217 m (rim), 0.215 m (body)

Gift of American National Bank, South Bend

1980.071

#### *Description*

Bichrome matt-painted ware vessel. Broad funnel rim and globular body with four handles on belly. Intact except for three nicks on lip. Small patches of accretion on exterior. Orange brown encrustation below lip may be corroded iron. Interior heavily encrusted. Rim and body meet at abrupt angle. Plain base, slightly concave. Opposed pair of vertical loop handles and similarly opposed pair of rectangular loop handles spring from just above belly. Structure of entire vessel slightly irregular, indicating it was hand-built or potted on low-speed wheel.

Painting predominantly dark brown slip with some reddish brown accents. Tan ground appears unslipped, perhaps prepared by wiping with damp cloth or finger. Glossy patches on handles and base suggest light burnishing. Dull tan fabric, fine with heavy content of silver mica flecks and some bronze-colored flecks.

Major exterior decorative zone extends from top of shoulder to belly, bordered at top and bottom by three horizontal lines. It carries pairs of vertical lines that alternatively frame individual handles and single painted rosettes. Diagonal cross painted between attachments for each of two loop handles. Wavy painted line encircles belly of pot, below which are three pairs of crossed diagonal lines. Loop handles decorated with simple painted lines; tab handles painted solid reddish brown. Funnel neck unpainted on exterior, but inside decorated with four-pointed star design in dark brown and reddish brown paint. Star formed by four tangent semicircles open at lip of funnel.

#### *Discussion*

No specific documentation for the origin of this pot exists, but its decoration is consistent with that of Daunian ware, one of several regional varieties of indigenous South Italian matt-painted pottery. Daunia lies in the Tavoliere valley in northern Apulia, a territory far south on the Adriatic coast of Italy. Its form—that of a funnel krater, a type produced from the sixth through





the early third centuries BCE<sup>1</sup>—and its painting style suggest more specifically that it was made in the region of Canosa sometime in the last quarter of the fifth century BCE or the first quarter of the fourth century BCE.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after that time, a curvilinear monochrome vegetal scheme replaced the traditional Daunian bichrome geometric style.<sup>3</sup>

South Italian vessels have been extremely popular on the modern art market and thus were frequently excavated without their findspots being recorded. Archaeologists have, therefore, had few records of original context to help understand the chronology or function of funnel kraters. Fortunately, recent excavations are providing some answers.

South Italian matt-painted pottery seems to have been inspired originally by imported Mycenaean pottery of the twelfth and eleventh centuries BCE, but the bold geometric patterns of South Italy developed separately from the pottery of the Greek mainland and evolved into a distinctive regional style. Daunian pottery was widely exported around the Adriatic Sea from the eighth through the sixth centuries BCE and has been excavated as far away as coastal Slovenia and Croatia, as well as in the vicinities of Venice, Naples, and Arezzo. Beginning in the fifth century BCE, however, imported Greek pottery became more and more popular in these areas, and Daunian geometric vessels of that period ceased to be found outside their home territory.<sup>4</sup>

Greek pottery also became increasingly popular in Daunia, and from the fifth through the early third centuries BCE, Greek imports and their local imitations dominated the Daunian household. Old-fashioned handmade vessels like funnel kraters soon came to be employed exclusively for funerary purposes.<sup>5</sup> The Daunian funnel krater in the Snite was almost certainly created near the site of Canosa to meet the needs of local funerary ritual. The contrast between Greek and Daunian pottery decoration was great: the metallic black gloss slip of the Greeks versus the matt paint of the Daunians; the mythological and floral ornamentation of the Greeks versus the austere geometry of the Daunians. The traditional character of Daunian decoration



seems to have been intentionally exaggerated after Greek imports began to arrive, probably in order to emphasize the ancient and indigenous character of the local pottery. Perhaps Apulians believed that their native vessels, through their ancient associations, had apotropaic powers of guarding the deceased.<sup>6</sup> Whatever their exact meaning, late Daunian pots like the Snite's seem to have performed functions beyond the strictly utilitarian.

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1. Herring 1998, 100–107. Funnel kraters were produced in the period that Herring calls “Ofanto Subgeometric II,” commencing around 550 B.C.

2. de Juliis 1977, 38–71; Yntema 1990, 266–67.

3. Herring 1998, 105.

4. de Juliis 1977, 83–87; Yntema 1990, 266–67.

5. Herring 1998, 153–54.

6. Ibid. See also Small 1986, 315.

*Comparanda*

de Juliis 1977, type 25.

Nava 2001, no. 96 (Advanced Daunian II).

Pryce 1932, pl. 7, D.4 (Canosan Urn).

Yntema 1990, fig. 249 (South Daunian Subgeometric IIB).



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*P.N.S.*







## Female Figurines

### 1. Seated Athena (?)

Greek, late 6th century BCE

Terracotta

H. 0.130 m, W. 0.073 m, D. 0.066 m

Terracotta

AA2006.063

### *Description*

Hollow terracotta votive figurine. Female seated on high-backed chair without armrests and with winglike projections on each side at top. Feet rest on small block or stool, robe or veil covers head. Full-length dress or robe with traces of black lines, probably indicating fabric folds or vertically striped pattern. Hair arranged in tight curls over forehead. Thin calcified coating over most of surface, with traces of red paint on dress and chair.



### 2. Seated Demeter (?)

Roman, Cyprus, 2nd century CE

Terracotta

H. 0.094 m, W. 0.033 m, D. 0.042 m

Gift of Ms. Susetta Khayat

1962.003

### *Description*

Hollow terracotta votive figurine. Female seated on high-backed chair without armrests, hands resting palm-down on knees. Wears full-length dress and long veil that falls over shoulders. Hair parted in center. Upper edge of dress has traces of paint. Small amount of calcified material on left side of lower body and right side of head; otherwise, figure is well preserved.





## *Discussion*

These figurines are made of terracotta (fired clay), an inexpensive, easily obtainable material. Before being shaped, the clay was mixed with another substance, perhaps another type of clay and/or sand or grog that helped reduce shrinkage in the drying and firing process.<sup>1</sup> Clay is abundant in Greece, and it is sometimes possible for archaeologists to trace terracotta artifacts to their place of manufacture based on the content of local clay beds.<sup>2</sup>

Terracotta figurines could be modeled by hand, thrown on a wheel, or, like the Snite figurines, created in molds. The technique of molding clay developed in Greece around 600 BCE. The first step in the process was the creation of an archetype of wax or fired clay from which a clay mold was taken and fired. Wet clay was then pressed into the mold, completely filling it for a solid figure or forming a thin layer for a hollow figurine. The process of hollow molding allowed for more detail and made the firing process easier and faster.

Although the Snite figurines are profoundly different from monumental Greek sculpture in size, detail, and material (monumental sculpture was usually created in stone or bronze), they are similar in at least one significant aspect: both were considered *agalmata*, “pleasing gifts to the gods.” Large-scale sculpture was often appreciated for its artistic merit, but in the context of a religious environment it was also intended as an offering of labor to the gods. Similarly, figurines like the two at the Snite Museum were probably purchased with the intent of dedicating them at the sanctuary of a deity. The practice of offering an image of the goddess being supplicated was a widespread, long-lived ritual in the Greek and Roman worlds.

One of the interesting aspects of these two objects is that in spite of the many centuries separating their production, they are remarkably similar. Both figurines are terracotta, are hollow, are seated in high-backed chairs without armrests, and wear similar robes, including one that covers their heads. The most obvious differences between the two lie in the form of their



thrones and in their hairstyles. At its top, the back of the sixth-century-BCE Greek throne has distinctive projections, while the Roman throne is simple and straight-backed. Where visible in the front, the hair of the Greek figure consists of tightly wound curls arching over her face like a crown or headdress; the hair of the Roman figure is only vaguely articulated and parted in the middle. The hairstyle of each mirrors the fashion of the time and so indicates a certain degree of empathy between the person who dedicated it (or its maker) and the goddess. The ritual of votive dedication may have remained relatively constant over the centuries, but that ritual was visually connected—through specific reference to contemporary style and fashion—with the society performing it.

Images of seated veiled females were produced throughout the Greco-Roman period as dedications to a goddess, often Demeter, and it is possible that both Snite figurines belonged to her cult. However, the Greek figurine is similar to a type of late sixth-century statuette common in Attica and on the Acropolis in Athens: a woman thought to represent Athena, seated on a winged throne with her feet resting on a stool. The bodies of these Athena figures are indistinct beneath their robes, and their head and hair are covered, except in the front where an arched row of tight curls rests on the forehead. And like the Snite figurine, these statuettes are regularly hollow and open underneath, with a flat, unmolded back. It is possible that the Snite figurine is one of these Attic statuettes; or it may represent one of the many copies of this popular Attic model created in other Greek communities.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Nicholson 1965, 44.

2. Higgins 1969, 10.

3. Nicholson 1965, 50, 51; Higgins 1969, 72.





*Comparanda*

Mollard-Besque 1954, 59–60, fig. B389.

Morgan II 1935, 200, fig. 7; 204, figs. 10d and 10f.

Zanotti-Bianco 1937, 243, fig. 7; 245, fig. 8.

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C.L.G.

L.M.H.





### **Hooded Male Portrait**

Etruscan or Latin, 3rd century BCE (if ancient)

Terracotta

H. 0.280 m, W. 0.165 m (base), D. 0.135 m (base)

1962 Purchase Fund

1962.010

#### *Description*

Ceramic portrait head and neck of hooded male. Complete except for four breaks on edge of hood around face and small breaks on hair. Shiny dark stains on base and vertical edges of hood. Dots of white paint on hair and top of hood. Dark brown paint inside head on interior of face. Remarkable lack of accretions, particularly on interior of hollow base. Coarse red-brown clay with small black inclusions and silver mica. In breaks, reddish core visible.

Overall proportions of face tall and thin; oversized eyes and high arching eyebrows, long pointed nose, narrow mouth with full lips, small dimpled chin, indistinct cheekbones, narrow jaw. Facial features smooth, elongated, idealized. Eyes opened wide, but heavy lids droop over pupils. Iris and pupils indicated by incised circle around shallow dimple. Eyebrows rendered as sharp ridge above eye socket; no indication of hair. Crisply defined edges on both sides of nose from eyebrows to tip. Nose projects strongly, but nostrils undefined. Lips thick and pouting.

Face and front of hair rendered in the round until meeting hood at midline of ears. Back of head and hood flat, thus no appearance of full skull. Hair divided into two rows of crescent-shaped locks. Each lock articulated by one or two shallow grooves. Face perhaps formed by pressing slab of clay into mold, but some finer details like hair and pupils probably added later. Neck hollow and open at base, revealing that face and hood are joined from separate pieces. Smoothing of seam still apparent. Small striations on surface indicate face smoothed with damp cloth.

#### *Discussion*

This head is closely comparable to votive ceramic male and female heads made in Roman territories during the Hellenistic period. Many of these have been unearthed in Rome and its environs. Large numbers were recovered during the dredging of the Tiber river; others lack recorded findspots,<sup>1</sup> but recent archaeological investigations are clarifying their origins and





functions. The tradition of making these heads seems to have begun in the middle of the fourth century BCE in Latium and spread through Etruria and Campania as Romans expanded their control over the Italian peninsula.<sup>2</sup>

Ceramic heads like the Snite's often come from votive dumps, which probably represent the periodic ritual clearing of the clutter of gifts displayed in sanctuaries. They are often found together with terracotta body parts and small figurines of deities, votives associated with local divinities and therapeutic cults—the sort of offerings characteristic of the common people.<sup>3</sup> Such heads were supplied to the small rural and urban sanctuaries where they are normally found by workshops that mass-produced figurines and other terracotta objects using standard molds.<sup>4</sup> They certainly do not represent portraits of individuals—they are all nearly identical—but it has been suggested that the prototype for some of the faces was a posthumous portrait of Alexander the Great.<sup>5</sup> It is significant that the figure is veiled, for in Roman practice, lifting the toga over the head was a gesture indicating sacrifice to the gods.

There is, however, considerable circumstantial evidence that the Snite head is a modern imitation of this Hellenistic type. Its fabric and surface are not completely consistent with ancient Italian ceramics. Unlike the Roman antefixes on pp. 95 and 97 or the Daunian funnel krater on p. 35, the exterior and even the interior of this head are totally free of burial accretions. Furthermore, the head may have been deliberately spray-painted to give an impression of greater age: under magnification, the stains at the base and vertical edges of the hood appear to be composed of small, shiny globules of dark paint, rather than natural accretions. Similarly, the thick coat of matte brown paint in the hollow interior of the sculpture does not resemble normal ancient slips.

Nor are the features of the Snite head exactly consistent with standard Etruscan and Latin originals.<sup>6</sup> Head no. 501 in Pensabene 1980 probably represents the type being imitated. It has



similarly large eyes and incised pupils, arched brows, long nose, and pouting lips, but all of those features are exaggerated and attenuated on the Snite head. Similarly, the hair on the Snite head is rigidly patterned in comparison to the rougher, more tousled, more naturalistic rendering common in Hellenistic votives.

Finally, none of the ancient pieces from Pensabene's Italian collections are as well preserved or as sharply defined as the Snite head. These objects were mass-produced for votive use, and their details were blurred or lost as the molds became worn from repeated use.<sup>7</sup>

The origins of the Snite head are obscure. It was purchased in 1962 from an antiquities dealer in New York, and the only information on its provenance is that it was "unearthed in Italy." Without further information and without rigorous testing, it will be difficult to verify its authenticity.

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1. Pensabene et al. 1980, 5–8.

2. Steingräber 1980, 222, 226–27.

3. Ibid., 245.

4. Söderlind 2002, 309-343, 382-391

5. Pensabene et al. 1980, 191.

6. See *comparanda*.

7. Söderlind 2002 traces several generations of blurred molds taken from finished heads.

*Comparanda*

Pensabene 2001, nos. 104 and 123.

Pensabene et al. 1980, nos. 447, 453, and 501 ("Veiled masculine head" type, nos. 446–526).



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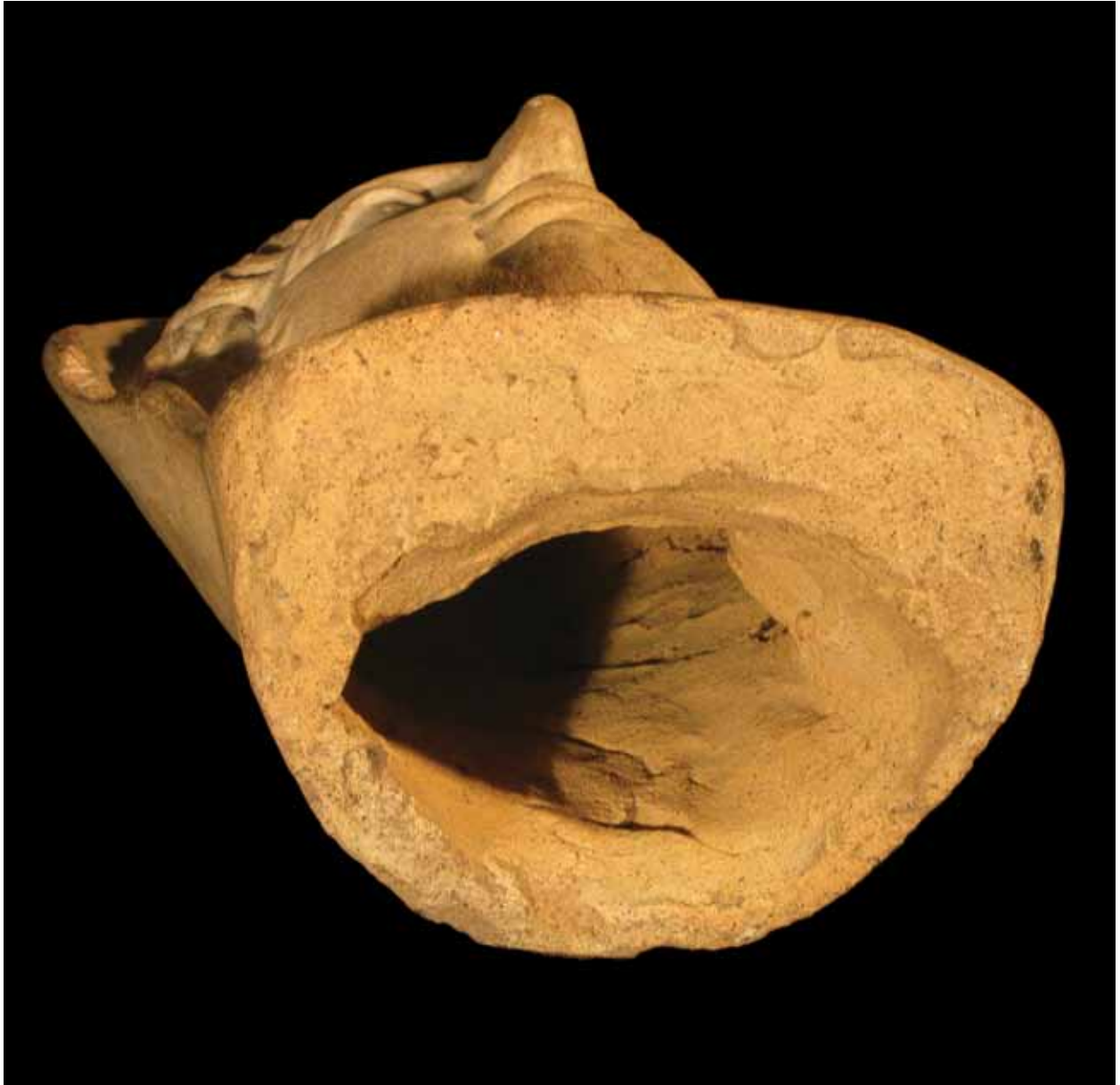
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*P.N.S.*









### **Small Female Head**

Hellenistic, Alexandria, 3rd or 2nd century BCE

White marble

H. 0.131 m, L. 0.118 m, W. 0.125 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1968.072.004

#### *Description*

Small marble female head, extremely well preserved. Some areas of damage, most noticeably tip of nose (missing) and pocks on forehead and chin. Broken off at top of neck, just below level of chin. Back of head flat and only roughly finished.

Highly idealized. Full, rounded face and heavy features. Wavy hair parted in center and pulled loosely around sides of head toward back, covering tops of ears. Diadem or fillet holds hair in place. Single lock of hair curls down against face in front of each ear. Hair in front of diadem deeply carved in thick waves, which dominate forehead. Behind diadem on top of head locks carved in low relief. Diadem flat, undecorated band that tapers as it approaches ears; slight ridge along center. Details of face finely finished. Eyebrows articulated by ridge of brow above each eye. Eyes almond shaped and both upper and lower eyelids represented. No pupils indicated. Line of each brow parallels arch of upper eyelid and descends to articulate edge of nose bridge. Lips full and shapely; chin protrudes slightly. Modeling creates shadows that define features, including articulation of muscles at corners of mouth and outline of cheeks. Back of head roughly worked (visible chisel marks) to flat, vertical surface, most likely for placement against wall for display.

