

COLNAGHI



A Gorgoneion Antefix

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South Italian Greek (Tarentine)
ca. 500 B.C.

Gorgoneion Antefix

Terracotta
h. 15.7 cm
6 1/8 in.

Provenance

Private Swiss Collection
Artemis Auctions, *Ancient / Ethnographic Art Around The World*, 11 June 2017, lot no.0014A;
Collection of Phillip Pearlstein (1924-2022).



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Antefixes were commonly fashioned as heads, either human or mythological, as seen in this example. Beyond their decorative function, these architectural terracottas served a practical role by covering and protecting exposed terminals of the wooden beams that made up roofs from weathering. This rounded antefix presents a striking frontal head of a Gorgon, one of the three mythological sisters of ancient Greek lore, whose grotesque features embodied the most terrifying associations with death and the supernatural. The face is rendered with wide, staring eyes, a sharp projecting nose, a threatening, fang-lined grin, large ears presented frontally, and a extended tongue, encircled at top by two rows of curled hair and all around by a wreath of spirals representing serpents. Gorgons were common motifs in Greek and Etruscan Art due to their apotropaic function: these menacing heads were meant to ward away evil.

Comparanda:



Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, 2021.3



Private Collection, published in Charles Ede Ltd *Antiquities Catalogue 168* (Charles Ede Ltd: London 2000), no. 11.

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