

## HEAD OF ARIADNE

Roman, 2nd century A.D.

Marble

H : 33 cm

Reference: 28737



This head beautifully executed in the white, large crystalline marble represents a young woman with carefully arranged hairstyle. It is certain that the head made part of a life-size statue and was carved separately, which is suggested by the shape of the lower part of the neck. The person is very young with a distinctive long neck. The face has a perfect oval shape and attractive features: full lips and almond-shaped eyes; heavy lids creating a dreamy and melancholic expression. This charm is also seen in the light turn of the head. The high forehead is framed by the parted hair, with wavy strands forming the symmetrical pattern. The hair is combed up from the sides and tightened in a bun at the nape. Such hairstyle remained popular in Greek art of the Classical and Late Classical period. The multiple and carefully arranged wavy grooves became typical for the hairstyle of the female images created by Praxiteles in the 4th century B.C. His style was copied in sculptures throughout the Hellenistic era and influenced the works of Roman sculptors. Elegant, crescent-like locks are seen on the sides at each ear.

The head is crowned with a wreath composed of pine cones and clusters. Their shapes are well-modeled and divided by the distinct grooves left by the running drill. Thanks to this attribute, the individuality of the represented person could be identified as Ariadne, who became the bride of the winegod Dionysos. It could also be a Nereid, a sea-nymph, one of the daughters of the sea-god Poseidon, as in ancient Greece the wreath of pine branches and cones was sacred to these deities. The exquisite qualities of the marble carving were revealed by the recent cleaning of the stone; the removal of the heavy modern mounting made in dark cement greatly helped to appreciate the initial composition.

The art of ancient Rome extends from the Republican Period in the 2nd century B.C. to works produced during the Roman Imperial Period from the 1st to the 4th century A.D. Throughout this time, Roman artists

were consistently inspired by a Greek artistic tradition, from which they borrowed heavily. Roman art is noted for its innovative architecture, finely executed wall paintings and mosaics, sculpture in bronze and marble, portrait sculpture, carved gemstones and ivory, glass, jewelry and metalwork of bronze and silver. Modern fascination with such objects is due to the exquisite quality of these works and the great range of artwork that was produced. These represent the many and diverse aspects of Roman civilization – from grand public monuments to personal objects of extremely fine craftsmanship. Such objects demonstrate their inspiration from the divine to the profane, and served both Imperial desires and those of the Roman upper classes for luxuria, finely made luxury goods.

### CONDITION

Good condition. Wear of the marble surface. Some chips (nose, left eye, left ear, hair).

### PROVENANCE

Ex- Swiss private collection, Montreux, collected in the 1960-1980's ; thence by descent ; Anonymous sale Hôtel des Ventes, Geneva, 30 September 2013, lot 224.