#### *Discussion*

The formal characteristics of this female head are comparable to Hellenistic sculpture of the third and second centuries BCE from Alexandria. Sculpture of this period was often influenced by images of the royal figures who ruled the various kingdoms of the Hellenistic Period (323–30 BCE). After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, Egypt was turned over to the Ptolemies, people of Macedonian lineage, who governed there until it became a Roman province in 30 BCE. Alexandria was the capital and political center of Hellenistic Egypt,



but culturally it remained separate from the rest of the nation. Its population was mainly Greek and Macedonian and engaged in Greek affairs. This is reflected in its sculpture, which includes an entire series of Ptolemaic portraits of purely Greek nature, made for use by Greeks.<sup>1</sup> While much of Greek sculpture survives only in Roman copies, a number of Greek original portraits of Hellenistic rulers are known from Egypt and Asia Minor. Depictions of Hellenistic kings and queens of Egypt are often accompanied by Greek royal attributes; because they were considered deities in Egyptian culture, their royalty can also be indicated by divine attributes.

In fact, the Ptolemaic kingdom offers the largest extant body of small-scale portraits from the Hellenistic period, many of Alexandrian provenance. A few have diadems or crowns or other attributes, including individualized features that can be compared to royal coin types, that suggest royalty; but others—especially female images—are hard to identify as rulers. One reason is that images of Ptolemaic queens are usually created with idealized features; another is that, unlike the kings, they are rarely accompanied by anything from the Greek repertoire of divinizing attributes. Divinity can also be indicated by purely Egyptian attributes, usually of Isis, but apart from her hairstyle (which women other than queens could also wear), her attributes are rarely found in Ptolemaic royal portraits of Greek style.

The character of the queens expressed in their official portraiture was naturally reflected in nonroyal images, further complicating the task of identification. Women other than queens could also wear diadems in their portraits and could be carved with the idealized features of queens or goddesses. The Snite head resembles portraits of Berenike II (a Ptolemaic queen and wife of Ptolemy III Euergetes I, who ruled from 246 to 222 BCE) and nonroyal portraits based on hers in its flat diadem, full face, large classical nose, and almond-shaped eyes.<sup>2</sup>

Most smaller than life-size portraits were made not for the king or royal court but for private groups or individuals. The fine quality and material of the Snite head suggest that it



was intended for the upper class.<sup>3</sup> These small-scale portraits became popular in the Hellenistic period and continued to be so in the private sphere throughout Roman Imperial times, when they often appeared as adornment for the private apartments or atria of lavish Roman villas. Their contexts and functions in the Hellenistic period are less certain, but it has been suggested that those small sculptures that may be identified as kings or queens were private dedications in sanctuaries, or in smaller shrines in public places. Arsinoe II, for example, the predecessor of Berenike II, was worshipped as a goddess in many parts of the Greek world, including in the Arsinoeion in Alexandria. Similarly, a number of small Ptolemaic heads of Alexander the Great are undoubtedly connected with the central cult of Alexander set up by Ptolemy I in Alexandria.

Unlike those examples, however, most small-scale portraits are generalized and unidentifiable as specific individuals. These, including the Snite piece, may in fact not be portraits of specific individuals but idealized reflections of royal types.<sup>4</sup> These would probably have been placed in private domestic settings, perhaps as objects of emulation, expressing loyalty and reverence at a personal or private level. Whether portraits or not, these sculptures provide direct insight into the upper-class notion of the royal-divine ideal and, by extension, into the character of the Hellenistic royal cult.

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1. Kyrieleis 1975; Smith 1988.

2. Portraits of Berenike II appear on fine gold decadrachms, where she is represented wearing a diadem and a veil, with her hair gathered in a knot at the back of her neck. See Richter 1984, 232, fig. 204; and Kyrieleis 1975, pl. 82, nos. 1–4. One possible sculpted portrait of her is a colossal female head from Alexandria, now in Kassel, Germany: Kyrieleis 1975, 98–99, pls. 83–84, no. K1. See also Smith 1988, pls. 37.4–37.5, no. 54; and Berger 1961, 44, no. 5.

3. Marble was scarce in Egypt and therefore an expensive commodity. Due to that rarity, marble sculptures were often recarved, finished in plaster, or, like the Snite piece, incomplete at the back where the object would not have been visible. Tops of heads were also often left flat and



unfinished, covered by the attachment of a veil. For example, see Kyrieleis 1975, pls. 77–80, nos. J8–10.

4. Compare to two similar Hellenistic heads from Alexandria, only slightly larger than the Snite piece: Kyrieleis 1975, pl. 85, K2–3.

*Comparanda*

Kyrieleis 1975, pls. 83–84, K1; pl. 85, K2–3.

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*A.M.B.*







### **Zeus Enthroned**

Greek, 3rd–1st centuries BCE

Marble

Max. pres. H. 0.16 m, W. 0.149 m, D. 0.490 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1972.036.008

#### *Description*

Small statue of bearded Zeus, head turned slightly to right. Broken at lower torso. Right arm broken just above elbow, extends slightly forward and to side. Left arm, broken above elbow, reaches up to hold scepter, small section of which is attached to arm. Mantle falls over left shoulder in heavy folds; small bulge of drapery visible at lower right torso. Backrest of chair projects slightly beyond right shoulder. Light abrasion on most surfaces, spots of dark gray discoloration on head. Back side roughly worked flat with backrest slightly offset. Attached at bottom break to modern mount.

#### *Discussion*

Although much of the arms and the entire lower half of this sculpture are missing, the figure's long hair, beard, semi-nude torso, and staff (scepter) identify him as Zeus, king of the Olympian gods. Like his divine brothers Poseidon and Hades, Zeus is usually shown bearded in Greek art, signifying his maturity and stature among the gods. A small section of a backrest behind his right shoulder indicates that the figure was originally shown seated on a high-backed throne.

The enthroned Zeus,<sup>1</sup> a motif known in Greek art since the sixth century BCE, became one of the most common representations of the god in Classical and Hellenistic Greece, made popular by the fifth-century cult statue of Zeus at Olympia. Created by Pheidias, the renowned sculptor of the Parthenon sculptures in Athens, the colossal enthroned Zeus achieved renown throughout the ancient world.<sup>2</sup> It was directly copied in various media for centuries and indirectly inspired many later versions of the enthroned Zeus (Roman Jupiter), including the Snite statuette.





Because of the high degree of uniformity among sculptures of this type, it is possible to reconstruct the original appearance of the Snite statuette with confidence. Zeus would have grasped a long scepter (a small section of which is still preserved) with his left hand at about the level of his face. The scepter may have been crowned by an eagle (an animal sacred to Zeus), a floral finial, or a simple knob. Zeus wears a chiton, or mantle, draped over his left shoulder, leaving his chest bare. The chiton would have crossed over his lap from the right (a small section is preserved on the lower right torso) and extended down to his ankles. His feet would have rested on the ground or on a footstool, with one foot extending slightly beyond the other in a relaxed pose. In statues of this type, Zeus might hold any of several objects in his right hand, including a *phiale*, a shallow bowl for making or receiving liquid offerings (libations) of oil or wine given by worshippers. He frequently holds his signature weapon, the thunderbolt, or an eagle. In Pheidias's cult statue, Zeus holds the goddess Nike in the palm of his hand.

The sculptural style of this small statue is difficult to date because of its schematically carved features, which have been dulled by the effects of weathering. Simple bulges indicate the eyes, while the folds of the chiton are crudely carved with straight, shallow cuts. Particularly abridged are the divisions of the pectoral muscles and abdomen, formed only by the crossing of perpendicular incisions; they display little surface modeling. Despite the rough workmanship, the bouffant hair and shaggy beard with double-point indicate a date in the Hellenistic period and can be compared to the colossal second-century-BCE head of Anytos by Damophon. A silver figurine of a standing Zeus from Dodona (now in Athens) also comes stylistically close to the Snite Zeus and dates to the third or second century BCE.

The back of the sculpture is roughly hewn and may be the result of hasty or careless work. It may, however, indicate that the figure was meant to be seen only from the front—that is, that it was backed up against something. Evidence for the display of small-scale sculptures in

Hellenistic Greece suggests that they were created for a variety of settings. Statuettes are known to have been displayed in niches of both public and private buildings, on small architectural features such as fountains, on tables or pedestals in the home, and even in gardens.<sup>3</sup>

Statuettes were also commonly sculpted for religious purposes and are often found in Greek sanctuaries. Such small-scale sculptures were given by worshippers as votives, or gifts to the gods, as a token of thanksgiving or gesture of prayerful appeal. Some votive statuettes are known to be miniature reproductions of larger cult statues within the sanctuary, a practice that may have begun in the fifth century BCE and gained popularity in the Hellenistic period.<sup>4</sup> Several large statues of enthroned Zeus dating to the Hellenistic period are known from literary sources and through archaeological discovery. One fragmentary example (now in Berlin) was discovered within the Temple of Zeus Sosipolis at Magnesia, on the Maeander river in Asia Minor, and probably served as a cult statue there. Unfortunately, nothing of the Snite statuette's original findspot is known, and no dedicatory inscription survives that might tell of the statuette's original function.

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1. The god Poseidon was sometimes depicted seated, though usually on a backless stool or on rocks; Zeus was far more frequently depicted in a high-backed throne.

2. The cult statue of Zeus at Olympia was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Made of gold and ivory over a wooden core, the statue does not survive today. A description of it is preserved by the Greek traveler and author Pausanias (5.11.1–11).

3. Bartman 1992, 39–42.

4. Ibid., 33–34.



*Comparanda*

Ackermann 1981-99, VIII.2, p. 229, no. 244 (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Kar. I)

Ackermann 1981-99, VIII.2, p. 228, no. 200 (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 1431)

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*G.P.H.*





### **Pair of Marble Feet**

Greco-Roman

Marble

Left foot: L. 0.245 m, W. 0.089 m., Max. pres. H. 0.13 m; Right foot: L. 0.247 m, W. 0.089 m., Max. pres. H. 0.09 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1971.049.002 A and B

#### *Description*

Pair of life-size feet. White, fine-grained marble with gray veins. Left foot broken above ankle. Lower left leg tilted slightly inward and preserves small hole in broken upper surface, probably to hold metal dowel for attachment to leg. Tip of left big toe broken. Right foot broken at ankle, tip of right big toe chipped. Both feet preserve light rasp marks over most surfaces, especially around ankle bones. Bottom surfaces flat with long rasp marks along length of foot. Small, oblique surface on bottom of left foot beneath big toe.

#### *Discussion*

This pair of marble feet once belonged to a life-size statue of a standing figure. Originally, the feet would have been inserted into specially worked depressions in a larger base or monument floor on which the statue stood. This method of attachment is somewhat unusual, as the feet of marble statues were usually carved in one piece with a flat plinth that was then set into a base. The sculptural quality of the feet is high, with smooth, subtle modeling and naturalistic features.

The lack of attachment holes for the application of metal sandals indicates that the individual represented by this statue was unshod. In ancient Greek and Roman art, divinities were usually represented with bare feet.<sup>1</sup> Deified members of the Roman imperial family were likewise represented without sandals or boots in order to appear as gods. Athletes, who performed barefoot, were also regularly represented without footwear.



Although the subject of the statue cannot be deduced from these small fragments, several important clues suggest its original pose. The extant portion of the lower left leg leans slightly inward, revealing that the left foot was extended somewhat to the side of the body. The oblique surface on the underside of the left foot indicates that the ball of the foot rested on the ground while the heel was slightly raised. In contrast, the underside of the right foot is completely flat, indicating that it was planted squarely on the ground, directly beneath the body.

This scheme fits the well-known classical stance produced by *chiasmós*. Named from the Greek letter *chi* ( $\chi$ ), *chiasmós* was a system of arranging relaxed and tensed parts of the body in diagonal symmetry in order to create dynamic and elegant standing figures. In this scheme, one tensed arm and one relaxed arm correspond along diagonals, like a *chi* ( $\chi$ ), with similarly tensed and relaxed legs. The tensed leg (usually the right) stands straight and bears the full weight of the body. The relaxed leg (usually the left) bears none of the body weight and extends outward, usually trailing behind and to the side of the body, and rests gently on the ball of the foot. A leading principle of sculptural design in Greece, the system of *chiasmós* is first known to have been perfected in the fifth century BCE by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos. His written treatise on the subject, though now lost, is expressed in his famous sculpture of a nude male warrior, the *Doryphoros* (Spear-Bearer), whose stance was mirrored by the statue to which the Snite feet once belonged.<sup>2</sup>

The Snite feet, said to be of Roman origin, demonstrate the lasting influence of Greek *chiasmós* in later Roman art. As Rome expanded its economic, political, and military dominance over foreign lands, Roman culture was exposed to foreign artistic traditions, most immediately to that of ancient Greece. Archaeological and literary evidence attests that Romans commissioned honorary statues, portraits, and cult images from Greek sculptors perhaps as early as the fifth century BCE.<sup>3</sup> By the late third to first centuries BCE, the looting of major cities during the Roman military conquests of Greece resulted in a massive influx of Greek statuary in Rome.



Greek art became enormously popular in Rome during this time. The works of Classical-period sculptors such as Polykleitos, Pheidias, and others were especially admired for their dignity and grandeur. Classical Greek works were also valued for their association with the height of Athenian Greek political and military might. The emperor Augustus was especially active in incorporating Classical Athenian sculpture into his public building projects, establishing a visual link between the historical glories of ancient Athens and the imperial aspirations of Rome.<sup>4</sup>

The high demand for Greek sculpture fueled a thriving art market that filled Roman homes and public spaces with both Greek originals and copies of famous Greek sculptures.<sup>5</sup> A first-century-BCE shipwreck discovered off the coast of Tunisia provides a fascinating glimpse of the Roman demand for Greek art. Sailing from Piraeus, the port of Athens, it held a cargo of Greek sculpture and architectural members bound for Rome.<sup>6</sup> The ancient Roman poet Horace famously observed the irony in the dominance of Greek culture in Rome, declaring that “captive Greece captured her rough conqueror.”<sup>7</sup>

Whether a Greek original, a Roman copy of a Greek original, or a Roman sculpture inspired by Greek style, the statue to which the Snite feet originally belonged is a testament to the popularity and relevance of Greek principles of design in ancient art.

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1. An exception was gods and goddesses such as the huntress Artemis (Roman Diana) or the warrior god Ares (Roman Mars) who, because of strenuous activity, wore characteristic boots or sandals.

2. Several Roman copies of the *Doryphoros* exist, including one found at Pompeii (now in Naples).

3. Ridgway 1984, 19–20.





4. Zanker 1979.

5. The appearance of many Greek sculptures, such as Polykleitos's *Doryphoros*, for example, is known today only through Roman copies.

6. Hellenkamper 1994.

7. Kraemer 1936, 373 (Horace *Epistles* II.1,156–57).

#### *Comparanda*

Stewart 1990, fig. 378 (National Museum, Naples, 6011).

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G.P.H.







### **Pair of Colossal Hands**

Roman(?), reportedly found near Rome

Marble

Left hand: L. 0.390 m, W. 0.255 m, D. 0.162 m; Right hand: L. 0.370 m, W. 0.282 m, D. 0.150 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1979.113.006 A and B

#### *Description*

Pair of greater than life-size marble hands. All left-hand fingers broken just above bottom knuckles. Left hand ends just below wrist at oblique surface, with pitted interior zone surrounded by smoothly carved band. Short, integral tenon projects from center of this surface. Breaks very smooth, indicating long exposure to elements. Carved creases on palm of hand seem to have deepened through weathering; other furrows appear solely due to weathering. Right hand less well preserved, with all fingers except middle one broken just above bottom knuckles; broken at wrist. Both hands show discoloration.

#### *Discussion*

These large marble hands originally belonged to a single greater than life-size statue of unknown type. Although their exact disposition is impossible to reconstruct, the better preserved left hand seems to be in a relaxed position with fingers bent slightly inward. The sculptural quality is high. The knuckles are softly modeled, with shallow furrows between them extending up the back of the hand in a naturalistic way. The sculptor has also taken care to reproduce the creases of the palms, fingers, thumbs, and wrists.

Whatever its original form, this colossal statue was pieced together from separately carved stones, as is shown by a joint face just below the wrist of the left hand. This oblique face would have been tightly bonded with a corresponding surface on the arm of the statue. The surface of the joint face was prepared with a labor-saving technique called *anathyrosis*, which appears as a smoothly carved band around the edges and a rough, recessed interior zone. As a



tight joint was required only at the outer edges of the surface, the sculptor was free to leave the interior zone in roughly worked state. Intentional roughening of this area could also facilitate the application of an adhesive, such as lead or cement, in order to strengthen the bond to the rest of the sculpture.

Although sculptures carved from a single piece of marble were admired in antiquity,<sup>1</sup> ancient Greek and Roman sculptures were often pieced together, whether for lack of a sufficiently large block, for ease of construction, or for making needed repairs to damaged parts of the statue. Because stone has no tensile strength, marble statues often broke under their own weight, especially in unsupported or thinner portions of the sculpture. A colossal statue from Delos, for example, is broken just above the left wrist, exactly where the joint face of the Snite left hand appears. It is possible that the Snite left hand had been similarly broken off at the wrist and subsequently reattached in antiquity.

Though the attachment or reattachment of smaller features such as nose and ears could be accomplished with adhesives, larger attachments such as these hands required the additional support of a tenon. The use of mortise-and-tenon joints is evident throughout the history of both Greek and Roman sculpture.<sup>2</sup> The tenon preserved on the Snite left hand was probably originally rectangular in shape and would have slid into a corresponding mortise similar to the one preserved in the lower left arm of the Belvedere Apollo in Rome. Iron pins and dowels, though not evidenced here, were sometimes used to strengthen this bond.<sup>3</sup>

The Snite hands may have been attached to a sculpture made entirely of marble, or they may have formed part of an *acrolithic* statue, in which marble was used for bare skin (feet, hands, and face) while other materials (wood, bronze, and/or stucco) were used for clothed parts of the body, hair, and accessories. This technique imparted to the sculpture an impressive variety of colors and textures.<sup>4</sup>



In any case, the sculpture to which the Snite hands were once attached was remarkably large. Colossal statues are known from all periods of Greek and Roman art. Ancient Greek literary sources record that colossal statues of gods were created to stand in cities or sanctuaries, often as cult images inside temples. The most famous colossal statue in the Greek world was the Colossus of Rhodes, a Hellenistic bronze statue of the sun-god Helios. Standing about one hundred feet high, it was numbered among the seven ancient wonders of the world.<sup>5</sup> In later Roman times, colossal figures of important men as well as gods were created for public display throughout the Roman Empire. A bronze colossus of the Roman emperor Nero was erected in Rome near the site of the later Flavian amphitheater, whose more common name, the Colosseum, derives from this statue.<sup>6</sup>

Reportedly from Rome, the Snite hands probably belonged to a colossal statue of a god or other distinguished individual. Without additional evidence, the original statue cannot be more precisely identified or dated. It might have stood as part of a commemorative monument, as a votive or cult statue in a sanctuary, as part of a sculptural program in a theater or bath, or in one of the myriad other public contexts where sculpture was displayed.

