

LAMP REPRESENTING A GROTESQUE MASK

Roman, 1st century-first half of the 2nd century A.D.

Ceramic

Length: 13.5 cm

Reference: 12233



Terracotta lamp whose top is in the shape of a theater mask. The lamp was applied before the firing process to a conical candelabrum with a small cup, whose upper part only is preserved. The small round nozzle sticks out of the beard of the figure, while the filling hole is formed by the open mouth.

Acquired on the German art market in 2000.

The mask has grotesque features mixed with realistic elements, typical of the satyrs and other mythological beings with an almost human appearance that inhabited the classical theatre plays. A broad flattened nose, the exaggeratedly full lips, the swollen cheeks, the huge ears and the thick arched brows contrast with the careful and anatomically accurate rendering of the eyes, of the curly hair, of the elaborate mustache and of the meticulous beard.

Our example is unique by its skillful workmanship, but also by the presence of the affixed candelabrum. While there are many close parallels for lamps in the shape of theater masks, as well as for terracotta candelabra surmounted by a classic-shaped lamps, the combination of a tall molded support with an anthropomorphic lamp has not yet been attested elsewhere.

Given its ceramological characteristics, our piece was probably manufactured by an Italian craftsman in the 1st century A.D. or in the first half of the 2nd century A.D., who would have been inspired by an original bronze.

CONDITION

Body of the lamp partially fragmentary; candelabrum stem lost. Burn marks on the hair.

PROVENANCE