

# LAUREATE HEAD OF EMPEROR CLAUDIUS

Roman, 1st century A.D.

Marble

H: 37.5 cm (14.7 in)

Reference: 15682



This larger than life-size male head was sculptured from a solid block of marble. It is a portrait of a middle age man with the slightly emaciated features (the cheek-bones are prominent).

The face has a massive square shape; the expression is severe if not tense (his lips are pinched). The man does not have a beard; his hair is combed from the top and displayed in regular strands which delicately curl above the forehead and ears and at the temples.

The facial features are finely detailed; the brows, lids and the lachrymal canals are indicated in the eyes, the lips are clearly drawn, and the ears are precisely defined. The man wears a laurel crown with the round fruits placed in alternation with the leaves. The broken part at the nape does not let to precise the attachment system at the back, probably, a band, which let to keep the combined branches in place.

The sculptor was able to vary harmoniously the depth of the elements carving some fine grooves in light relief (for example, the hair at the occiput) and, on the contrary, using the drill to dig deeper the material to shape the sculptured mass (as is the crown).

The presence of this laurel crown is very important; it is symbol of victory, genius and immortality; it was a reward for great men, and one of the insignia of the Emperor himself.

In this present portrait, the monumental scale of the sculpture as well as the solemn expression of the represented person, and the presence of the crown in addition, confirm the high importance of the personality, who was immortalized in this marble. According to the stylistic features of this sculpture, it is possible to place this piece in a direct line of the works of Julio-Claudian period. Therefore it could be the portrait of Emperor Claudius.

## CONDITION

The neck is broken off; large breaks have damaged the sculpture in several places affecting the marble strata (between the eyes, nose, chin, below the ears, and also at the back of the head); the patina presents more coloration on the right side of the head; some encrustation.

## PROVENANCE

Private collection, acquired on the Swiss market, 1992.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

HEKLER A., Greek and roman portraits, New York, 1912.  
JOHANSEN F., Roman portraits: catalogue, I, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, 1994.