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1. The ancient author Pliny (*NH* 36.37) praised the famous Laocoön statue for having been carved from a single stone.

2. Claridge 1990, 135.

3. In some cases, dowels may have been employed in the initial construction of a statue to reduce the need for conspicuous external struts (Merker 1973, 9).

4. It has been suggested that the *acrolithic* technique may have been developed to emulate prestigious *chryselephantine* statues, sculptures in which bare skin was worked in ivory and the other parts in gold (Bilde 1995, 124).



5. Pliny *NH* 34.41. Writing in the first century CE, Pliny records that there were one hundred other colossal statues in Rhodes, none of which has survived today.

6. Suet. *Nero* 31. The statue was converted into a statue of the Sun and then dismantled by Hadrian.

#### *Comparanda*

Stewart 1990, fig. 573 (Vatican, Rome, 1015; for rectangular mortise at lower left arm); fig. 840 (National Museum, Athens, 1928; for break at arm).

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*G.P.H.*









## Glass Bottles

### 1. Candlestick Unguentarium

Roman, 2nd half of 1st–first half of 2nd century CE

Blown glass

H. 0.115 m, 0.050 m (body); Diam. 0.026 m (rim), 0.038 m (body)

Provenance unknown

AA 2006.062

#### *Description*

Long-necked glass unguentarium with flaring rim, conical body, and flat base. Cylindrical neck slightly constricted at joint with body. Intact, with small patches of iridescence. Some accretions on interior.

Blue-green, transparent blown glass. Prominent streaking in uneven fabric caused by stretching of heated glass during blowing and rolling of body. Fire-polished rim. No pontil mark perceived, but part of base concealed by modern adhesive.

Belongs to common variety of unguentaria, one of simpler shapes produced by blowing. Flaring rim characteristic of production of western half of Roman Empire. Exact shape classified from excavations in Mainz by Harter (Harter form D11c; also Isings form 28b). Common in second half of first to first half of second century CE.



### 2. Funnel-Mouthed Flask

Roman, 4th century CE

Blown glass

H. 0.194 m, 0.077 m (body); Diam. 0.051 m (rim), 0.096 m (body)

Gift of Mrs. Maria Schubert

1983.011

#### *Description*

Long-necked glass flask with flaring rim and globular body. Intact with some accretions. Cylindrical neck constricted at joint with nearly horizontal shoulder, tapering to globular body with concave base. Transparent blown glass with greenish tint and sandy inclusions. Polished rim.



Many funnel-necked flasks, some elaborately decorated with applied colored-glass trails, were produced from roughly the third through the seventh centuries CE. Hookah-like flasks with impractically tall necks continued to be produced in the east under Islamic rule. The proportions of this piece are similar to vessels manufactured in the fourth century CE (Goethert-Polaschek form 101b, Isings form 104b).

### *Discussion*

Glass flasks have been found throughout the Mediterranean and in the Roman provinces of Gaul and Britain. Ancient writers say that glass vessels were a cheap commodity whose production increased quickly in the early empire.<sup>1</sup> Although the details of the glass business are not well understood, the evidence suggests that Roman glass resulted from a well-organized system of mass production that achieved a high level of standardization.

Glassworking had been known for thousands of years in Egypt and the Levant, but it remained expensive and uncommon before the technique of free blowing was developed. Most early glass vessels were core-formed, a technique in which layers of glass are built up on a narrow rod and subsequently heated to achieve fusion. Core-formed vessels were limited to a small size and narrow diameter, so they had little practical use. Instead, they served as items of prestige and have usually been discovered in high-status tombs. A technique of molding glass bowls was developed in the Hellenistic period, but vessels produced by this process were also expensive.<sup>2</sup>

Free-blown glass was a significant technological innovation that led to a revolution in the early Roman glass industry. Evidence of early experimental blowing in Jerusalem indicates that this technique was invented in the Levant in the first century BCE.<sup>3</sup> The technology allowed a variety of simple forms of flasks and beakers to be produced with great speed even by a small workshop. As a result, glassworks rapidly spread across the Roman Empire during the peace and economic expansion under Augustus and the Julio-Claudians. Lightweight, thin-walled blown glass was fragile but easily recyclable, could be worked at much lower temperatures than clay,



and must have been substantially cheaper to produce and to transport overland than pottery.

Studies of ancient glass have determined that the technique of glass-making has changed little since Roman times. In glassblowing, a hollow blowpipe is employed to introduce an air pocket into the center of a lump of molten glass. Keeping the glass hot and malleable, the artisan can produce an even, tubular flask by rapidly rolling the glass on a workbench. Deviations in the line of the tube, as in the constricted neck of the Snite's funnel-mouthed flask, can be effected with the help of other tools, such as metal tongs. A second stage of fabrication often involves the transfer of the still-soft vessel to a solid metal rod, a pontil, with which the glass continues to be rolled as it is worked with various tools. Upon completion, the pontil rod is removed, often leaving a small scar in the center of the underside of the base. As none of the Snite vessels has a clear pontil mark, it may be that they were shaped with a blowpipe only.<sup>4</sup>

The Snite's candlestick unguentarium is an early type of small, easily blown flask. Its body and neck could be blown and rolled out quickly, the flaring rim turned out with tongs, and the lip polished off in the heat of the furnace. The funnel-mouthed flask, however, represents a later, larger bulbous vessel added to the typical Roman repertoire of small flasks after the third century CE.

Molten glass could also be formed efficiently through a modification of the free-blowing technique. It could be blown into two or more molds that were then assembled as a whole, like the Snite's bifacial unguentarium (see, p. 59). After the glass cooled, the molds were removed from the vessel.<sup>5</sup>

Without evidence of their contents, the functions of the Snite's three glass objects remain uncertain. These small, inexpensive vials could have been put to any number of uses in a common Roman home. As indicated by the modern terminology, unguentaria are thought to have been used as containers for perfumes, oils, or medicines; but given their excellent preservation,



the Snite unguentaria may have come from graves. In fact, in the later first century CE, glass like the Snite's candlestick unguentarium came to replace similar clay unguentaria that had been made specifically for burials. Unguentaria made of clay or glass, as well as larger flasks, were often placed in modest Roman graves and may have played a special role in the funeral ritual, perhaps serving as containers for oils to be poured over the funeral pyre or for a drink to the deceased.<sup>6</sup> A large vessel like the Snite's funnel-mouthed flask could have performed a similar function or, in a domestic context, served as a table flask for wine or water. Head-shaped vessels like the Snite's bifacial unguentarium also regularly appear in both domestic and funerary contexts.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Fleming 1999, 22–24; Appendix B, 151–57.

2. *Ibid.*, 6–9, pl. E.3; Grose 1989, 185–97.

3. Israeli 1991.

4. Refer to Grose 1989, 29–36, and Stern 1995, 19–44, for technical explanations of glassblowing techniques and terminology.

5. Stern 1995, 45–48.

6. Anderson-Stojanovic 1987, 121–22.

7. Israeli 2003, 218.

*Comparanda*

AA2006.062: Harter 1999, no. 639; Hayes 1975, no. 628; Whitehouse 1997, no. 215.

1983.011: Goethert-Polaschek 1977, no. 1027; Hayes 1975, nos. 307 and 420; Whitehouse 1997, no. 313.

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*P.N.S.*





### **Bifacial Unguentarium**

Roman, 3rd century CE

Blown glass

H. 0.083 m, 0.055 m (molded head); Diam. 0.018 m (rim), 0.056 m (body)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1986.052.010

#### *Description*

Small glass vessel in the form of two heads set back-to-back and topped by short, narrow, tubular neck and flared rim. Intact, with extensive heavy, dark accretions obscuring much of hair and upper half of faces. Rim folded out and down, vessel neck slightly restricted at junction with conical top of heads. Hair rendered in three curving ranks of globules that meet at junction between heads. Each face childish, with tiny features and pudgy cheeks and chin. Identical faces consistent with heated glass introduced into identical molds. Flat base slightly elliptical in section. Blown glass, two-part mold. Light green opaque to milky glass, iridescent and bubbly. Mold seams not clear, but heavy encrustation conceals much of surface.

#### *Discussion*

The exact origins of glass-making are unknown, but it had become an advanced industry by the time this little bottle was produced.<sup>1</sup> The technique employed here, blowing glass into reusable molds, made the mass production of such objects possible and was widespread in the Roman world by the middle of the first century CE.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, this technique facilitated experimentation with a wide variety of forms, including bifacial unguentaria like this one. Faces became a popular means of elaboration for blown-glass unguentarium (a type of cosmetic container), in part because they easily conformed to the globular shape of these small flasks. This particular kind of bifacial vessel was commonly made in the second and third centuries CE and is referred to as “janiform,” after the Roman deity Janus, a two-faced god who could look backward and forward simultaneously.





Decorating vessels with molded human faces had a long tradition in Italy, originating with the Villanovan biconical ash urns. Farther east in the Mediterranean, janiform pottery was produced as early as the seventh century BCE,<sup>3</sup> and after falling out of use in the fourth century BCE, it regained popularity in the first century CE in the medium of glass.<sup>4</sup> In the Roman world, all janiform glassware was mold-blown as two vertical sections, each with a corresponding face. The seam where the two parts of the mold joined could be neatly concealed in the hair,<sup>5</sup> and only close examination reveals its clever placement on the Snite piece. Easily reproducible molded glass is normally associated with workshops rather than individual artists, but with the easy international flow of goods established under the Augustan peace, even boundaries between workshops became blurred. The Snite bottle is reputed to be from Italy, but the specifics of its form associate it more closely with the Syro-Palestinian area. As early as the close of the first century BCE, the city of Sidon (in modern-day Lebanon) was a leader in the production of mold-blown glass,<sup>6</sup> and it was there that perhaps the first two-faced glass vessel, carrying opposing images of the Gorgon Medusa, was produced.<sup>7</sup>

The first known janiform glass vessel from Italy dates from later in the first century CE.<sup>8</sup> The faces it carries are also of Medusa, recognizable in the heavily sculpted waves that re-create her snaky hair and in her dramatically furrowed brows and pursed lips. Very different are the knobby hair of the Snite bottle figures and their softer, less pronounced facial features. The globular hair and chubby faces are more typical of eastern workshops<sup>9</sup> and are consistent with the Roman interest in exotic forms exhibited in other types of head-shaped vessels, such as Negroid heads or grotesques.<sup>10</sup>

From the first to the fourth centuries CE, and throughout the Roman Empire, Medusa was the most popular motif in janiform bottles.<sup>11</sup> Second was Bacchus (the Greek Dionysos), the god of libation, and glass vessels depicting him are most commonly found in the eastern



Mediterranean, where his cult arose. The Snite bottle appears to represent a less popular third category of Roman head-shaped vessels, the “Chubby-Childlike” types produced in the second and third centuries CE. The Chubby-Childlike vessels cluster in the eastern Mediterranean, and while the identification of their figures is not certain, it has been suggested that they represent a young Bacchus or even Eros, the god of love.<sup>12</sup> One flask decorated with a pair of young male faces was discovered in a tomb in Ravenna, but its date and, therefore, its classification as a member of the Chubby-Childlike group are debatable.<sup>13</sup> Much closer in physiognomy and hairstyle to the Snite piece, with its prominent brow, fat cheeks, and three-tiered knobby hairstyle, is a piece in the Toledo Museum of Art collection, securely dated to the third century CE and manufactured in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>14</sup>

If the Snite vessel is in fact of the Chubby-Childlike type, it was probably created in the Syro-Palestinian area; and if, as implied by its Museum record, it was found in Italy, it probably arrived there as an ancient import. To judge from its small size and teardrop shape, the vessel was probably designed as a cosmetic container called an unguentarium, a small bottle whose narrow neck and wide lip helped prevent spills and reduce evaporation of the valuable liquid it contained.<sup>15</sup> Unguentaria were mass-produced in glass-making workshops throughout the Mediterranean and would have been found in the personal chambers of many Roman women. They were also often used as grave gifts, and the iridescent patina of the Snite bottle and the intact preservation of its glass suggest that it was safely buried long ago.

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1 Glass bits have been excavated in Mesopotamia that date to the third millennium BCE (Stern 1995, 34). On the origins of glass Pliny the Elder writes (in his *Natural History*) that merchants on the shores of Akko accidentally created “a strange translucent liquid [which] flowed forth in streams” (English translation by D. E. Eichholz, quoted in Stern 1995, 65). This legend might have been based on Akko’s prominence in glass production, for the unique composition of the sand in this region is particularly suited for glass-making.



2. Stern 2001, 142–43.

3. Stern 1995, 202.

4. Some historians contend that the revival of double-headed forms began in Italy, but the supporting evidence is not conclusive enough to settle the debate. The earliest datable glass vessel of the true janiform type was discovered in a tomb in Virgorovea, Italy, and dates to the middle of the first century CE. Because it was found in association with other glassware known to be created in Italy, it is assumed to have been made in Italy as well. While this data points to Italy as the center for the janiform resurgence, the majority of vessels in this style are traced to the eastern Mediterranean. Stern 1995, 207, fig. 86.

5. Ibid., 203–4.

6.. Stern 1995, 87.

7. Ibid., 89–91, fig. 65.

8. Ibid., 207, fig. 86.

9. Ibid., 201–3, 210–12.

10. Ibid., 203.

11. Ibid.

12. The Chubby-Childlike type is hypothesized to represent either Bacchus or Eros because “both...were frequently depicted as a child and both...were worshipped throughout the Syro-Palestinian area during the second and third centuries” (Stern 1995, 233). While cherublike Eros could be a model for this type, Bacchus is more likely. There is already a precedent in the single-headed flasks, and, furthermore, Greek mythology places Bacchus childhood and education in this area.

13. Stern 1995, 209, fig. 89. The grave goods range in date from the first to the early fourth centuries CE, and the exact date of this object cannot be determined.

14. Ibid., 236, no. 154.

15. Wearing perfume to mask the smells of the city was an integral part of Roman hygiene, and large quantities of small bottles were required for storing the various oils and lotions that were used daily. Ibid., 201.

*Comparanda*

Auth 1976, no. 74; Harden 1936, no. 628; Hayes 1975, no. 94; Israeli 2003, no.272; Stern 1995, nos. 149 and156; Whitehouse 1997, no. 549.

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*T.L.J.*

*P.N.S.*





### **Head of a Young Man**

Roman, first half of 1st century CE

Basalt

Max. pres. H. 0.16 m, W. 0.123 m, Max. pres. D. 0.14 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1976.043.015

#### *Description*

Portrait head of young man in black basalt with highly polished surfaces. Approximately half life-size. Front two-thirds of head and neck preserved. Neck broken 0.02 m below chin. Back of head broken behind ears. Left ear chipped.

Broad, high forehead. Narrow cheekbones taper to small but well-defined chin and jaw. Features idealized, though nose has slight bump on bridge. Skin has no blemishes or creases, and features like brow ridge, eye sockets, lips, and philtrum indicated only by subtle changes in plane. Some important features—eyelids, nostrils, outer auricle of ears—have crisply edged borders. Lips slightly parted, separated by shallow groove. Deep dimple creates strong shadow between lower lip and chin.

Hair schematically rendered in rough, linear gouges cut into polished surface. Wavy locks rendered as crescent-shaped grooves arranged in several roughly horizontal tiers. Tiers of crescents meet one another to form longer wavy lines. Sideburns trimmed to mid-ear. Eyebrows formed by series of short parallel incisions diagonal to brow line.

#### *Discussion*

This head clearly exhibits the standard characteristics of portraiture of Augustus and his Julio-Claudian successors.<sup>1</sup> The Romans had a long tradition of portraiture, of representing specific individuals for private ancestor commemoration and public monuments. Late Republican aristocratic portraits are well known for their intense realism. The portraits that have survived tend to depict mature, powerful men, whose wrinkles and blemishes are meticulously documented to the point of exaggeration. This verism ultimately developed from a native Italic tradition of death masks and stands in stark contrast to the smooth youthful ideal of Classical



Greek sculpture. The Snite head, on the other hand, is representative of a trend in Roman portraiture that became firmly established in the reign of Augustus (late first century BCE), in which Classical Greek style was combined with native Italic sculptural tradition for the purpose of lifting portraits beyond the expected, beyond the everyday, into a more monumental realm.

Classical Greek allusion had been employed to a lesser extent in late Republican portraiture, particularly in the case of political figures, whose sagging, middle-aged heads might rest on flawless, young, nude Greek bodies. But the official portraits of Augustus represented a new level of classicism. His youthful, idealized portraits clearly recalled the sculpture of fifth-century-BCE Athens and served to associate him and his policies with the greatest accomplishments of Greece. Purely Greek are the smooth planes of his face, as well as the distinctive cowlick above his forehead, an unambiguous reference to the famous *anastole* of Alexander the Great. Yet the tradition of native Roman portraiture is still evident in the distinctively individual proportions and features of the face, immediately recognizable as Augustus.

This Hellenizing of the portraiture of the royal family continued through the Julio-Claudian dynasty, the successors of Augustus. Their careful imitation of style and specific iconography resulted in a consistent presentation of the ideals and image of the dynasty, but also in artificiality and uniformity. As a result, it can be difficult to distinguish the portrait of one Julio-Claudian from another. Such is the case with the Snite head.<sup>2</sup> The exact identity of its subject is uncertain, but its youthful, idealized features—the almond-shaped eyes, broad cranium, aquiline nose, and small, narrow chin—and its short, crescent-shaped locks agree most closely with the official portraiture of Tiberius,<sup>3</sup> the immediate heir to the throne of Augustus.

It is also difficult to isolate the exact date of the portrait or even the part of the world in which it was carved. The material used, basalt, may indicate an Egyptian origin. Egyptian artists

had mastered the carving of hard stone like basalt many centuries earlier, under native Pharaonic rule, and under the rule of the Ptolemies a school of Hellenized Egyptian artists continued the tradition to the end of the Hellenistic Age, when Augustus—then called Octavian—became ruler of Rome and Egypt.<sup>4</sup> Portraiture in hard stone continued in Egypt under Augustus and the Julio-Claudians, and though Roman sculptors imported exotic raw materials into Rome from across the empire, most of their portraiture at that time was cut from Italian and Aegean marbles.

