

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



## *Head of a Youth*

Italic Greek, Tarentine  
ca. 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

Terracotta  
14 cm.; 5 ½ in.

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### Provenance:

Possibly Comte Adrien Charles Prosper d'Epinay (1836 – 1914);  
(By family tradition, brought back from Rome where he worked for Luigi Amici in 1861)

By descent to Comte Henri d'Epinay (1940-2017), Longuenesse, France;  
His sale, Saint Omer auctions, 17th December 2017, lot 177;  
Private Collection, United Kingdom.

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The present sculpture represents the head of a young man wearing a Phrygian cap and probably depicting Ganymede. According to the myth, the earliest extant version of which comes from Homer's *Iliad*, the Trojan youth was abducted by Zeus on Mount Ida near Troy and was granted with eternal youth and immortality. Other interpretations suggests that the present head may represent Mithras, an ancient Persian deity derived from Zoroastrianism, or Paris, the Prince of Troy both of whom were regularly depicted with a Phrygian cap. The Phrygian cap was deployed by Greek artists across all media when depicting a figure, mythical or historical, who was associated with the East.

The figure delicately gazes at the viewer with his head slightly tilted to the right. The hair is swept up above the forehead and the lips are slightly parted. A Phrygian cap covers the top of the head and comes to a point over the crown of the head, in typical style. Judging by the scale, its purpose was most likely votive, to be offered at a sanctuary or buried in a grave.

The particularities of style in this head indicate that it was most likely produced in the city of Taras, modern day Taranto, an important Italic Greek community founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Tarentine production of terracotta first flourished in the Archaic Period and is well attested through the Classical Period, from which the present head dates. Production in Taras of terracotta continued into the Hellenistic Period, as many high quality examples attest. This distinct Magna Grecian style of terracotta is arguably one of the best in the Italic Greek world from the period.

## References:

Hoffman, Sanne. *Between Deity and Dedicator: The Life and Agency of Greek Votive Terracotta Figurines*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.

Kingsley, Bonnie M. *The Terracottas of the Tarentine Greeks*. Malibu: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1976.

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Vafopoulou-Richardson, C. E. *Ancient Greek Terracottas*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1991.

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