

OINOCHOE HANDLE WITH A SATYR, PERSEUS, AND A GORGON

Attic, 470 - 450 B.C.

Bronze

H: 20 cm (7.8 in)

Reference: 15019



This handle, composed of different elements melted with lost wax and welded, probably belonged to a "Schnabelkanne" type oinochoe. Its remarkable state of conservation makes it possible to still admire the great artistic quality of which the bronzier had proof in the realization especially of the two figures, but also in the general balance of the object. The decoration is particularly elaborate: the lower attachment of the handle has a medallion with a satyr, palmettes and scrolls, the outer face of the handle is decorated with nested lotus buds, A male torso (a bearded man dressed in a female garments) holding two circular dishes with a human face in relief is modeled on the upper fastener.

If the figure of the satyr – one of Dionysos' quintessential companions – can be explained by the close link between the oinochoe (the most frequently used wine jug) and the world of symposium (banquets), the presence of a man dressed as a woman is enigmatic, as are the two faces fixed on these two hands. No comparable statuette can be mentioned, but the Attic ceramic from the first half of the 6th century provides a series of images of Dionysian processions where bearded men appear dressed as women and / or have feminine attributes (parasol): scientists have proposed several interpretations for these scenes, without any being unanimous. It could be an image of the poet Anacreon (Sappho's companion), of men dressed in a new oriental (Lydian) fashion or of the only way that men could adopt to participate in the Dionysiac processions (in the iconography Attic, Dionysus is accompanied by satyrs, maenads or women, but very rarely by men).

CONDITION

Very good condition; some traces of oxidation.

PROVENANCE

Ex- European private collection, acquired in 1999.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FRONTISI-DUCROUX F. – LISSARAGUE F., De l'ambiguïté à l'ambivalence, un parcours dionysiaque, in *Annali dell'Istituto orientale di Napoli* 5, 1983, p. 11-32 (avec toute la bibliographie antérieure)