Many questions about the Snite portrait remain to be answered. The high polish of its surface is consistent with the Egyptian treatment of basalt, and the polish and subtle modeling of the face are characteristic of Julio-Claudian portraiture in general. However, the few known imperial portraits in Egyptian stone exhibit locks of hair well modeled in relief, much as they are when rendered in softer materials,<sup>5</sup> whereas the hair of this head has been reduced to a schematic series of roughly drilled grooves, apparently in concession to the hardness of the stone. And though the proportions of its face are typical of the time of Augustus or Tiberius, the Snite head is surprisingly small. It is approximately half life-size, while official portraits are generally life-size. Finally, the head is too fragmentary to judge whether it was from a bust or a complete statue, and where it might have been displayed remains a matter of conjecture.

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1. This discussion has benefited from the notes left by Carrie Tovar from her 1998–99 research.

2. Kleiner 1992, 61–69; see also Rose 1997, 62–63, and Massner 1982.

3. See *comparanda* and Rose 1997, 62–63.

4. Breckenridge 1968, 176–77.

5. de Kersauson 1986, nos. 43 and 67; see also the portraits in Drerup 1950.





*Comparanda*

Massner 1982, pl. 17a (Portrait of Tiberius, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, no. 1750); pl. 19b (Portrait of Germanicus, British Museum, London, no. 1883).

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*P.N.S.*





### **Palmette Antefix Plaque with Winged Victory Protome**

Roman, probably 1st century CE

Terracotta

H. 0.230 m, W. 0.18 m restored, Max. D. 0.096 m, Avg. D. 0.03 m

Gift of Mr. Joseph V. Noble

1968.044.010

#### *Description*

Molded antefix from front of eaves-cover roof tile. Plaque formed as palmette in high relief with human head in center, small neck and shoulders rendered in low relief below. Mended from two fragments, break running across palmette just above Victory head. Lower right section missing, restored with painted plaster. Tips of middle and upper right leaves of palmette missing, also restored with plaster. Accretions light, except in recesses.

Hair falls in three pointed locks, one in middle of forehead, others curling out to sides. Bust flanked by pair of schematically rendered wings, one restored in plaster.

Palmette consists of seven leaves that spring from behind Victory head and from just above its wings. Central palmette leaf vertical, other six arranged in three pairs of alternatively downturned and upturned tips. Leaves molded in low relief, raised about 0.003 m. above flat background.

Narrow horizontal fillet below winged bust rests on crudely formed dentil frieze. Immediately below, base of plaque formed by plain fascia set back about 0.005 m. from dentils.

Back of plaque originally attached to semi-cylindrical eaves-cover tile, now mostly broken away. Antefix base descends to about 0.04 below resting surface of cover, masking eaves pan tile. Vertical plaster element under cover not part of original tile but added by modern restorers.

Antefix fabric dark reddish brown with bits of dark gray temper and some shiny black inclusions, possibly indicating volcanic origin. Obsidian was mined in Italy and often used as temper, improving clay's strength and reducing shrinkage during drying.







### **Palmette Antefix Plaque with Gorgoneion**

Roman, second half 1st century BCE–death of Augustus (14 CE)

Terracotta

H. 0.240 m, Pres. W. 0.145 m, Avg. Th. 0.030 m

Gift of Mr. Joseph V. Noble

1968.044.011

#### *Description*

Molded antefix from front of eaves-cover roof tile. Tall, well-preserved seven-leaf palmette springs from acanthus leaves above bulbous object, flanked by pair of elaborate tendrils. Design executed in low relief raised about 0.005 m. above plain background. Bottom and left sides of plaque missing. Rounded cover broken off about 0.03 m. behind its joint with plaque. Heavy accretions on all surfaces. Old paper label on back perhaps names Rome as original place of sale, but writing unclear.

Palmette composed of three pairs of downward-curling leaves, symmetrically arranged around central, vertical leaf. Below is symmetrical pair of S-shaped tendrils with spiral ends. Above upper spiral is another tendril ending in small five-leaf palmette.

Broken bulbous form at center of plaque should be restored as gorgoneion. Only wavy hair of gorgon preserved, crowned by row of ovals. Lower pair of leaves above head become ends of ribbon wrapped around gorgon's face.

Base of plaque formed by broad, low fillet above plain fascia. Back of plaque attached to semi-cylindrical eaves-cover tile, now mostly broken away.

Fabric reddish tan with bits of gray and reddish brown tempering.

#### *Discussion*

Antefixes are elaborately molded plaques placed along the edge of a tiled roof to form a line of figural, floral, faunal, or geometric forms in relief. Due to collectors' and archaeologists' traditional preference for decoration and style over the practical details of ancient roofing, they are the only ancient roof tiles that have been consistently collected and studied. The other roof





tiles would have been undecorated and, therefore, discarded. Even the long eaves-cover tile to which each Snite antefix had been attached was broken off and discarded. The cover tiles protected the joints between pan tiles, flat tiles that directed and carried rainwater off the roof; together, row by horizontal row, the pans and covers waterproofed the roof from eaves to ridge.

The Snite antefixes would have been relatively easy to construct, and they lack some time-consuming features such as the painted slip decoration typical of Greek roof tiles. The face of each plaque was formed by packing a sheet of clay into a reusable mold. The molded plaque was then removed and mounted vertically against the end of a semicircular sheet of clay for the cover. Damp clay was wiped over the join to reinforce the bond between the two elements. The streaks from this process are still visible on the back of the winged Victory antefix. The tile was then fired.

Roman tile makers were capable of producing huge numbers of tiles to supply what must have been a considerable demand, given the massive construction that took place across the empire. Proximity to settlements and supplies of clay, water, and fuel for firing kilns were the major concerns in locating a workshop. Roman kilns and tiles found near settlements from the Mediterranean to Britain indicate that the method of producing tiles has remained essentially the same from ancient times to the present.<sup>1</sup>

Palmette decoration on antefixes was characteristic of the earliest monumental architecture of the Greek mainland and was later adopted and adapted by Roman builders. It is typical of the late Republic and early Roman Empire, when a wide range of inexpensive, mass-produced tiles were available for modest public and private buildings. Antefixes of the period usually had a large seven-leaf palmette above a small human head, a gorgoneion, an Olympian deity, or a heraldic representation of an animal.<sup>2</sup> The winged Victory antefix is the later of the two Snite examples, probably dating to the first century CE.<sup>3</sup> The gorgoneion antefix dates to the second half of the first century BCE.<sup>4</sup>



Antefixes like both of the Snite examples seem to have originated in Rome, though nearly identical pieces are found in central and northern Italy. The closest parallels from the Museo Nazionale Romano are tiles that probably come from Rome and its suburbs, and the gorgoneion antefix appears to have been purchased there.<sup>5</sup> The winged Victory, however, has volcanic inclusions in its fabric, perhaps indicating that it was manufactured in a region with deposits of obsidian, as around Naples.

Although broken away except for the hair, Snite 1968.044.011 had a central gorgoneion, the face of one of the Gorgon sisters, a motif long popular in both Italian and Greek art. Snite 1968.044.010, in contrast, clearly belongs to a diverse series of antefixes that carry images of winged Victory. These motifs, the gorgon and a divine female, were popular throughout the long history of Italian roofs. From the seventh century BCE on, they represent the most popular themes of antefixes and temple pediments in Etruria and Latium, as well as in the Greek colonies of southern Italy and Sicily. Gorgons and goddesses were appropriately awe-inspiring subjects for the edge of the temple roof, articulating and elaborating the outermost boundary of the temple and thus the transition to its sacred space.<sup>6</sup> By the time the Snite pieces were made, however, these symbols of the divine had become stock subjects for all tile roofs, whether the building they adorned was sacred or secular.

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1. Darvill and McWhirr 1984, 249-254; Hampe and Winter 1965, 204-208; Sapirstein 2008, 79-83, 91-96.

2. Pensabene 1983, 30-32.

3. Pensabene antefix types 141-43.

4. Pensabene antefix type 83; Uboldi A6.





5. Uboldi 1998, 84; Pensabene 1983, 1; see *comparanda*.

6. Knoop 1995, 96–97.

*Comparanda*

1968.044.010:

Pensabene and Sanzi Di Mino 1983, no. 567 (Pensabene antefix types 141–44).

1968.044.011:

Pensabene 1999, 280, no. 33; Pensabene and Sanzi Di Mino 1983, no. 69; Uboldi 1998, A6.

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*P.N.S.*





### **Mercury-Thoth**

Roman, 1st century BCE–1st century CE  
Solid-cast bronze with a modern mount  
H. 0.084 m, W. 0.049 m, D. 0.012 m  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf  
1973.079.008

#### *Description*

Solid-cast statuette of syncretized Egypto-Roman deity Mercury-Thoth, or the Egypto-Greek Hermes-Thoth. Incised features. Distinguishing attributes are winged sandals, money bag and *caduceus* (held in right and left hand, respectively), and lotus leaf protruding from crown of head. Statuette has green patina and is well preserved.

#### *Discussion*

This is a well-preserved example of the Mercury-Thoth statuette type that was found primarily in domestic contexts throughout the late Hellenistic and Roman empires. Its material, bronze, was valued for its durability and its ability to reproduce the sensuous lines of fabric and the human form, as well as the smooth sheen of human skin. Mercury-Thoth's contrapposto stance is accentuated by the tilt of his chest and the strong swing of his hips, both of which emphasize his right leg and its role in supporting the weight of his body.

The contrapposto stance helps draw the eye back and forth across the figure to the attributes related to his role as a deity and to his significance in a household. On his feet are winged boots that enable him to travel swiftly when conveying messages from the gods, and over his shoulder is the cloak of a traveler. He holds a money sack in his right hand, appropriate to his role as the god of merchants (also of thieves). In the crook of this arm rests his *caduceus*, a magic wand given to Mercury by Apollo to enable him to travel between the worlds of the living and the dead. In part, the *caduceus*—which has two intertwined snakes wrapped around it—relates



to Mercury's role as *psychopompus*, or guide for souls to the underworld. The *caduceus* also represents Mercury's link to magic, a connection that led to a post-antique misunderstanding of the wand. Around the seventh century CE, a strong link developed between Byzantine medicine and alchemy, and the *caduceus* began to be confused with and substituted for the staff of the Graeco-Roman healing god Asclepius, which traditionally carried only a single snake. The *caduceus* held by the Snite statuette, however, has little to do with health and everything to do with alchemy, the process of transforming base metals into gold. In this light, the *caduceus* complements the money sack held in Mercury's right hand.

Usually Mercury wears a *petasos*, or winged cap, which like his boots signifies his role as a swift messenger. But here, instead of a *petasos*, a single lotus leaf springs from the crown of his head. This is the one attribute that signals that Mercury has become assimilated with the Egyptian god Thoth. Syncretism, combining the qualities of two gods into one, flourished in the Hellenistic period after Alexander's broad conquests and continued throughout the Roman period.

What is it about these two gods that made them appropriate for syncretism? Mercury's great cultural gift was connected with magic, specifically with magical incantations he invented. Thoth was also the bearer of a significant cultural gift, writing, which like magical incantation relied on words for its efficacy. Mercury was the god of the marketplace and Thoth, though he had no direct connection with monetary transactions, was "the protector of the weak and of him whose property is violated."<sup>1</sup> Thoth could, therefore, be invoked as protection from harm to goods and belongings of the household. Mercury's connection with economic prosperity was linked to his general nature as a shrewd, silver-tongued trickster. The Homeric Hymn to Hermes presents a god who, as a newborn infant, sneaks out of his crib, stages a masterful theft of Apollo's cattle, and when confronted by Apollo, craftily denies any knowledge of the theft:



“So then said Hermes shooting quick glances from his eyes: And he kept raising his brows and looking this way and that, whistling long and listening to Apollo’s story as to an idle tale.”<sup>2</sup>

While Thoth was never associated with theft and lying, he too was well known for this capacity to persuade. It was Thoth who convinced the hostile, destructive goddess Tefnet to move north into Egypt from her home south of the Upper Kingdom and act as a benevolent divinity to the Egyptian people.<sup>3</sup>

The likely original context for the Snite statuette is a *lararium*, or household shrine. A *lararium* usually contained images, either painted or sculpted, of the *lares* and *penates* (guardians spirits who protected the family and its storerooms) and other gods from the Roman pantheon. Mercury was especially popular for *lararia*, as were statuettes of Mercury-Thoth after Egypt was incorporated into the Hellenistic world and throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The hybrid Mercury-Thoth of the *lararium* presided over the economic prosperity of the household and the protection of that prosperity via just laws. He also, through his association with business transactions and with borders, was relied upon to facilitate productive business talk and to offer protection against nonfamily members brought into the house for purposes of business.

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1. Naville 1886, 182.

2. Evelyn-White 1914, “Homeric Hymn to Hermes,” 278-281.

3. Bleeker 1973, 127–31.



*Comparanda*

Babelon and Blanchet 1895, 156–57, no. 356.

Cicirelli 1993, 166, no. 10, fig. 10.

Gschwantler et al. 1986, 101–2, no. 134, fig. 200.

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C.L.G.









### **Head of Roman Matron**

Roman, ca. 50 BCE–50 CE

Marble

H. 0.283 m, W. 0.209 m, D. 0.211 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1985.067.013

#### *Description*

Head of woman with thick mantle draped over crown of head. Face turned slightly to left. Facial features shallowly carved and heavily weathered, dulling their appearance; nose entirely missing. Slightly wavy hair parted in center of forehead and swept back. Broken at neck, heavy weathering and abrasion over all surfaces. Large chip missing from left cheek. Broken in back with deep rectangular cutting.

#### *Discussion*

This head of a veiled woman was part of a full-length portrait statue commemorating a married Roman woman, or *matrona*. The head was originally carved in one piece with the neck (now largely missing) and would have been separately inserted into a hollow in the top of a full-length marble body. Although its exact original context is unknown, the rectangular cutting at the back of the head probably held a metal dowel for attachment to a flat surface.

The most striking aspect of this portrait is the frankness with which the sculptor has rendered the face. Fine wrinkles, drooping eyelids, shallow depressions under the eyes, and slightly hollowed cheeks give the impression of a middle-aged woman. Although realism is a characteristic of most periods of Roman portraiture, portraits from the late Republican period and the early years of the empire (from about the second century BCE to the early first century CE) are especially vivid in recording an individual's appearance. Wrinkles, furrowed brows, and other distinctive features impart a striking individuality to portraits of both women and men from this period.



This type of realism in Roman portraiture, also called verism, can be traced in part to a native tradition of portrait making associated with early Roman funerary practices. According to written sources, upper-class families displayed portraits of their deceased relatives in a domestic shrine reserved for the veneration of ancestors. Upon the death of a family member, these ancestral portraits were carried, together with a portrait of the newly deceased, in a grand funerary procession that publicly commemorated their lineage. Ancient historians wrote that these portraits, which they called “masks,” reflected the likeness of the deceased with great accuracy.<sup>1</sup> According to one source, these masks were originally wax impressions of the face.<sup>2</sup> Although no such mask has survived, stone portraiture from this period probably derives its stark realism from this Roman funerary tradition.

As a sculptural style associated with the veneration of ancestors, verism also reflected the social and moral authority of age over youth. In early Roman portraiture, the physical signs of maturity signaled the wisdom, prudence, and stature gained only by age and experience.<sup>3</sup> In a portrait of a married woman, they indicated the respect and authority she retained as manager of an often extensive household. This authority increased with age, and mothers, grandmothers, and widows were especially revered.

Dress could visually reinforce these honored distinctions of age. Clothing—both specific garments and even colors—reflected a status and position in Roman society that often coincided with the various stages of a woman’s life. Specific dress codes were followed for girls, brides, matrons, mothers, and widows. Although the body of the Snite portrait is lost, a contemporary full-length portrait statue now in Worcester, Massachusetts, illustrates the typical dress of a Roman matron: a long tunic beneath a light outer shell, over which a long woolen *palla*, or mantle, was draped from head to foot. The *palla* could be wrapped around the shoulders or, as in the Snite sculpture, pulled up over the head. For the Roman matron, the long *palla* signified



female modesty—the ideal characteristic of the Roman woman—both in her public behavior and in private. Neglecting to wear the *palla* was potentially scandalous for a Roman matron and, as willful negligence of wifely duty, was legal grounds for divorce.<sup>4</sup>

A matron's modesty was also signaled by the binding of her hair. In Roman art, loose tresses carried highly sexual connotations and were therefore reserved for representations of goddesses or mythological women. A matron's hair was bound up beneath the *palla* with woolen ties (*vittae*), which, like the *palla*, were worn only by married women. In the Sute portrait, the matron's gently waving hair is pulled back from a central part, a simple type of "double wave" coiffure popular in the late first century BCE and early first century CE and one that characterized the portraits of Livia, the wife of the emperor Augustus. Portraits of contemporary Roman women often emulated those of Livia and through that connection implied virtues and character similar to those of the ideal matron of Rome.

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1. Polybius 6.53.

2. Pliny *NH* 35.6–7.

3. In the late Republican period (second–first centuries BCE), portraits were made only of mature men and women. Children and youths were not considered appropriate subjects for portraiture. Kleiner 1992, 38.

4. Sebesta 1994, 48–49.

*Comparanda*

Comstock and Vermeule 1976, 206, no. 326 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 68.767).

Kleiner and Matheson 1996, 197, no. 145 (Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA, 1978.78); 200, no. 150 (North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, 79.1.2).

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*G.P.H.*







### **Panther Protome from Tripod Table**

Roman, 1st century CE

White marble

Panther: H. 0.146 m, L. 0.205 m, W. 0.105 m; Post: H. 0.143 m, L. 0.080 m (at top), W. 0.069 m (at top), W. 0.048 m (at bottom)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1968.072.006

#### *Description*

Marble panther-head protome on fragmentary leg of marble tripod table. Most of head and part of neck of panther preserved. Lower jaw missing and front of snout broken off. Head emerges from rectangular, vertical table leg broken at top and bottom. Table leg and head carved as single piece. Head smoothly finished; table leg less so, with chisel marks visible on all sides. Numerous pockmarks and discolorations on surface of marble.

Features of cat highly stylized and deeply carved. In profile, neck and head form continuous arch. Ears laid back and overlap rectangular tripod leg. Bones of face prominent, with strongly protruding eyebrows and forehead. Cheeks sunken; indentations may indicate teeth behind skin. Eyes and eye sockets deep set and circular. No pupil marked. Slight indication of upper eyelid. Ridges on forehead form inverted V-shape that defines sides of snout. Incised lines indicate bottom of triangular nose, whiskers, and upper teeth between fangs. Mouth open and carved; though lower jaw missing, back of tongue visible. Small chisel marks on roof and back of mouth.

Rectangular form of tripod leg clearly visible from behind. Back of leg tapers gradually toward bottom. In profile, front and back of tripod leg coincide with vertical line of panther's neck.

