

# GRECO-ROMAN MARBLE HEAD OF A VEILED WOMAN (A NURSE ?)

Greek-Hellenistic, 1st Century B.C. - 1st Century A.D.

Marble

Height: 24.5 cm

Reference: 8577



Reference **15046**

This figure is identifiable as a servant, probably as a nurse, but her features are modeled in an elegant, refined manner: everything is realistic. This representation is a wonderful image of feminine old age. It is necessary to emphasize the excellent artistic quality of this piece, with a very fine sense of three-dimensionality about the face and the folds created by the veil on the neck.

This head can be compared to images of nurses sculpted on Roman sarcophagi, for example like those representing the saga of Medea or Niobe.

## CONDITION

The bust, carved from a beautiful marble with a smooth polished surface, seems to have been part of a Roman sarcophagus: the asymmetry of the face is partially explained by the fact that the woman would have been seen in three-quarters. The neck cranes forward slightly, as if her back was rounded, and the numerous wrinkles of the skin, that cover her face and neck, indicate the extreme age of this figure; she wears a thick fabric tunic while a veil covers her head that, falling just to her neck, nearly completely covers her hair.

## PROVENANCE

Sotheby's New York, June 12<sup>th</sup> 2001, n. 33.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

On nurses, see:

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VILATTE S., *La nourrice grecque in L'Antiquité classique*, 60, 1991, pp. 5-28.

On the iconography of old women, see:

ZANKER P., *Die trunkene Alte, Das Lachen der Verhöhnnten*, Francfort, 1989.

*Die Antikensammlung im Pergamonmuseum und in Charlottenburg, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Mayence/Rhin, 1992, pp. 232-233, n. 119.*

For the sarcophagi with the saga of Medea or Niobe, see:

*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, vol. VII, Zurich, 1994, s.v. Medea, p. 393, n. 50-61; s.v. Niobe pp. 908 ss.