

COLNAGHI



Head of Hathor

Egyptian, Third Intermediate Period,
21st-24th Dynasty, ca.1069-715 BC

Wood, bronze

22.2 x 6.5 x 6.9cm; 8 ³/₄ x 2 ¹/₂ x 2 ³/₄ in.

Provenance:

Maurice Bouvier, Alexandria, Egypt; exported to Switzerland 1959, thence by descent.

Exhibited:

Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, Switzerland, 'Égypte, Moments d'éternité', 18th March-13th July 1997;

Musée d'Art et d'Histoire (lieu d'exposition: Musée Rath), Geneva, Switzerland, 26th September 1997-11th January 1998 Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, Switzerland, 1999.

Published:

M. Page-Gasser - A.B. Wiese, Égypte Moments d'éternité, Mainz, Catalogue d'exposition, Musées d'Art et d'Histoire, Musée Rath, (Geneva, 1997-1998) n°138.

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This finely carved wood head of Hathor is surmounted by a bronze crown with a central bronze ureaus at her forehead. The goddess gazes straight ahead, her large eyes and eyebrows recessed for inlays, now missing. She wears a plain wig, the lappets tucked behind her ears and falling over her shoulders onto her chest. The crown is composed of a circle of rearing cobras from which emerge the sun disc and cow horns of Hathor. Below the wig at the back, a right-angled section would have allowed the head to be fixed to a second element; a square dowel hole between the front lappets.

The head is the central element of an aegis which would have decorated the prow of a ceremonial barque.

Hathor was the daughter of Nut and Ra (as well being also his wife and mother). The sun disc in her headdress reminded the Egyptians of her closeness to her father, whilst the cow horns are reminiscent of the bovine form she sometimes took.

As the consort of Horus, her name literally translates as 'House of Horus'. Hathor was the goddess of love, beauty, music, womanhood and joy. One of the most important and widely venerated deities of the Egyptian pantheon, she was considered the divine mother of the Pharaoh. Hathor's worship was strongly linked to the afterlife. Her epithet 'Mistress of the West' alludes to the place where the sun sets, and where the afterlife is thought to reside. She was displayed at the prow of funerary barques so that she might help guide the deceased to 'the West'. Indeed, Coffin Text Spell 61 states 'Hathor, Lady of Byblos, makes the steering of your barque'.

References:

Compare Guñther Roeder, *Ägyptische Bronzefiguren* (Berlin, 1956), Tafel 64 h.