#### *Discussion*

Juvenal, a Roman writer of the late first–early second century CE, describes a table resting on a ramping, gaping panther of solid ivory.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, the white panther comes from a similar table base. It and two other similar legs would have supported a round table leaf. Such supports were almost universally composed of an animal protome, a disembodied head or bust, most often of a lion or panther, springing from a cluster of acanthus leaves that circled the upper section of a substantial feline leg. The feet of tripod tables were generally catlike paws but







occasionally had the bony, plated appearance of griffin talons. In the Snite example, however, no trace of acanthus leaves is preserved. In many examples, the leg takes on rectangular form above the neck and head of the panther, as it does in the Snite version. In others, capitals spring directly from the top of the protome's head. In most tripod tables, the three legs were joined by a horizontal or slightly arched marble brace. The tripods were often set on undecorated bases, sometimes with cuttings for the feet, or stood with a separate plinth beneath each paw.<sup>2</sup>

The tripod table seems to have been a Greek invention of the fourth century BCE, until which time the table-support configurations were exclusively rectangular. However, as Greek tripod tables were made of wood, no actual examples survive. Instead, representations of them appear on Attic funerary reliefs, on red-figured vase paintings, and in the banquet scenes of South Italian vases.<sup>3</sup> They have round tops resting on three legs, which are sometimes of curved profile. This table form was enthusiastically embraced by workshops producing marble tables for the Italian market. By the Roman period, the tripod table predominates, having replaced the rectangular table almost completely. Representations appear in Roman frescoes and mosaics and on reliefs throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>4</sup> The elaboration of table legs by the addition of animal protomes is also a Greek Hellenistic tradition. At some point in the late second or first century BCE, table legs were elaborated by the addition of animal protomes, as is clearly depicted in art of the Augustan period (31 BCE–14 CE).<sup>5</sup> Most actual examples, however, are from the Roman Imperial period. Based on the large number of surviving examples, the tripod table with protome supports seems to have been the most common form of marble furniture in Roman Imperial Italy, and the Snite type is one of the most popular variations.

A date in the first century CE seems probable for the Snite panther, based on stylistic comparisons with surviving examples from Pompeii, Herculaneum, and other towns preserved by ash from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE. Its lack of drilled pupils and lack of



bearded lower jaw, both of which are characteristic of panthers of the second century CE, indicate that the Snite protome was carved before the end of the first century.

The examples of marble tripod tables with animal protomes from Pompeii and Herculaneum were found only in large houses and villas, attesting to their production for the upper class. These were expensive luxury objects, made as often of imported marble as of Italian, some possibly from overseas workshops. For the most part, they seem to have been non-utilitarian, and unlike other types of marble tables, they were displayed mainly in gardens.<sup>6</sup> They were commonly erected on major garden axes, on direct lines of sight, particularly as the emphasis on gardens and courtyards in Roman houses increased after the middle of the first century CE. One room in particular would have been open to the garden: the *triclinium*, or dining room. Much of the art displayed in both the *triclinium* and the garden expressed Bacchic themes, an interest that may explain the use of panthers—who in mythology drew the chariot of Bacchus (the Greek Dionysos) and whose skins were often worn by female followers of the god—as an integral part of many tripod tables. Bacchus, the god of feasting and drinking, was an appropriate presence in the pleasure rooms and gardens of the Roman house.

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1. Juv. *Sat.* 11.120.

2. For a comprehensive examination of this type of tripod table with animal protome legs, see Moss 1988, Type 9, especially nos. C10, C27, C28, C30, C71, and C95, which are closest to the Snite piece. Complete marble tripod tables of this type with panther protomes have been found at Herculaneum, Lucus Feroniae, and Luni. For Casa dei Cervi, Herculaneum, see Tran tam Tinh 1988, 97–99 and 103–4, inv. 523, 526, figs. 158–59, found in situ in the garden; for Villa dei Volusii at Lucus Feroniae, see Moretti and Moretti 1977, 18, 36, pl. 15, found in the *lararium*; for Luni, see Rossi 1996, 64–76, figs. 1–4, pls. 4–6.

3. For Attic grave stelai, see Conze 1900, pls. 252–55 and 257. Richter 1966, fig. 369, illustrates one such relief from the late Hellenistic period with the deceased stretched out on a couch, a table with food by his side. For Attic vase painting, see Beazley 1963, 1476–77, no. 3, from



Kerch, by the Eleusinian Painter. For South Italian vase painting, see Trendall 1967, 112, 460, pls. 57.3–4 and 178.1.

4. See Richter 1966. Fig. 570 illustrates a fresco from Herculaneum; fig. 569, a mosaic signed by Dioskourides; fig. 571, a wall painting from the Villa Farnesina; fig. 568, a funerary relief in Istanbul.

5. Moss 1988, 38n57.

6. However, the tripod table at the Villa dei Volusii appears to have been used as a cult table, for the worship of the household *lares*, or guardian spirits (see note 2 above).

#### *Comparanda*

Moss 1988, 711, no. C10 (Museo Archeologico, Bari, Italy); 724–25, no. C27 (Casa dei Cervi, Herculaneum); 725–26, no. C28 (Casa dei Cervi, Herculaneum); 727–28, no. C30 (Villa dei Volusii, Lucus Feroniae); 760–61, no. C71 (Pompeii); and 777–78, no. C95 (Museo Civico, La Spezia).

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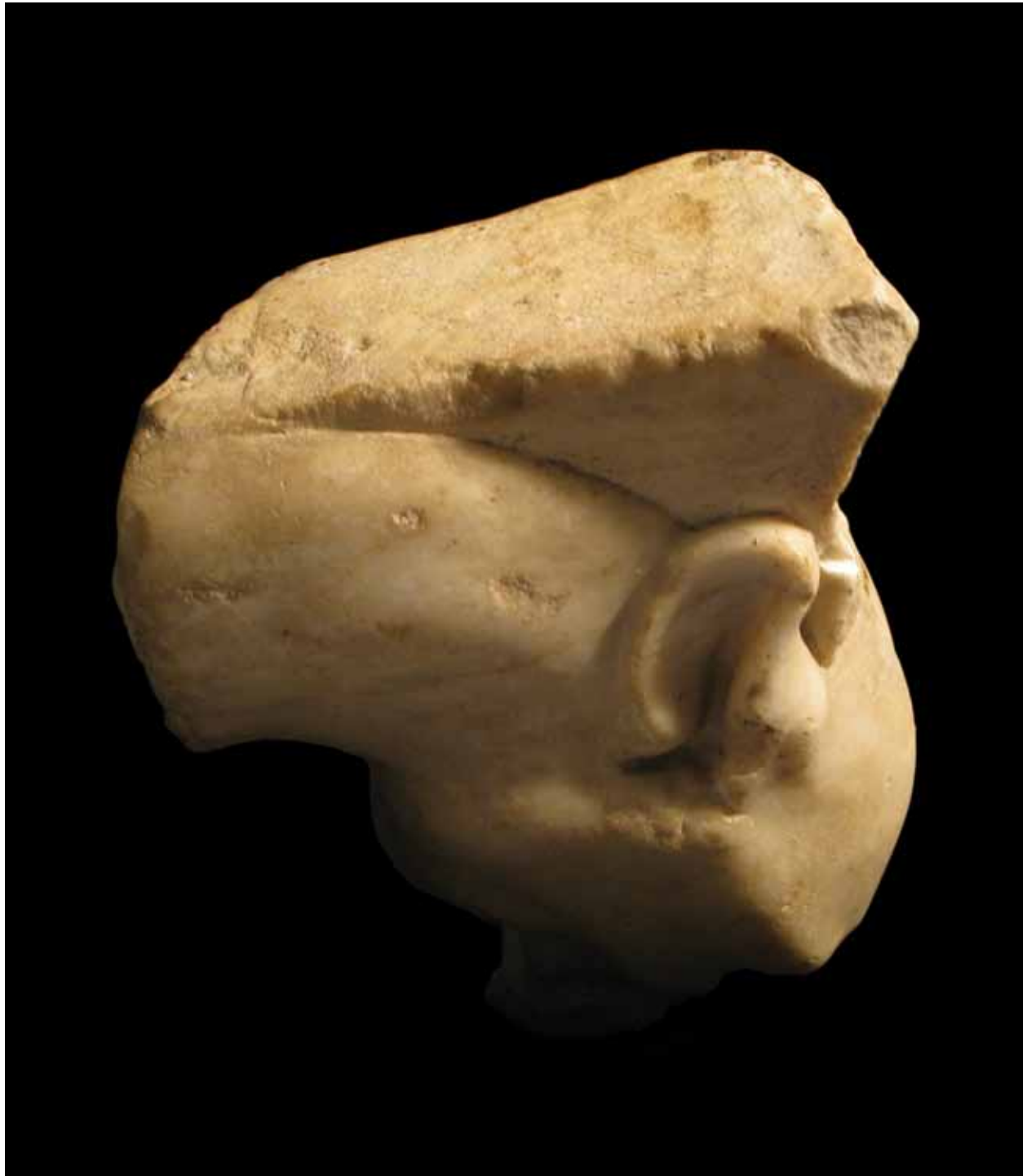
Rossi, F. “Considerazioni su un gruppo di trapezofori lunensi in marmo di Numidia.” *Quaderni: Centro studi Lunensi* 2:64–76.

Tran tam Tinh, V. 1988. *Casa dei cervi*. Rome.

Trendall, A. D. 1967. *The Red-Figured Vases of Lucania, Campania, and Sicily*. Oxford.

*A.M.B.*







### **Silenus**

Roman, 1st century CE

Bronze

H. 0.148 m, W. 0.075 m, D. 0.050 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1976.043.005

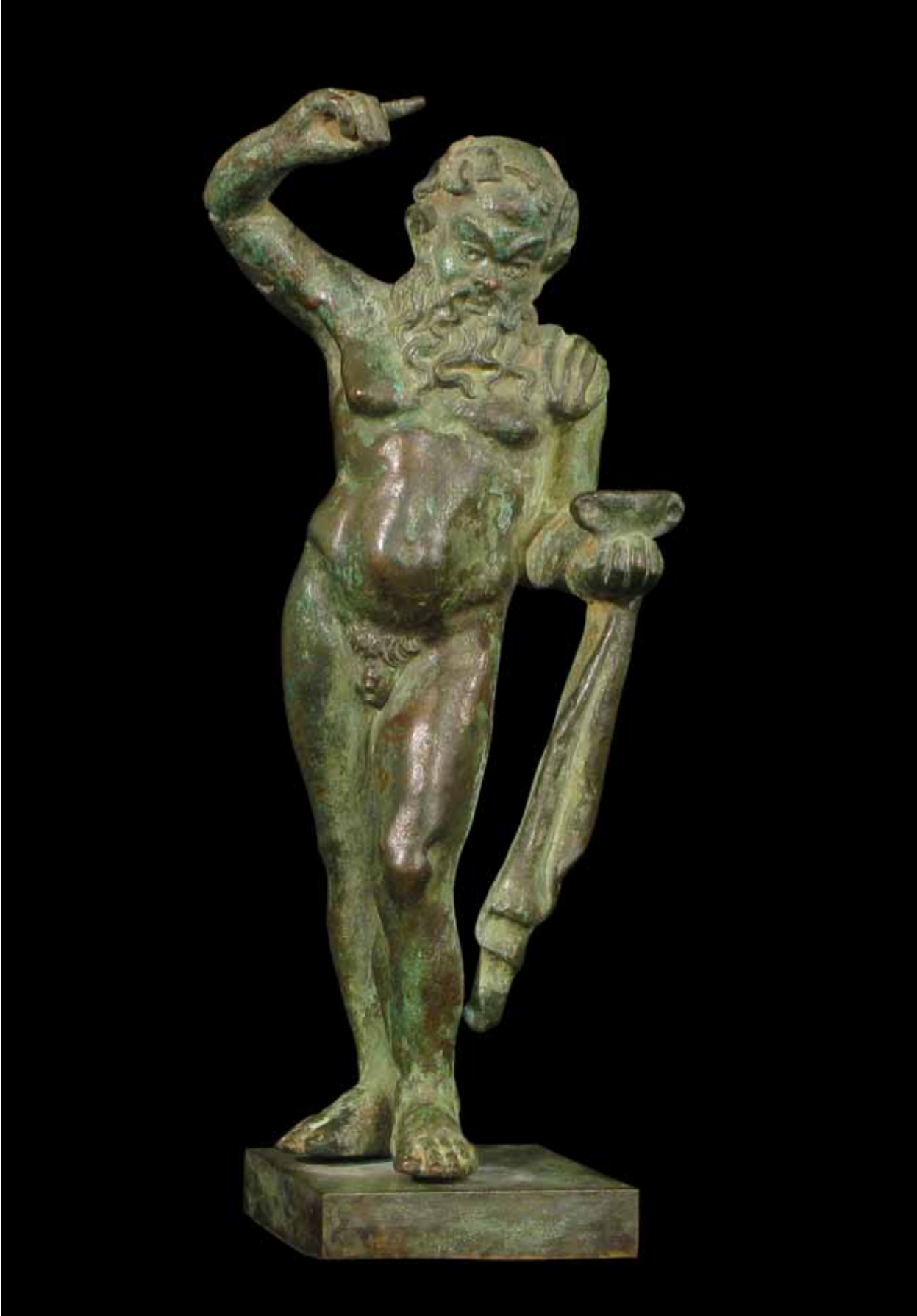
#### *Description*

Solid-cast bronze figurine of silenus. Complete and in very good condition, aside from one crack on back of right leg at mid-thigh. Surface well preserved with dark green patina.

Stands with weight on right leg and left leg slightly advanced. Nude except for piece of cloth draped over top of left shoulder, falling down back, wrapping around left arm, then hanging down to mid-calf. No pin or fastener represented. Holds kylix, or two-handled drinking cup, in left hand. Right arm raised above head and bent at elbow, with index finger extended and two middle fingers touching thumb. Gesture suggests act of pouring wine into cup; may have held wineskin in raised hand. This impression increased by turn of head, down and to left, in direction of cup. Balding head encircled by wreath of ivy. Long beard falls in wavy locks onto shoulders and chest. Wreath and face rendered in great detail. Eyebrows form V-shape, meeting at top of nose. Pupils formed by tiny circular indentations in centers of eyes. Equine ears, characteristic of silenus, point forward. Features otherwise human, lacking usual silenus tail. Body well modeled, with sagging chest, slightly protruding belly, and full, round buttocks. Muscles of torso and legs well defined. Navel visible, pubic hair present around genitalia.

#### *Discussion*

The word *silenus* (in Greek, *silenos*) has both collective and individual associations. It is the name of a particular satyr, a human-horse hybrid, who was a local god or daimon in Asia Minor and the tutor of the Greek god of wine, Dionysos (Roman Bacchus).<sup>1</sup> This Silenus was known for his wisdom and was captured by the Phrygian king Midas. Midas recognized the satyr as a follower of Dionysos and returned him to the god. When Dionysos gave the king the right to choose a gift in return, he foolishly asked that whatever he touched be turned to gold. The mythological Silenus is first mentioned in the fifth century BCE by Herodotus, but



a number of sixth-century-BCE vase paintings depict his capture. The term *silenus* also refers collectively to a group of mythical hybrid creatures. They are mentioned as early as the seventh century BCE in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, where they are said to mate with mountain nymphs in the depths of pleasant caves.<sup>2</sup> They are commonly represented in Greek vase painting with pipes, wineskins, or bunches of grapes, often with nymphs or maenads, and accompanying the god Dionysos. The earliest known association of these creatures with Dionysos appears on the famous François Vase (ca. 570 BCE), made in Athens by the potter Ergotimos and the painter Kleitias. There, biped human-horse hybrids are labeled as *sileni*. Most early Greek *sileni* have the body of a nude man, with human legs and feet but the long ears and tail of a horse. In general, they became progressively more human in appearance and in representation. In the fifth century BCE, *sileni* (by this period also called satyrs, with no differentiation in meaning) were represented as small children, unbearded adolescents, or adults. In Hellenistic and Roman times, some became more caprine, sprouting horns and a short tail, perhaps through association with the demigod Pan.

In the Roman period, small bronze figurines such as this *silenus* appeared in quantity, and many may have been intended as furniture adornment. They appeared as decorative attachments on objects such as candelabra, oil lamps, heating vessels, tables, and cup stands. Some of the figures were related to the function of the object to which they were attached. For example, many elegant lamp stands, often placed in dining rooms, held freestanding figurines from the circle of Bacchus (the Roman name for Dionysos), the god associated with feasting. *Sileni* were particularly appropriate as adornment for cup stands on account of their connection with Bacchus and wine. Figurines associated with Bacchus, the god not only of wine and feasting but also of the theater, may also have been souvenirs of the theater. They probably stood on display in the house, possibly reflecting the social status of the owner as a sophisticated theatergoer and appreciator of art.

A bronze silenus very similar to the Snite figurine decorates the lid of a large Roman oil lamp in the National Museum in Naples.<sup>3</sup> He holds his body in the same position, with his left arm extended, his right arm raised, and his head turned. He also has drapery wrapped around his left arm, an ivy wreath encircling his balding head, equine ears, and no tail. The two pieces are also comparable in the proportions and modeling of the bodies. The Naples piece is from Campania, the area around and including Pompeii and Herculaneum, and probably dates to the first century CE.

Besides their intrinsic value as informative creations of the Greco-Roman world, bronzes like the Snite silenus have also helped to arouse general public interest in classical antiquity. They have both pleased and influenced the taste of modern collectors. In the nineteenth century, a large market developed for reproductions of antiquities discovered in recent excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Particularly popular were bronze figurines like the silenus. In fact, a reproduction of the bronze silenus in Naples mentioned above is one of the objects listed in the 1929 catalog of one of the most famous foundries, the Chiurazzi foundry.<sup>4</sup> The Snite piece might also be an early twentieth-century reproduction, as numerous copies of the Naples silenus would have been made from the foundry's mold of the original bronze.<sup>5</sup> The practice of molding and casting replicas of antiquities flourished in Italian foundries throughout the twentieth century, reproducing ancient objects at original or reduced scale. In addition to their commercial value, bronze and plaster casts are good teaching tools and have been widely acquired by museums and universities in the United States, where access to original classical art is limited. A renewed appreciation of casts has emerged in the past decade, and the Notre Dame School of Architecture recently arranged to acquire a number of them from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for display and teaching in Bond Hall on the Notre Dame campus.



1. Virgil, *Eclogue* 6; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 11.85–145.
2. *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 259–62.
3. Naples Museum inv. no. 72287, published in *Pictorial Catalogue of the National Archaeological Museum, Naples*, microfiche cards 71, 77, and 78. Reproduced in a drawing in Chiurazzi 1929, no. 516.
4. See note 3 above. For the most recent bibliography on the Chiurazzi foundry, see Mattusch and Lie 2005, 342–61.
5. The main difference between the two figurines is that in the Naples figure, the pointed finger of the right hand and the cup held in the left are broken off. However, these features would have been restored in a reproduction.

