

## ROMAN MARBLE BUST OF A CITIZEN

Ro-Imperial, Late 2nd-3rd Century A.D.

Marble

H: 90 cm

Reference: 11822



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This portrait, which is slightly larger than life size, represents an old man with wrinkled face and tired features. He turns his head to the right, towards which his eyes, surrounded by deep shadows, also turn; the neck, with its finely nuanced musculature, is large and strong. This man is dressed in a tunic, of which one can see part of the collar in light relief, and in a toga made of a thick fabric (the edge of the toga is wrapped around the neck) that he holds up in his right hand and which envelops him completely. The back part of this bust is hollow; the supporting pillar flares slightly and ends, towards the base, in a rectangular element decorated with volutes and a rosette and mounted on a small circular capital. Contrary to other similar portraits, this bust is well carved, including the back, which the observer probably would never have seen; originally, it would probably have been installed in a niche or in a gallery as one of the family portraits.

The face of the man is large and square – the bone structure of the head and the contours of the jaw are easily seen in this work – and the expression is austere, suggesting a person with a short-tempered, authoritative character. The artistic quality of the sculpture is excellent: stylistically, the rendering portrays an impressive realism, characterized by the thick arched brows, the wrinkles that crease the forehead and surround the eyes, the asymmetry between the two halves of the face and the short beard, through which one can make out the hollowed cheeks and the shape of the chin. The short, wavy hair forms a voluminous mass in spite of the receding hairline; some small curls – which are barely sketched out on the crown and on the back of the head – are carved onto the forehead. This head shares many traits with the portraits from the Severan Period (193-235 B.C.) : in spite of the advanced age of the man, the solidity of his head, the square shape of his face and the rendering of the area around the eyes and of the forehead seem to resemble images of the emperor Caracalla. However,

this bust belonged to a Roman citizen, identity unknown, who lived between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. and who may have been an admirer of Caracalla.

### PROVENANCE

Ex-French private collection 19<sup>th</sup> century; European Art Market 1990's; with B. Blondeel, Paris, Maastricht Fine Arts Fair 2002.

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