

GOLD PENDANT IN THE SHAPE OF A BULL'S HEAD

Roman, Late 4th century B.C

Gold

Length: 3.8 cm

Reference: 25091



The piece is shaped as a bull's head and was one of the charms attached to a necklace. Considering the wide aperture of the suspension tube, it is possible to suggest that the necklace itself was a round (upset) chain designed to accommodate the ornaments of various designs and beads. The size and the elaborate ornament of the suspension tube would make this the central piece in the entire composition.

This sculptural head was made from gold sheet hammered on the mold, the seam on the back (now visible) was soldered. The ears and horns are worked separately and attached. The repoussé technique was used to shape the anatomical details (eyes, veins, dewlap folds), and more detailing (like the skin on the muzzle) was obtained by punching. The entire piece is a combination of the naturalistic shape of the animal with the decorative motives. A row of hair locks, hardly visible at first glance, is incised above the forehead; it outlines the three wires, two plain and a beaded one in the middle, which border the curly hair imitated by multiple granules of gold. The transitional element set on the back is also ornamented by two rows of beaded wire. This element connects the head with the highly ornamented tube. It is divided into two sections by plain and beaded wires, the intersections are decorated with filigree spirals and the top is marked by three large granules set on the beaded wire rings.

Animal head shaped pendants (rams, calves, lions) were popular amulets since the Archaic period. A very similar pendant is found in the central piece of the elaborate Greek necklace found in the Scythian tumulus of Karagodeuashkh in South Russia, dated to the end of the 4th century B.C. and today in the collection of the Hermitage Museum.

CONDITION

Essentially preserved; right ear is missing, few

fractures, left ear is partially detached, surface of the lower part and the horns are deformed; the loop has a hole, oxides on the granulation.

PROVENANCE

Ex- British private collection; Ex- US private collection, New York, 2001.