#### *Comparanda*

Chiurazzi 1929, no. 516 (Naples Museum inv. no. 72287).

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*A.M.B.*







## Architectural Fragments

### 1. Fragment of Wall Decoration

Roman, 2nd century CE (?)

Stone

H. 0.064 m, Max. pres. W. 0.10 m, D. 0.011 m

Gift of Mr. Joseph V. Noble

1968.044.023

#### *Description*

Red stone appliqué in the shape of pilaster capital. Centered anthemion with two pendant leaves on either side.



### 2. Carved Molding from the Temple of Concordia

Roman, Pompeii, 1st century CE

Marble

Max. pres. H. 0.05 m, Max. pres. L. 0.05 m, Max. pres. D. 0.03 m

Gift of Mr. Joseph V. Noble

1968.044.015

#### *Description*

Small fragment of *cyma reversa* molding carved with tongue-and-dart pattern, with fascia above. Marks of fine chisel apparent on top and front faces; some discoloration on right end of fascia face. Cellophane tape (modern) stuck to fascia face toward left end.



### 3. Molding

Roman, Pompeii, ca. 1st century CE

Marble

Max. pres. H. 0.12 m, Max. pres. L. 0.09 m, D. 0.024 m

Gift of Mr. Joseph V. Noble

1968.044.014





### *Description*

Fragment of molding consists of—from bottom to top—cavetto, *cyma reversa* with crisply carved leaf-and-dart design, and fascia. Some black discoloration.

### *Discussion*

One of the most characteristic features of the architecture of classical Greece and Rome is the universal use of moldings. Serving as transitional elements between structural components of a building, these moldings performed significant practical, visual, and conceptual functions. In subsequent periods of classical revival, they functioned as detailed and specific references to the architecture and ideals of classical antiquity.

Decorations modeled on ancient moldings like those in the Snite collection were revived with particular intensity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Greek and Roman architecture served various symbolic purposes for governments, revolutionaries, and private citizens. At the same time, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architectural theorists, who have had tremendous influence on contemporary views of classical antiquity, were interested in directing the new discipline of anthropology toward the analysis of classical form as a means of deducing the very origins of architecture and architectural decoration. Gottfried Semper, a leading classical architect and theorist of the mid- to late nineteenth century, considered architectural decoration worthy of the same attention as the structural aspects of architecture. He railed against scholars whose methodology insisted on stripping a building of its non-utilitarian elements—moldings, mosaics, paint—as a prerequisite for uncovering the essential “truth” of architecture. Semper believed that classical architectural decoration reflected the basic beliefs, practices, and character of the ancients as surely as plan or structure. He approached architectural moldings and appliquéés like the Snite’s by attempting to determine the needs and practices that generated them. Among other things, he concluded that many of the decorations on classical monumental architecture represent permanent stone reminders of the apparatus of ancient



religious celebrations. For him, ancient monumental architectural structures and their decoration were embodiments of a group's collective desire to make permanent the ephemeral constructions used to commemorate important concepts and moments in their community:

The festival apparatus, the improvised scaffolding with all of the special splendor and frills that indicate more precisely the occasion for the festivity and enhance the glorification of the day—covered with decoration, draped with carpets, dressed with boughs and flowers, adorned with festoons and garlands, fluttering banners and trophies—this is the *motive* of the *permanent* monument.<sup>1</sup>

For Semper, to find ancient carvings was to find artifacts of ancient ritual and celebration. But whatever theoretical approach a viewer brings to classical moldings, there is no question that they represent specific solutions to specific problems and that they can, therefore, provide significant insight into the minds of the ancients.

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1. Semper 1989, 255–56.

*Comparanda*

Miller 1994, 269–73, pl. 84, figs. b and d.

Shoe 1950, pl. 109, fig. 2.

Strong 1953, pl. 6, fig. 3; pl. 8.

Viola 1994, pl. 94, figs. a–c.

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C.L.G.









### **Painted Bust of a Youth**

Egypt, 1st–3rd centuries CE

Painted wood

Max. pres. H. 0.23 m, Max. pres. W. 0.24 m, Max. pres. D. 0.02 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James. W. Alsdorf

1983.058.011

#### *Description*

Bust of youth painted in encaustic or tempera on wooden panel. Head turned slightly to right. Eyes, brows, nose, and chin outlined with dark, heavy lines. White-gray colored flesh with added pink at cheeks, chin, lips, and side of nose. Added gray at right side of neck and under eyes. Head covering (helmet?) has dark green edge at forehead from which at least twelve green rays extend upward. Poorly preserved white circle circumscribes bust. Background reddish-brown inside circle, black outside. Paint in general poorly preserved in all areas, with many chips missing, especially around edges of head. Large patch of discoloration appears to right of bust. Parts of right side of chin and nose painted on thick patch of orange-brown paste, indicating (modern?) repair and repainting. Upper right edge of wooden panel cut at oblique angle: likely a modern cut, since painting would probably have been centered within rectangular border.

#### *Discussion*

Painting on wooden panels has a long history in ancient Greece and Rome and was a common medium for portraits, maps, and other portable images.<sup>1</sup> However, because wood does not survive well on land in any but the driest conditions, the vast majority of panel paintings have long since disappeared. Spectacular exceptions to this lacuna in the history of ancient painting are the so-called Fayum portraits of Roman-occupied Egypt, to which the Snite painting is closely related.

Named for the region that has produced the most examples, Fayum portraits (also known as “mummy portraits”) are life-size paintings used in the final preparation of a mummified body. They may take the form either of a full-length portrait painted directly on a linen burial shroud, or of a portrait bust painted on a very thin wooden panel inserted into the mummy wrappings around the head.<sup>2</sup>



The creation of a lasting image of the deceased was a crucial aspect of Egyptian burial practices for over three millennia. Ancient Egyptians believed that an individual's life force, or *ka*, could achieve immortality if provided with a permanent dwelling after the death of the body. If carefully preserved through mummification, the corpse itself could receive the *ka*. As additional insurance, artificial substitutes for the corpse were created and placed within the tomb in order to guarantee that the *ka* could be properly housed in case of accidental destruction or decay of the body. These replacements took the form of statues or sarcophagi carved to represent the deceased. In Roman Egypt, this ancient tradition of funerary image-making persisted in the use of painted Fayum portraits. More than serving simply as a lasting testament to an individual's appearance in life, a Fayum portrait was part of a magical formula meant to fulfill Egyptian expectations of eternal existence.

Although Fayum portraits performed a traditional function in Egyptian religion, their painting style marked a drastic departure from the idealism and abstraction that had characterized much of earlier Egyptian art. In contrast to art from previous periods, Fayum portraits are noted for their high degree of realism: features such as skin tone, facial hair, and bone structure are painstakingly rendered in most images of this type. These portraits, especially those of women, also carefully depict contemporary fashions in hairstyle, jewelry, and clothing.<sup>3</sup> The striking sense of immediacy in Fayum portraits has long led scholars to believe that they were painted from life (or shortly after the subject's death).<sup>4</sup>

The new true-to-life aesthetic demonstrated in the Fayum portraits developed in Egypt through exposure to Greek and Roman portrait techniques. Realistic portraiture may have first been introduced to Egypt by Macedonian Greeks as early as the fourth century BCE.<sup>5</sup> Painted primarily in the first–third centuries CE, Fayum portraits were profoundly influenced by contemporary Roman portraits. The faithful recording of an individual's likeness is one

of the most enduring legacies of Roman portraiture, as demonstrated by the many portraits of the Roman imperial family that were regularly distributed and copied throughout the Roman provinces.

Because of its small size and uncharacteristically thick wooden panel, the Snite painting was not a Fayum or “mummy” portrait in the traditional sense, as it was not meant to be affixed to a mummified corpse. Nevertheless, it displays a style closely related to Fayum portraits. Although the painting is more schematic than life-size Fayum portraits, its large, expressive eyes and added pink and gray pigment give its subject a lifelike, youthful, individualized appearance. Also reminiscent of painting from the Fayum are the thick lines that outline the chin, eyes, and nose.

The panel probably belongs to a small group of little-known panel paintings from the Fayum and elsewhere in Roman Egypt. These paintings were also funerary portraits but were intended to be framed and hung in a domestic setting in order to commemorate (and perhaps even to worship) the deceased members of the household. One such portrait now in Cairo depicts the bust of young boy that, like this portrait, is framed by a painted roundel.

The head covering worn by the Snite youth is difficult to identify, as head coverings of any kind are rare in Fayum portraits. One funerary portrait now in Moscow depicts a man wearing a jeweled helmet of the rounded-calotte type with lower trim, a type known from Hellenistic Egypt.<sup>6</sup> Although the characteristic earflaps and knobby crest are missing, the Snite panel may similarly depict a young, helmeted warrior. If so, it may once have hung in the family house of a fallen Egyptian soldier.

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1. Panel paintings depicting Roman military conquests were carried in triumphal processions, for example (Ling 1991, 10–11).



2. The panels are usually no more than half a centimeter thick.
3. The fashions depicted in Fayum portraits closely mimic those set by the imperial family in Rome. For this reason, Fayum portraits can sometimes be dated with great precision.
4. Walker 1997, 14–15.
5. Doxiadis 1995, 84–85. The Greek fourth-century painter Apelles, for example, was renowned for his lifelike portraits (Pliny *NH* 35.36.88).
6. Parlasca 1966, 65.

*Comparanda*

Sörries 2003, 106, no. 18 (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, C.G. 33269); 124–25, no. 24 (J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 74-AI-20, 21, 22); 126, no. 25 (Pushkin Museum, Moscow, 4233/I 1a 5786).

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*G.P.H.*







### **Head of Roman Matron**

Roman, ca. 100 CE, with slight recutting in late 4th/early 5th century CE

Marble on modern mount

Max. pres. H. 0.17 m, Max. pres. W. 0.11 m, D. 0.110 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1987.035.039

#### *Description*

Smaller than life-size portrait head of a Roman matron, in rose beige marble. Lower part of nose missing but rest of head in good condition. Hairstyle and facial expression date portrait to early Flavian period, ca. 100 CE, but closely set drilled pupils and upward gaze suggest head slightly reworked in late fourth or early fifth century CE. Hairstyle typical of those worn by members of Emperor Titus's family, such as his second wife Marcia Furnilla and daughter Julia Titi. Front section of hair shows significant drill work used to delineate piles of curls. Traces of red paint visible in deeper channels of curls. Pair of rolled braids separate forehead curls from sections of twisted hair, which separate this front section of curls from ten shallowly carved vertically oriented plaits that cover back of head. All gathered together in large braid at nape of neck. Two wisps of hair on neck behind ears. Ears long and narrow with drill holes in lobes for separately attached earrings.

#### *Discussion*

This Roman bust is a typical portrait of a respectable and wealthy matron of the second century CE. She is somewhat past her prime: her cheeks and the flesh around her mouth have started to sag, and her jawline has lost the firmness of youth. The rolls of skin that have formed on her neck, however, do not necessarily convey the same message. Rather, they appear on sculptures of Roman women of all ages to signify beauty, and have thus come to be called "Venus rings" by modern scholars.

The white head turns slightly to the right, and the face tilts almost imperceptibly upward. Originally, the eyes would have been painted to look straight ahead, but later—probably in the late fourth or early fifth century CE—a hole representing the pupil was drilled high in the





orb of each eye, creating the effect of a strong upward gaze. Piled on the woman's forehead immediately above her eyes are luxurious curls that still retain traces of their original red paint. Toward the crown of her head, these curls give way to elaborate braids that are eventually bound together at the nape of her neck.

As a portrait, this sculpture surely bears a physical resemblance to the woman depicted, but it also attempts to convey a social and spiritual likeness. This is accomplished in part through the contrast between the woman's face and hairstyle, a contrast characteristic of Flavian portrait sculpture. Her face is not unattractive, but the seriousness of her expression and the slightly sagging flesh were probably not intended as highlights of her physical beauty. Her calm expression and subtle signs of age convey the air of a stable, mature woman capable of running a household. She displays a *gravitas* consistent with what the Romans valued in a matron. Yet her complex hairstyle suggests female vanity and wealth. This coiffure took hours to arrange, as well as to maintain. Curling irons intended for just such projects have been found in excavations at Pompeii and elsewhere. Such an elaborate hairstyle, with intricate curls and braids, testifies to the social status of a family that was wealthy enough to have slaves who served as ladies' maids. Present in the Sute portrait, then, is the peculiar Flavian agenda of reviving traditional Republican values, which stressed hard work and restrained luxury, while simultaneously celebrating a taste for wealth and prosperity that the Roman Empire brought to many of its citizens.

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*Comparanda*

Harrison 1967, U22, fig. 31.

Richter 1914, 63, fig. 5.

Thompson 1948, 69, pl. 57.

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C.L.G.





### **Head of Youth**

Roman, 2nd century CE

Marble head on a modern mount

Max. pres. H. 0.45 m, Max. pres. W. 0.33 m, Max. pres. D. 0.23 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1973.079.007

#### *Description*

Larger than life-size blue-veined white marble head of youth on modern mount. Head broken from body midway down left side of neck and where neck met shoulder on right. Part of lower section of nose missing but other facial details well preserved. Large section of back of head broken off from just behind crown; edges and surfaces of break considerably worn. Locks of hair spring from crown of head, carved in increasingly high relief toward face, and form deeply carved curls across brow and around head. Curls separated from lower relief locks by what appears to be thin encircling fillet. Fillet carved only in a short section in center above forehead; probably painted elsewhere.

#### *Discussion*

In the absence of associated inscriptions or iconographical attributes, it is hard to know whether this greater than life-size sculpture represents a person or a divinity. Its scale and the valuable material from which it is made, a yellowish marble with blue veins, suggest that it was created for either a public space or the interior of a wealthy home. Its lack of significant weathering may indicate that it stood in a portico, sheltered from the elements.

The seemingly contradictory stylistic elements found in this piece, such as the juxtaposition of angular elements (for example, the bridge of the nose) and soft ones (such as the flesh of the lower face), represent the second-century-CE Roman practice of combining elements of various earlier Greek sculptural styles in a single sculpture. By that time, when the Roman Empire had reached its greatest geographical extent, it had absorbed many elements from the various artistic traditions that existed within its borders. From an early stage in Rome's



expansion, Greek art had been highly prized: original Greek works were brought back to Rome, famous Greek sculptures were copied, and Greek sculptural styles were imitated. The sculptor of the Snyte head has not simply imitated a single Greek style but has blended two, creating a pastiche of the Early Classical and the Hellenistic. The low forehead, the waves of hair brought forward from the crown of the head, and the sharp edges of the bridge of the nose and inner eyebrows harken back to the Early Classical period. The lips and eyes, however, as well as the turn and tilt of the head, borrow from a stylistic tradition used to portray Hellenistic rulers. Full, parted lips helped create an impression of physical passion and vivacity. The large, upward-looking eyes recalled the portraits of Alexander the Great and, therefore, associated the ruler with the intense personality, keen intelligence, and almost divine accomplishments of the man then considered the greatest conqueror in history. The details of the eyes would have been rendered in paint.

In the modern world, the contradictions inherent in artistic pastiche can seem awkward and aesthetically questionable. Yet the mixing of elements in the Snyte head demonstrates the Roman capacity for projecting a desired image by amalgamating qualities from different sculptural styles, with different historical and ideological associations. The Early Classical style was associated with the birth of Classical Athens, and Hellenistic ruler portraits represented those Greek nations and leaders that the Romans esteemed, conquered, and emulated. There seems to have been a general belief, expressed most clearly by the rhetorician Seneca the Elder, that sculptors must not strive to produce an exact replica of an existing sculpture because “the imitator can never be equal to the creator.”<sup>1</sup> Instead, sculptors should, as Quintilian advised, isolate the best aspects of different painters’ and sculptors’ works, blending and transforming them into a new creation.<sup>2</sup> The borrowed components needed to be recognizable in order to carry forward their meaning, but in combining various elements, the new work took on an entirely



unique significance. In the Snite head, the sculptor has created a compelling balance between power and order by mixing the passionate temperament of a Hellenistic ruler with the self-control demonstrated in sculpted figures of the Early Classical tradition.

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1. Seneca the Elder *Controversiae* 1.1.6

2. Quintillian *Institutio* 12.10.3–9.

### *Comparanda*

Gazda 1995, 153, fig. 5; Robinson, 277; Shear 1935, 444, fig. 9; Thompson 1953, 25, pl. 28.

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C.L.G.



### **Lion Head Spout**

Roman, 2nd century CE

Marble

Max. pres. H. 0.42 m, Max. pres. W. 0.33 m, Max. pres. D. 0.17 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1987.035.029

#### *Description*

Life-size marble sculpture of lion head. Highly geometricized, smoothly polished face surrounded by deeply carved, heavily drilled mane, except beneath jaw, where roughly tooled. Hole of open mouth pierces entire thickness of marble, from face to unfinished rear surface.

#### *Discussion*

The powerful gaze of this lion inspires questions about the sculpture's original use and the reaction it was intended to inspire in its viewers. A deeply carved and intricately curling mane of thick hair frames the animal's face on the top and two sides. The strong skeletal and muscular structure of the face is rendered with grooves, ridges, and knobs that form a clearly articulated, symmetrical, geometric surface pattern. The round eyes are set in deep sockets, and the mouth is open, baring large, sharp canines on top and bottom. The overall impression is of power and primal rage. The flat, unfinished nature of the rear surface indicates that the sculpture was visible only from the front.

The circular cavity of the mouth extends through the entire thickness of the marble sculpture, sloping up and widening from front to back, forming a funnel that originally channeled water from above and behind, through and out the mouth. Common in Roman architecture, water spouts in the form of lions' heads could be found on the eaves of temples and in fountain houses. The emphasis of practical structure through the use of decoration was part of the mindset of classical monumentality.







The tradition of lion head spouts goes back to the Archaic period in Greek architecture, and their visual function and impact were related to those of the pedimental sculpture of early Greek temples. There, ferocious beasts—monsters or carnivores—directly confronted those approaching the temple, directly engaging them with their fearsome, awesome gaze. The most basic purpose of Greek monumental architecture was to lift the viewer out of the everyday, to transform his or her state of mind into one appropriate for the approach to divinity, and critical to this transformation was the experience of pedimental figures and other sculpture that decorated the roof.

The exaggerated geometry and deep carving of the Snite lion's facial features and mane are distinctive and unusual and might suggest that it was intended to be viewed from a great distance, perhaps high above on the eaves of a roof. But an almost exact comparison is found on a marble strigilated sarcophagus in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It is Roman and dates to 220 CE.<sup>1</sup> After their original use as coffins Roman sarcophagi were sometimes transformed into water troughs or fountain bases.<sup>2</sup> The "holes cut through the mouths of both lions indicate that [the] sculpture was reused as a magnificent container for water".<sup>3</sup> In this secondary context, the holes served basically as overflow valves.

