

COLNAGHI



A Roman Head of a Woman

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Roman

Hadrianic, ca. 120-130 A.D.

Head of a Woman

Marble

Height: 22.8 cm; 9 in.

Provenance

Said to have been found in Alexandria, Egypt;

With Galerie Nefer, Zürich, November 1983;

Clarence Day (1927-2009) Collection, Memphis, Tennessee, acquired in 1983;

Sotheby's New York, 8 June 2011, lot 49;

Private Collection, Switzerland.

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This very finely carved marble portrait depicts a young woman with an oval face enhanced with a finely shaped mouth, slightly aquiline nose, large almond-shaped eyes, and incised brows. Her elaborate coiffure of undulating curls frames the forehead and is bound in a turban of coiled braids around the crown of the head. Her earlobes are pierced for earrings. Traces of red pigment remain on the finely polished marble. This portrait, of notably fine quality, is a striking combination of a high fashion contemporary Roman hair arrangement with a very individual physiognomy. The effect is remarkably individual and provides a fascinating portrait in marble of an ancient face that we are more used to seeing in a Fayum portrait (Figures 1-2).

The hairstyle worn by this woman allows her to be dated to the Hadrianic period. The wide high plaited turban is seen in Imperial portraits of the period such as those of the Empress Sabina and others of the Hadrianic court such as the Yale portrait of Avidia Plautia (Figure 3), D. Kleiner and S.B. Matheson, eds., *I, Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome*, exh. cat., New Haven, 1996, no. 30. The unarticulated eyes, however, place the date of our portrait to the early reign of Hadrian before such drilling became the norm after about AD 130.

For discussion of similar portrait types see K. Fittschen, 'Courtly Portraits of Women in the Era of the Adoptive Emperors (AD 98-180) and their Reception in Roman Society,' in D. Kleiner and S. B. Matheson, eds., *I, Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome*, exh. cat., New Haven, 1996. There are also similar portraits in Berlin: Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung Berlin, acc. no. Sk 1340 (Figures 4-5); and in Copenhagen: F. Johansen, *op. cit.* 256, no. 106 (Figures 6-7).

Clarence Day acquired his first antiquities in the 1970s and in the course of thirty years built one of the finest private collections in the United States, in the tradition of Norbert Schimmel, Leon Pomerance, and Christos Bastis, exhibiting the same high level of quality and connoisseurship. A discerning and eclectic collector of art, in 1989 Mr. Day donated to the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art sixty Greek, Roman, Iranian, Egyptian, Etruscan and Byzantine artworks. Many of these are on display in the museum today.



Figure 1: Prague, National Gallery, O 1420.



Figure 2: Malibu, The Getty Villa, 81.AP.42.



Figure 3: New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery, 1992.2.1.

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Figures 4-5: Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung, acc. no. Sk 1340.



Figures 6-7, Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Inv.-nr. 1722.

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