

GREEK TERRACOTTA STATUETTE OF A SEATED ACTOR

Greek-Classical, middle of the 4th Century B.C.

Greek ceramic

Height: 8.9 cm

Reference: 13749



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The figurine, in yellowish-beige terracotta, is hollow; the surface retains traces of red paint and white plaster. The man is seated on a stool covered by wavy fabric. The mask and the short dotted tunic, which does not cover the genitals, characterizes this figure as an actor. He assumes a "thinking" position, with his legs spread, his left arm resting on his knee, while his right hand, placed on his chin, supports the head in an attitude of reflection, as if he is planning a prank.

Typologically, this genre of person is used in ancient low comedy to designate a slave; the prominent buttocks and the rounded stomach are certainly padded, the disproportionate phallus is an attachment. In spite of its miniature size, the mask is modeled with extraordinary precision: the open mouth and large puckered lips, flattened nose, wrinkled cheeks and forehead, almond shaped eyes. The man even has pointed ears like a satyr, an unusual detail. This statuette can certainly be placed in relation to a famous group of terracottas in the Metropolitan Museum that come from an Athenian tomb and that constitute one of the most important and rare direct connections with the low comedy. Numerous figures from this group seem to belong to different comedies, thus making it impossible to assign a title. Among the female figures, one can certainly recognize an old nurse, holding a swaddled baby in her arms, as well as some young women coquettishly veiling their faces. Among the men, one can identify a statuette of Heracles, a traveler, perhaps a philosopher, and even a seated slave in a pensive pose that offers an exact parallel for this piece: according to M. Bieber, he was a precursor of the cunning, skilled slave, who would become a very important character in the "New Comedy".

PROVENANCE

Ex-N. A. C. Embiricos Collection

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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