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1. *Heilbrunn* 2005.258

2. Picon 2007, 1

3. *Ibid.*

*Comparanda*

Broneer 1973, 151–53.

*Heilbrunn* 2005.258

Stamper 2005, *passim*.



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C.A.M.

M.C.K.





**Acanthus Medallion with Human Head**

Roman, eastern provinces, 2nd century CE

Gray volcanic stone

Max. pres. H. 0.63 m, Max. pres. W. 0.59 m, D.. 0.16 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1981.090.007

*Description*

Fragment of architectural sculpture in gray volcanic stone. Relief plaque of acanthus-leaf wreath with human head in center. Irregular, roughly circular outline suggests it was cut out from a larger plaque and removed from its original context. Stone is porous, with somewhat weathered, pitted front surface, particularly on right side of nose. Traces of chisel on sides and back, and channels left by running drill in veins of acanthus leaves.

*Discussion*

In its material, subject, and style, this architectural fragment appears to have been created in the second century CE in a region known as the Hauran, in modern-day southern Syria. The Hauran was an area of volcanic mountains and fertile agricultural plains inhabited primarily by a large, relatively prosperous farming community that created a durable architecture from the abundant black volcanic stone that lay close at hand. The highly tensile yet relatively lightweight nature of this building material meant that it could be used in place of wood—a boon in this area where timber was scarce. Thanks to the hardness of the stone, a large number of residential structures remain to this day, and the sculptural elements of many buildings tend to be well preserved.

The original location of this particular fragment is somewhat hard to determine. Its large scale and the high quality of its carving (given the porous nature of the material) suggest that it came from a large public building, perhaps a temple, though unfortunately no such structure survives intact in the Hauran. It could come from a frieze or, since its good condition suggests a well-sheltered environment, perhaps a ceiling coffer.





The face is heart shaped, with a low brow; long, angular eyebrows; large eyes with raised irises and rope-like eyelids; rounded cheeks; and a mouth fashioned in a crooked smile. It is framed by sideburns or locks of hair that hang in long, spiraling curls down to the jawline and by a row of corkscrew curls that run in waves across the forehead. Stylistically, the head resembles Nabatean sculpture, suggesting a date after the first century CE, when the capital of the Nabateans was moved from Petra to the Hauran.

This Nabatean figural style is merged here with the Roman convention of depicting a human head or human figure with acanthus leaves. The head is nestled in a bed of six acanthus leaves carved in high relief; where the leaves swell outward, they are detached completely from the sculptural ground. Long drill channels and the shadowed patterns they create lend a delicacy to the foliage that is difficult to achieve in such rough, porous stone. Imperial busts, particularly those created in the eastern Roman provinces, were occasionally set amid acanthus leaves, and though in antiquity acanthus was closely connected with death and often accompanied posthumous portraits of the emperor, the leaves also signaled his immortality.

Perhaps more immediately appropriate to this piece, acanthus leaves appear to have also symbolized the divine power of luxuriant growth and vitality. A combination of acanthus leaf and human figure is found on the small temple of Zeus Sosipolis in the Magnesia agora. The epithet “Sosipolis” presents Zeus as the savior of the city who ensures, most specifically, a good harvest. Perhaps the Snite piece too was originally linked to the supplication of divine forces that protected the inhabitants of a farming center.

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*Comparanda*

Glueck 1937, 367, fig. 5; 371, fig. 10; 374, fig. 13.

Glueck 1939, 382, figs. 3–4; 384, fig. 9.

Markoe 2003, 94, fig. 78.



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*C.L.G.*





### **Funerary Bust of Roman Cavalryman**

Roman, Palmyra, 2nd century CE

Limestone

Max. pres. H. 0.48 m, Max. pres. W. 0.41 m, D. 0.210 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1969.018.004

#### *Description*

Rectangular limestone funerary stele with relief bust of Roman cavalryman. Cavalryman depicted from waist up. Bearded with full head of wavy hair. Long-sleeved tunic with small round fibula and baldric. Nose broken off, some damage to lips. Arms bent at elbow, hands at waist in front of torso. Hilt of a sword held in left hand, unidentifiable object in right. Small relief figure above cavalryman's right shoulder, possibly a groom, wears long tunic with folds; right arm bent at elbow and held across body. Head of groomsman severely damaged. Above left shoulder of cavalryman is relief of horse head and neck. Horse wears bridle and has short cropped mane.

#### *Discussion*

This limestone sculpture is a funerary monument of a Roman cavalryman from the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. It attests to the importance of the Roman military in this region in the second century CE and illustrates the desire of those with influence in the area to memorialize themselves with monuments commemorating the source of their power and prominence, namely their attachment to Roman institutions and culture. Only four other similar sculptures are known, and they are all associated with the Syrian city of Palmyra.

Palmyra lay on the eastern edge of the Roman Empire at the junction between important trade routes. An ancient city even in Roman times, Palmyra had developed a rich culture through the multiple influences of successive Near Eastern powers that held sway over its territory. These included the ancient Mesopotamian cultures of the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians, as well as the Hellenistic empire established by Alexander the Great.





Thus the Palmyrene region had a rich artistic heritage separate from the Roman traditions that are evident in this sculpture.

Indicators of profession are not very common in Roman funerary monuments. Most grave markers are simple inscriptions that display only the full legal name of the deceased and thus indicate familial connections and citizenship. Those connections were originally emphasized by the regular arrangement of the markers in groups of family members or associates.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, no information is preserved about the exact original location of the Snite monument, as it was purchased on the art market and was, perhaps, unearthed at a time before the value of a known findspot was fully appreciated. In addition, it preserves no inscription. However, the fact that it is a stone figural monument automatically separates it from the bulk of common Roman grave markers. Such a tomb marker signals a financial and social status above the ordinary.

Stylistically and iconographically, the Snite bust is much like works produced in Palmyra circa 150–180 CE. All other known Palmyrene funerary sculptures of soldiers have inscriptions containing information about military service that help to establish their date. These Roman cavalymen are all shown in busts, arms in front of chest or stomach and holding the hilt of a sword and, in some cases, a whip. A horse appears over the left shoulder of each figure. All of these soldier-horsemen are shown wearing a *chlamys* or *sagum*, a cape-like outer garment worn by men engaged in active pursuits, particularly horsemen. Other precise similarities between the Snite cavalryman and figurative stone sculptures from the same region and time period include the conventions for carving the beard, hair, eyebrows, eyes, and lips.

The Snite sculpture is a typical blend of local and Roman traditions. Palmyrene sculpture of this period is characterized by round-faced, robust figures with extremely symmetrical features. The chin has a distinct protrusion, and the eyes are almond-shaped. The stance is



fully frontal, and the folds of garments are carved with sharp edges. However, the sculptors or patrons of the group of cavalymen monuments to which the figure belongs sought to Romanize their subjects by incorporating elements common on military tomb markers from the western part of the Roman Empire, particularly Italy. For example, the particular configuration of the long-sleeved tunic under the *chlamys*, the fastening of the *chlamys* at the left shoulder with a round fibula, and the arrangement of the *chlamys* falling down the figure's back all appear on numerous Roman soldier statues from the west, but are rare at Palmyra. The straps that cross the figure's chest are also reminiscent of the baldric worn by western Roman cavalymen. Palmyrene swords, in contrast, were not supported by a baldric but by a belt at the waist. Finally, though the diminutive figure above the cavalryman's right shoulder is somewhat comparable to images of children on Palmyrene funerary monuments, it is much closer to the image of the groom, or *calo*, seen in western models, particularly in representations of Roman soldiers. The groom is usually shown extending his arm toward the horse as if to hold the rein or bridle, as the Snite figure does. Children in Palmyrene funerary sculptures, though often dressed similarly to this figure, are usually shown with birds or grapes in their hands.

These Romanizing elements could be the result of an influx of foreign artists who followed the Roman army to Palmyra or of specific instructions from the western Roman officers. Or they could result from local Palmyrene soldiers adopting Romanizing styles and iconography as a way of illustrating their attachment to the controlling military and economic system.<sup>2</sup>

By the mid-second century CE, Palmyra had become one of the richest cities in the empire. Its strategic position astride the main caravan route from the Mediterranean into Asia allowed it access to some of the most profitable commodities of the time, including textiles, spices, perfumes, jewelry, and precious stones. Fine wide streets, fora, porticoes, arches, and



magnificent public buildings adorned the city. From the time of Trajan (98–117 CE), Palmyra had been an important recruiting station for the Roman army. The Palmyrene cohorts of mounted archers and armored cavalry had been used to great advantage all over the empire. Shortly after this monument was carved, Palmyra was granted the rank of titular colony, and some of her leading citizens were elected to the Roman Senate. The Snite cavalryman represents the fusion of Roman military power with local Palmyrene artistic traditions and thus illustrates one of the central features of Roman imperial success, the ability to assimilate, co-opt, and manipulate local elites into the service of the Roman imperial agenda.

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1. There is some evidence that similarly shaped grave stele from Palmyra were slabs covering grave niches or loculi. Such burials were probably arranged in subterranean chambers called *hypogea* or small structures containing many niches called *columbaria*.

2. There were three kinds of cavalry in the region of Palmyra. Cavalrymen and cameleers served the *auxilia* of the Roman army; local Palmyrene militias protected and patrolled the caravan routes; and privately hired guards escorted the caravans.

#### *Comparanda*

Albertson 2000, Pl. 31, fig. b (Louvre, Paris, inv. no. AO 14924); Pl. 32, fig. a (Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, inv. no. 3749); Pl. 32, fig. b (Museo Provinciale Iripino, Avellino, Italy, inv. no. 66).

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*J.M.D.*





### **Panther Chariot Attachment**

Roman, Thrace, 2nd or 3rd century CE

Bronze

Panther: H. 0.066 m, L. 0.117 m; Base: H. 0.015 m, L. 0.185 m,  
W. 0.075 m, D. 0.003 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1987.035.041

#### *Description*

Solid-cast figurine on solid-cast curved plinth, probably attached after casting. Plinth curved on both long sides, with concentric inner and outer edges. Cat turns toward outer edge indicating it as front. Narrow lip on underside of plinth along outer edge and right short edge suggests it slipped over something, perhaps end of curved component of chariot. Body of panther complete and well preserved with no breaks or cracks. Base also complete except for tips of two corners on left side. Dark brown, shiny patina with heavy corrosion on top and bottom of plinth.

Clearly incised spots over entire body of leopard (called “panther” by modern convention). Probably female, with what appear to be teats indicated on underside. Stands with left legs slightly advanced. Tail wraps around inside of rear right leg, encircling foot. Tongue protrudes from wide open mouth, perhaps roaring. Significant attention to detail in numerous incisions and ridges. Fur indicated by lines on face below ears and on lower jaw. Whiskers and nose indicated by inscribed lines on snout. Eyes indicated by raised circles with indentations for pupil. Ridges along upper edge of eyes mark eyebrows. Ears stand upright with hollowed insides and tufts of hair, again indicated by incised lines. Four grooves on panther’s right side suggest ribs. Fur indicated by incised lines on back of both right legs and on tip of tail.

#### *Discussion*

This panther would have been one of a pair. Similar pairs of panther figurines on curved plinths have been found in Thracian burials of the Roman period,<sup>1</sup> some nearly identical in pose to this piece, with head turned and tongue protruding from an open mouth. Reconstructions have most often placed these objects on a chariot box, on the top at the front.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Snite panther, the Thracian pieces are hollow cast and, rather than a lip around the outer edge of the plinth, have holes through which pins would have fastened the plinth to the wooden frame





of the chariot. Lipped plinths of the same form as the Snite piece are, however, common for attachments, including panther figurines, and despite the difference in means of attachment, the other close similarities between the Snite and Thracian pieces suggest that they all occupied similar positions on a chariot.

While horse-drawn chariots originally developed for practical reasons, they could also be used as elaborate displays of status. In Roman times, horses and chariots were the appropriate conveyance for the emperor and his noble entourage in ceremony, hunting, warfare, and sport. The chariot was used similarly by the aristocracy as a luxury vehicle, and the prestige associated with it made it worthy of ceremonial burial with its wealthy owner. In fact, horse-and-chariot burials occurred at various times and in different cultures, as early as the beginning of the third millennium BCE and in such widespread areas as central and southeastern Europe and Mesopotamia.

Funerary chariots with elaborate attachments like the Snite panther attest to the great prosperity of Roman Thrace (far northeastern Greece) in the late second and early third centuries CE.<sup>3</sup> They have often been found with horses still harnessed in rich trappings. The wealthiest chariots were four-wheeled and decorated with ornamental metalwork, including bronze busts and statuettes and silver reliefs depicting a variety of Greco-Roman deities and mythological scenes. The Thracian burial of which the Snite panther was a part would have occurred in a tumulus and would have included many other precious possessions, perhaps even a trusty steed and a favorite wife.

The panther was an especially popular motif for the decoration of funerary chariots and appears on various fittings, handles, and appliqués. It and the subjects of other attachments (centaurs, Amazons, silenoi, Herakles, Hermes, Dionysos, etc.) fit well with the Dionysiac themes common on funerary chariots:<sup>4</sup> panthers draw or accompany the chariot of the god



Dionysos (the Roman Bacchus). Thrace itself was an area particularly sacred in Dionysian worship, even becoming the seat of an oracle of the god.<sup>5</sup> Legend told that Dionysos, driven mad by Hera because he was the bastard son of her consort Zeus, wandered the lands of the East until, finally, the Phrygian goddess Cybele cured his madness and initiated him into her mysterious rituals. He spread her cult throughout Asia and then returned to Greece from the East (from Asia Minor or perhaps even India, which he was thought to have conquered),<sup>6</sup> coming first to Thrace.

Dionysiac scenes were among the most popular for Roman sarcophagi; the majority date to the time of this piece, the decades around 200 CE. Many show the triumphal return of the god from the East riding in a chariot drawn by panthers, animals also closely associated with Cybele.<sup>7</sup> As in the Snite piece, these panthers are often female, with frontal face and open mouth and fur around the head and legs. The owner or builder of the chariot to which the Snite panther belonged was following these traditions when choosing its decoration.

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1. Two silver-plated female chariot panthers are in the J. Peytel collection: Seure 1904, 221, no. 20; Venedikov 1960, pl. 96, fig. D. Two paired bronze statuettes of female panthers from Slavonia are in the Budapest National Museum: Hampel 1898, 284, figs. 5–7; Mercklin 1933, fig. 4. Two bronze statuettes of a male and female panther are in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris: Babelon and Blanchet 1895, nos. 1122, 1123. A reclining panther with inscribed spots is in the Wüsten Estate: Braun 1857, no. 1.

2. Seure (1904) reconstructs a chariot with such a placement for a panther figurine, 210–37, figs. 35–36, no. 20; Venedikov (1960) suggests for the same piece both this and an additional position: on curved projections at the base of the chariot box, on either side of the place where the pole that connected the yoke bar at the base of the horse's neck attached to the axle of the chariot, pls. 96–97, fig. D. Cf. Hoddinott 1975, 207, pl. 135, actual reconstruction of a chariot from Trite Mogili, where the metal parts of the four-wheeled chariot were found in situ.

3. Numerous attachments have been recovered from tumuli in the Kjustendil district dating to the second and third centuries CE, including one of the Notre Dame type (on a curved base) of a reclining figure of Strymon, a river-god of Edonia in Thrace: *Fol*, 2004, 335, no. 323e. Funerary chariots from tumuli in the area of Stara Zagora of the same date include an attachment of the





Notre Dame type of a fallen Amazon: Venedikov 1960, pl. 26, nos. 82–85; Hoddinott 1975, 208, no. 136. Various other attachments of the Notre Dame type of unknown provenance have been dated similarly: Mercklin 1933, 90, fig. 3, and Venedikov 1960, pl. 43, nos. 151–52, pl. 45, no. 159, a centaur; Mercklin 1933, 87, fig. 1, and Venedikov 1960, pl. 55b, no. 194, Herakles holding a drinking-cup; Mercklin 1933, fig. 2, and Venedikov 1960, pl. 55b, no. 193, Hermes.

4. On Dionysiac funerary chariots in general, see Alföldi 1939. For examples of these subjects on attachments, see note 3 above. Centaurs led the chariot of Dionysos; Amazons accompanied Dionysos to India from Egypt (Diod. 3.74.2) and fought against Dionysos in Asia Minor (Paus. 7.2.7); silenoi and Herakles are often among the followers of Dionysos; and Hermes saved the child Dionysos from Hera (Apollod. 3.4.3; Paus. 3.18.11).

5. Herod. 7.111; Paus. 9.30.9.

6. The story of Dionysos's travels is told in the following ancient sources. Dionysos in the East: Apollod. 3.4.4, 3.5.1; Eur. Ba. 13–20; Diod. 3.62–74. Travels from Asia to Europe through Thrace: Apollod. 3.5.1–2; Diod. 3.65.4–6. Origin in India: Diod. 3.63.3. Conquest of India and return in triumph: Paus. 10.29.4; Diod. 3.65.7, 3.73.7.

7. For sarcophagi depicting panthers and tigers drawing the chariot of Dionysos, see Matz 1968a, 164–69; pl. 69, no. 59; pl. 71, no. 58; pls. 76–77, no. 58A. See also Matz 1968b, 279–86; pls. 121–22, nos. 96–98; pl. 124, no. 99; pls. 126–27, nos. 100–101; pl. 168, no. 148; pls. 170–72, nos. 142–43 and 145–46. Turcan 1966, pls. 10c, 16b, 25c, 32a, 35, 37a, 57a.

#### *Comparanda*

Babelon and Blanchet 1895, nos. 1122–23.

Hampel 1898, 284, figs. 5–7.

Mercklin 1933, fig. 4.

Seure 1904, no. 20.

