

ROMAN MARBLE STATUE OF A DRAPED WOMAN

Ro-Imperial, 1st-2nd century A.D.

Marble

H: 145 cm (with the base)

Reference: 20082



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The statue, which is close to life size, is of a standing woman, completely clothed and in a frontal pose. The details of the statue are beautifully rendered, especially in the carving of her back. The woman's pose is steady: she places her weight on her left leg, with her right slightly bent and positioned off to the side, so that only the tip of her sandal touches the ground. Her bent left arm descends alongside her body, while her other arm is held out slightly to the right. Unfortunately the attributes which she once held are lost, but from parallels of this type, it is possible to guess what they might have been: a vessel (an offering cup?), a fruit, a roll of papyrus, a flower, etc. Since little remains of the attachment of the head and neck, it is difficult to determine the position of the woman's head.

The statue is dressed in a typically Greek style, wearing two garments: a thin, ankle-length chiton with a high neckline, fastened at the shoulders and the arms (note in particular the clasps on the right side which have been carefully sculpted); and a wool himation (cloak) over her arms, back and left shoulder, from where it descends in a cascade of vertical folds; in front, a large fold of the himation is pulled back towards her left elbow, where it falls, forming zig-zagged folds. She wears sandals with thin leather soles and a thong between her toes. Despite a certain structural and stylistic rigidity, this statue is of remarkable artistic quality: the proportions of the body were rendered with precision and the pose is very natural and charming. The great variation in the rendering of her clothing is also notable: from the folds on her bust – thin, delicate and in relief – the fabric appears almost wet, clinging to her body, highlighting her sensual feminine form. This rendering contrasts strongly with the rigidity and symmetry of the fabric over her shoulders and the deep furrows in the heavier wool fabric of the himation and the bottom of the chiton. There is one aspect of the woman's clothing which is not common among Roman imperial

sculpture and may suggest a slightly later date for the statue: the long folds of the himation were made with a drill, a fact which may indicate that this sculpture was made in the 2nd century B.C. (perhaps during the rule of Hadrian).

In the absence of any attributes, the interpretation of this statue is largely hypothetical: with many variants (such as an inverted position of the legs, the presence of a veil on the head or a belt below the bust, a raised right hand, etc.) this general form is used from the beginning of the Imperial period to represent different female figures, both ordinary citizens and Imperial women (such as Livia, Augustus' wife) as well as divinities, like Juno, Diana or Fortuna. Sculptures such as these were created by Roman artisans in imitation of famous Greek examples from the Classical period (the treatment of the folds on the bust are similar, for example, to the Polykleitan Hera of Argos, an excellent copy of which is currently in Boston) and the Hellenistic period (cf., for example the statue of Themis of Rhamnonte).

CONDITION

This statue is carved from a beautiful white marble with gray veins. It is in a remarkable state of preservation, with only the forearms, head, and tip of the left foot missing. The surface of the stone retains its brilliance, and the high quality of the carving is apparent. The statue and its elliptical base are carved from a single piece of stone, which is unusual for this period. It is probable that the forearms and head were also carved from this same piece of marble, as there is no trace of any metal tenon which would have been used to join different pieces of stone.

PROVENANCE

Ex-private American collection, Los Angeles, ca. 1970.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

On Roman sculpture in general:

KLEINER D.E.E., *Roman Sculpture*, New Haven-London, 1992.

Parallels:

Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC), vol. V, Zurich, 1990, s.v. Iuno, n. 193-195, 214 vol. VIII, Zurich, 1997, s.v. Tyché/Fortuna, n. 26 ff.

LIPPOLD G., *Die Skulpturen des Vatikanischen Museums*, vol. III, 2, Berlin, 1956, n. 28, pp. 392-393, pl. 168; n. 46, pp. 404-405, pl. 171 (two Roman citizens).

WINKES R., *Livia, Octavia, Iulia, Porträts und Darstellungen*, Providence-Louvain, 1995, n. 123, pp. 193 ff.