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*A.M.B.*





### **Theater Mask**

Roman, Asia Minor, ca. 300 CE

Marble

H. 0.304 m, W. 0.252 m, D. 0.116 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1973.079.005

#### *Description*

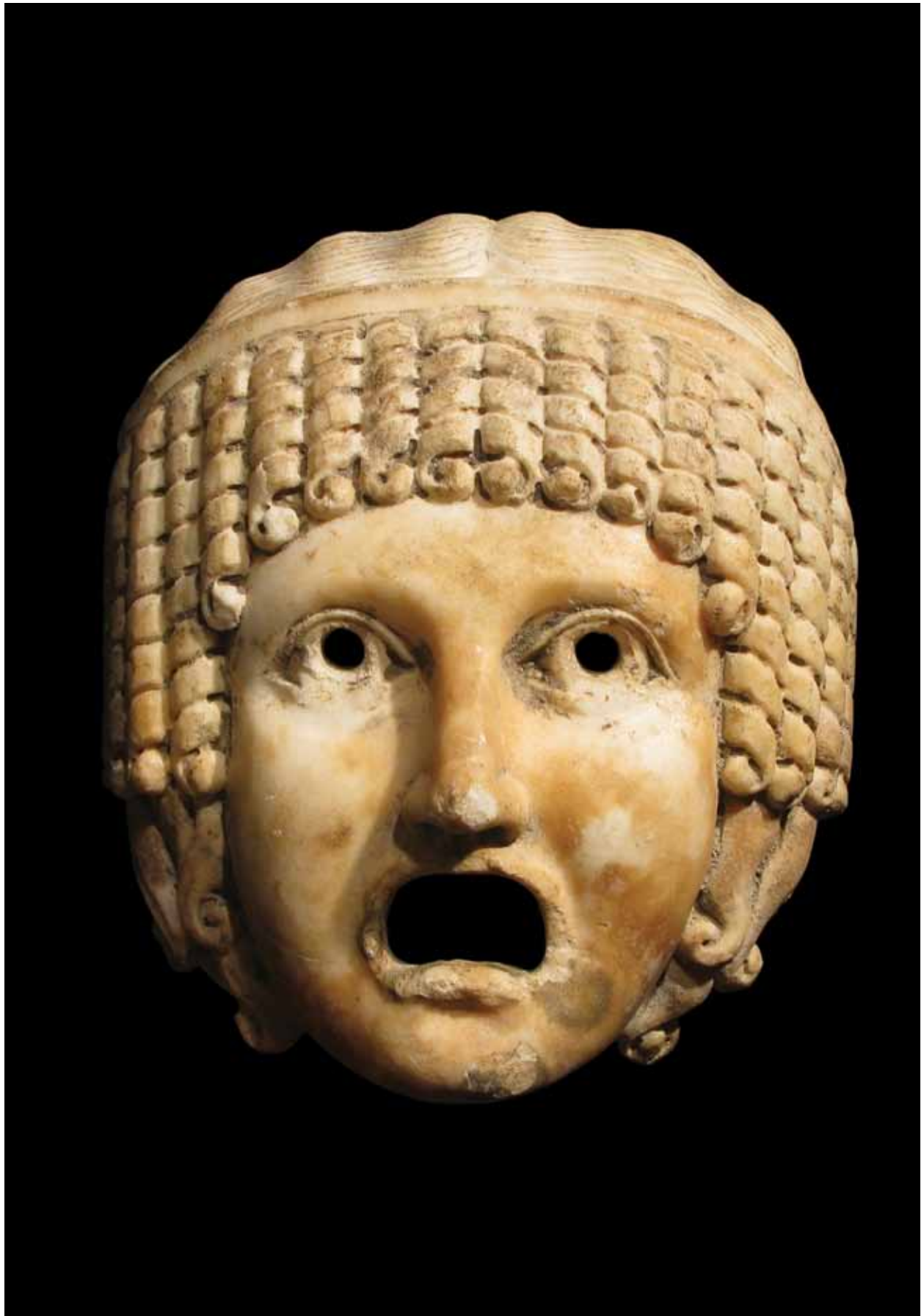
Marble theater mask, life-size head. Geometrically symmetrical features rendered in broad, dramatic strokes, with widely opened, deeply carved eyes and mouth. Both irises and entire opening of mouth drilled out from front to back surface, leaving large black holes in otherwise smooth, unshadowed surface of surrounding face. Similar contrast presented by shadows and deeply cut, symmetrical pattern of elaborately styled curls and depending ringlets that frame smooth marble surface of face. Back roughly finished, never intended to be seen.

#### *Discussion*

Though few survive today, masks were crucial to the production of plays in Greek and Roman antiquity. At least by the fourth century BCE, they had become a permanent part of Greek theater, and no respectable actor would appear onstage without one.<sup>1</sup> This tradition, which continued throughout Greek antiquity, had also been adopted by the Romans by the first century BCE.<sup>2</sup>

The marble theater mask in the Snite Museum collection was found in Asia Minor and dates to about 300 CE. Its features are exaggerated and deeply carved, the eyes and mouth wide open and the eyes deeply set. Although little attention is paid to skeletal structure, the face has other pronounced features, such as a strong nose and arched eyebrows. The prominence of facial features on theater masks was in part so that they could be seen and understood from a distance: some theaters held as many as twenty thousand spectators.<sup>3</sup>





Large holes like those in the eyes and mouth of the Snite piece allowed actors wearing theater masks to see and speak,<sup>4</sup> but the Snite mask was never intended to be worn. There is no provision for securing it to an actor's head—it is flat on the back, not molded to fit a face—and as it is carved from a thick slab of marble, it would have been much too heavy to wear. Actual theater masks were made of lighter materials—wood, cork, or even leather—and covered the entire head, not just the face. However, this piece certainly resembles a theater mask, and it is possible that it served as a marble model over which masks were stretched and formed.<sup>5</sup>

Other possibilities also exist. Marble masks have been found in Roman tombs as votive offerings, and even more commonly, they were employed as architectural decoration. For example, at Myra in Asia Minor (where the Snite mask originates), the Roman amphitheater is decorated with many carved masks. But whatever its intended function, we can be sure that the Snite piece was designed to resemble the theater masks of its day.<sup>6</sup>

In the ancient world, masks were not individually created for specific characters in a specific play. Rather, certain types of masks represented certain types of characters,<sup>7</sup> of which there were four general categories: old man, young man, slave, and woman.<sup>8</sup> Each had its own consistent attributes. A slave mask, for instance, had raised eyebrows, a coil of red hair, and a grotesque mouth and beard that together resemble the open bell of a trumpet.<sup>9</sup> The character of a young man, in contrast, was represented by a clean-shaven face and idealized features.<sup>10</sup> Classical theater audiences immediately recognized a character type through its distinctive mask.<sup>11</sup>

The Snite piece exhibits the characteristics of a female type.<sup>12</sup> Its long, coiled hair is an obvious reflection of gender, as is its mouth, which, though opened, is not as wide open as a man's would be. Nor is the color of the marble as dark as would be expected for a man's mask.<sup>13</sup> Further, the careful styling of the hair suggests that this mask does not represent just any woman.

Instead, it probably signifies an older courtesan, who not only wanted to present an attractive facade but also had the means to accomplish it elegantly.<sup>14</sup>

An ancient theater mask was more than just part of a costume; in its broad strokes, it stood for and made immediately recognizable a character type familiar in Greek or Roman society. The nature of that representation speaks volumes about attitudes and experience in classical society and makes an important contribution to any classical collection.

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1. Brooke 1973, 75; Beare 1951, 142.

2. Boyle 2006, 19.

3. Brooke 1973, 78.

4. McDonald and Walton 2007, 249. In recent experiments, it has been discovered that one of the biggest problems with ancient masks is that the actor could not project his voice from behind the mask. One way in which this was solved was to add a back, which enclosed the entire head and helped create resonance and reverberation. In addition, Greek and Roman theaters were designed to have excellent acoustics, which also helped the audience hear the actors' words.

5. Brooke 1973, 77.

6. Many Roman paintings included representations of theater masks. For example, wall paintings in the Villa of Oplontis at Torre Annunziata employ masks and other theater motifs such as falling curtains that reveal glimpses of unexpected and sometime impossible scenes behind. Just as these perspective paintings expand the space of the room into fantasy architecture and mythical landscapes, so too the masks and curtains recall the alternate reality of the theater.

7. Beare 1951, 178.

8. Wiles 1991, 150.

9. Ibid., 76 and 153.

10. Ibid., 154.



11. Within each of these categories, subdivisions existed. In the case of the young man mask, for example, there were at least nine. *Ibid.*, 75.

12. It is important to note that although there were masks for both male and female characters, all actors in antiquity were male.

13. Bieber 1961, 19. These traits of female masks reflect the statues of women in antiquity. Female masks had smaller mouths because, in the ancient world, a woman's place was to listen and not to speak. Likewise, female masks had paler skin because a woman's place was inside in the home.

14. Wiles 1991, 181.

#### *Comparanda*

Bieber 1961, *passim*.

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*C.E.A.*







### **Coptic Funerary Stele**

Egypt, 4th–5th centuries CE

Limestone

H. 0.335 m, W. 0.300 m, D. 0.115 m

Gift of Mr. Lester Wolfe

1967.047.001

#### *Description*

Square limestone Coptic funerary stele with pair of columns and pediment above. Columns carry simple foliate capitals; pediment carries small acroteria. Beneath pediment stands male figure with staff in left hand. Broken object in right hand may have been torch. Figure wears simple tunic with many folds. Inscribed above are large Greek letters: ΑCΩΝ.

#### *Discussion*

*Copt* is the name that was gradually attached to Egyptian Christians who, following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, broke with the majority of Christians on the question of the precise nature of Jesus as both god and human. This small limestone stele in the Snite Museum is a Coptic Egyptian funerary monument.

Limestone was the cheapest, most easily worked, and most common stone sculptural material in Egypt in Late Antiquity. This stele bears a relief of a man in a plain tunic, standing with his hands held aloft in a pose recognized as indicating prayer in both pagan and Christian contexts. In his right hand he holds what might be a torch, in his left what appears to be a staff. The inscribed letters above his head probably indicate the name of the deceased.

Today, Coptic art is not considered to be universally Christian, and the Snite funerary stele provides no overt epigraphic or iconographic evidence that the deceased was a Christian. In fact, many Coptic works of art depict subjects of pagan tradition and are associated with pagan tombs, while others, like this stele, are of indeterminate religious affiliation. However,





since many kinds of pagan motifs were used in Christian contexts in the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity (fourth to seventh centuries CE), many Coptic artworks—even those with pagan themes—may well be Christian. Adding to the ambiguities of interpretation, older, non-Christian sculpture was often reused in Christian contexts.

The inscription on this stele is written in Greek characters, but it is impossible to know whether ACΩN was a Coptic-speaker or a Greek-speaker, or both. In Late Antique Egypt, those with education and political connections read and often spoke Greek. It was the dominant language of the region's premiere metropolis, Alexandria. It was also the source of liturgical language for Egyptian Christians, because it was the language of the first Christian texts in Egypt. But the Coptic language, the Late Antique version of ancient Egyptian, was also written in Greek characters, or in a combination of Greek and other characters.

The plain and bold character of indigenous Coptic art is compelling to many modern viewers. Its immediacy, or primitive character, is in stark opposition to the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Arab styles that preceded and followed it. How it came about that the most cosmopolitan region of the ancient world produced such artwork is a question that has fascinated and frustrated historians. The Copts, though often defined as Christian, were not exclusively so, and they used many pagan iconographic and epigraphic elements, including those of Pharaonic and Greco-Roman tradition. They existed in a multiethnic, multilingual world. The departure of Coptic style from traditional canons of the past has often been seen as evidence of a reactionary ethos in opposition to the dominant foreign influences of the Roman government and Hellenic culture. Like many theories, however, this has proven simplistic and does not do justice to the cultural complexity of Coptic Egypt.

The Snite monument is a fine example of one of the most common kinds of Coptic carvings, the gabled tomb stele. The deceased is pictured inside a gabled portico. Stelai like



the Snite's have been associated with Alexandria at the mouth of the Nile and with other sites in the Nile delta. There is also a concentration of such works in the Fayum region, particularly from around the town of Heracleopolis Magna. And like the Snite piece, the figures from Heracleopolis regularly have large round eyes with no pupil and a small round mouth with a definitive horizontal line separating the lips.

The heavy use of the drill, especially in the cap of curls that frame the forehead, suggest that the stele was not carved before the early fourth century CE, when such tooling became common. The deep and open carving, in which the form of the figure is not crowded with floral or geometric decorative motifs, further suggests that it was carved before the late sixth century. This agrees with the dates of the majority of similar sculptures from Heracleopolis Magna and indicates that the Snite stele, like those from Heracleopolis, dates from the fourth or fifth century CE.

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#### *Comparanda*

Thomas 2000, fig. 31 (for orant in pedimented structure); fig. 37 (for figural style); fig. 41 (for linear drapery); fig 58 (for drilled hair).

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*J.M.D.*







### **Forgery of Roman Wall Painting Fragment with Gorgoneion**

Modern

Pigment on plaster

H. 0.114 m, L. 0.129 m, D. 0.024 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1987.035.002

#### *Description*

Fragment of plaster with painted gorgoneion (gorgon head). Broken on all four sides; mended from two pieces. Painting well preserved, retaining much color. Small cracks in paint. Some loss of pigment on both sides of gorgon head and hair, more so on right side. Entire face preserved. Painted frame around head damaged or missing. Back of fragment reveals small stone inclusions in plaster.

Gorgoneion painted on black background. Face placed in frame of alternating red, yellow, and brown lines. Hair represented by wavy lines of blond and light brown; parted in middle, hangs loose around face. Full, round face painted in brown pigment with some pink added to lips and cheeks. Dark brown accents emphasize lower lip, chin, and area beneath eyes. Thin brown lines form eyebrows. Upper and lower eyelids indicated. Eyes dark, almost black, with lighter point for pupils. Mouth open and round with upper teeth depicted, as if hissing. Nose upturned with open nostrils. Lower part of face emphasized in lighter paint, giving impression of illumination from below.

#### *Discussion*

From the eighteenth century on, the ever-increasing number of antiquities brought to light by archaeological excavations has stimulated the enthusiastic collection of ancient art. Coincident with this, and stimulated by the growing demand of museums and private collectors, has been the appearance and flourishing of professional forgers of antiquities. In the mid-eighteenth century, excavations at Pompeii, Herculaneum, and other Campanian cities around Mount Vesuvius revealed for the first time the rich interiors of Roman houses. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE had utterly destroyed life in these Roman towns, but the ash that buried them also preserved their ruins from later destruction.







Floor mosaics and wall paintings were revealed in large numbers and great variety and were rescued by archaeologists. Strict controls on excavations limited the supply that reached the art market, but the demand of museums and collectors was great. Small, easily hidden fragments of paintings were smuggled off the sites to dealers, especially minor decorative elements from rich, ornamental borders. Together, the seemingly unquenchable thirst for antiquities and the shady nature of the market also encouraged the production of forgeries.

The gorgoneion was often included in the decorative borders of Roman paintings. It had a long history in the art and mythology of the Greeks as a monster whose gaze was so powerful and destructive that anyone who met it was immediately turned to stone. In Greek art, the gorgon is always represented as a female monster, with a broad frontal face, large staring eyes, wide mouth with protruding tongue and fangs, large flat nose, dark curly hair and beard of snakes, and wings. In the Roman period, gorgons become humanized and more clearly female, most developing into a “beautiful” type, though often still retaining the original attributes of snakes and wings. This type is usually represented with a more natural mouth and face, with closed or slightly parted lips rarely showing teeth, and with the head or eyes turned slightly to the side or upward. When the monster type of gorgon does appear in Roman art, it follows Greek convention.<sup>1</sup>

The Snite gorgoneion is clearly not of the “beautiful” variety. It attempts to be scary, but it is simply not consistent with Greek convention: her mouth and face are very narrow, her nose is upturned, and she is blond. This is not how either the Romans or the Greeks represented gorgons of the monster type. The boundaries of Roman artistic representation are elastic, but unreasonable variation from the norms indicates forgery. Unquestionably, the Snite gorgoneion intends to look Roman, but whoever painted her was ignorant of the specifics of ancient iconography and style and seems to have guessed at details on the basis of contemporary perceptions or expectations.



Classical works of art have been counterfeited from the Renaissance onward, but the vast majority of forgeries appeared in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The continuing discovery of forgeries in museum collections has inspired a number of exhibitions on this topic. Forgeries are initially missed by the purchaser for a number of reasons. In the early nineteenth century, there was no photography and thus very little accessible *comparanda* for new material. Often, a judgment of authenticity must be made only a short time after reference material has become available. Identification of a forgery must frequently be based on intangible, aesthetic grounds, such as anachronisms in design or style. And stylistic mistakes in forgeries that happen to be in keeping with contemporary taste pass largely unnoticed—for example, the blond hair and facial features of the Snite piece. It is often only in hindsight that such errors in judgment are apparent.

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1. Greek examples: Ackermann 1981-99, 285-330, nos. 1-351, pls. 163-88. Roman examples Ackermann 1981-99, 345-62, nos. 1-206, pls. 195-207.

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*A.M.B.*

## APPENDIX: Additional Objects in the Classical Collection



### **Black Glaze Feeder Jar**

Greek  
Terracotta  
H. 0.091 m, D. 0.089 m.  
Provenance unknown  
AA.2009.027.001



### **Red Figure Squat Lekythos**

Greek  
Terracotta  
H. 0.100 m, D. 0.085 m  
Provenance unknown  
AA.2009.027.002



### **Latin Inscription in Marble**

"Q LOLLIUS RUFUS EQUES ROMANUS"  
Roman, Italy, 1st century BCE  
Marble  
H. 0.368 m, W. 1.702 m, D 0.051 m  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf  
1987.035.019



### **Head of a Young Satyr**

Roman, Italy, 1st century CE  
Marble  
H. 0.229 m, W. 0.184 m, D. 0.222 m  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf  
1980.085.002



**Roundel Decorated with the Three Graces**

Roman, Italy, 1st–2nd century CE

Lead

D. 0.165 m

Gift of Mr. Joseph V. Noble

1968.044.007



**Horse**

Roman, Italy, 1st century BCE– 1st century CE

Bronze

H. 0.092, Max. pres. W. 0.09 m, D. 0.025 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1976.043.006



**Galloping Horse**

Roman, Italy, 1st century BCE–1st century CE

Bronze

H. 0.064 m, W. 0.089 m, D. 0.022 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1986.052.002



**Standing Horse**

Roman, Asia Minor, 2nd century CE

Bronze

H. 0.056 m, W. 0.052 m, D. 0.023 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1987.035.030





**Pithos Rim stamped “ALEXANDRILADA”(?)**

Roman (Latin inscription)

Terracotta

H. 0.014 m, W. 0.079 m, D. 0.054 m

Gift of Mr. Joseph V. Noble

1968.044.012



**Pithos Rim stamped “ΕVKΑΠΗΙΑ”**

Roman (Greek inscription)

Terracotta

H. 0.152 m, W. 0.114 m, D. 0.061 m

Gift of Mr. Joseph V. Noble

1968.044.013



**Shell-Shaped Bowl Decorated with Male Heads (Putti ?) and Rings**

Roman, Asia Minor, 3rd century CE

Bronze

H. 0.076 m, D. 0.222 m

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1987.035.033



**Ibex Head**

Greco-Persian, 4th century BCE

Limestone

H. 0.197m, L. 0.178m, D. 0.083

Gift of Mr. Lester Wolfe

1976.045.004





**Bearded Male Head**

Roman, 2nd century CE

White marble

H. 0.353m, W. 0.229 m, Diam. 0.229

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

1985.067.019

## COLOPHON

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