

# HEAD OF THE “SMALL HERCULANEUM WOMAN” TYPE

ROMAN, 2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY AD  
MARBLE

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HEIGHT: 20 CM.

WIDTH: 16 CM.

DEPTH: 16 CM.

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*PROVENANCE:*

*ON THE EUROPEAN ART MARKET IN THE FIRST THIRD OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, ACCORDING TO PHOTOS TAKEN BY THE ARCHAEOLOGIST AND TRADER PAUL ARNDT (1865-1937), ARNDT ARCHIVES, INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, FRIEDRICH ALEXANDER UNIVERSITÄT ERLANGEN NÜRNBERG, NUREMBERG. COLLECTION OF THE PARISIAN TRADER ERNEST STANISLAS LE VÉEL (1874-1951), THEN PASSED DOWN IN HIS FAMILY AS AN HEIRLOOM FROM AT LEAST THE 1950S.*



This delicate, feminine head made from white marble depicts a young woman with an oval shaped face that is both gentle and graceful. She has high cheekbones, while her narrow cheeks and chin give her a youthful appearance. Her almond shaped eyes are delicately sculpted, with fine, slightly drooping eyelids and pupils that were marked with a chisel. Her brow line, which is also fine, frames her gaze, which is directed slightly to the left. Her nose, now missing, was most likely narrow and straight, in perfect harmony with the rest of her face. Her fine mouth sculpted with small, full lips and her slightly upturned chin give our young girl a serene, calm demeanour. Finally, her delicate ears are sculpted with great accuracy and an attention to detail that showcases the sculptor's dexterity.

Our head is also admirable for its hairstyle, the so-called melon coiffure. It was very fashionable at the end of the classical period and is composed of twisted plaits that are gathered into a flat chignon. The same finesse apparent in our head can be seen in the sculpture of her wavy hair. Each lock was individually shaped and the whole hairstyle is finished with a complex chignon, itself made up of overlapping plaits that give the whole style volume and a tangible impression of



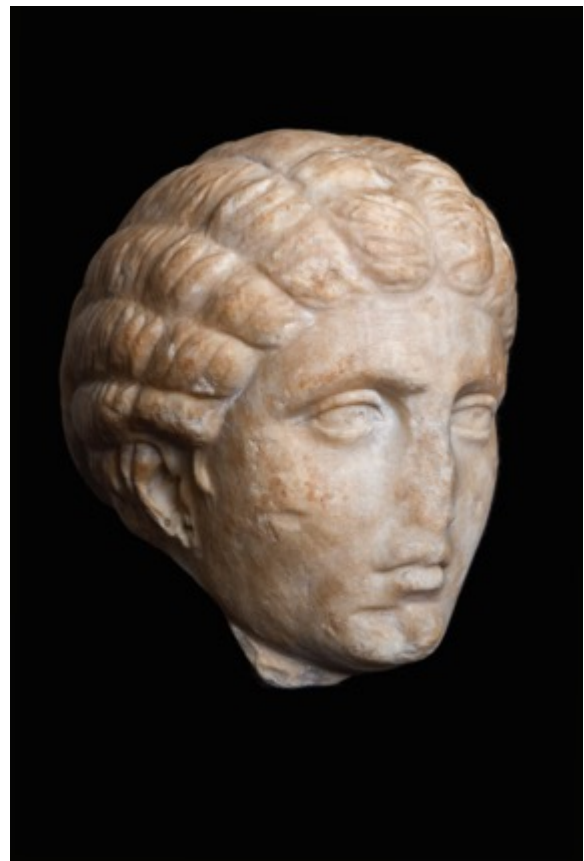
matter. The realism of the hairstyle is also apparent in the representation of small escapee locks falling onto the young girl's temples. All these details give our sculpture a special aura and make it very precious and quite unique.

Sculpted in white marble, it has an ochre hued patina, a testament to the effects of time on the stone.



This iconography should be compared with the "Small Herculaneum Woman" type. It is named after a Roman copy found in the ancient theatre of Herculaneum in 1711 and now conserved at the Archaeological Museum in Dresden (Ill. 1). This sculpture was inspired by a Greek original, now lost, which was created in the 4th century BC in the workshop of the famous sculptor Praxiteles. Very popular under the Roman Empire, the iconography of the body

remained practically identical: the young woman was represented standing, draped in a chiton and a himation, resting her weight on one leg while the other was slightly flexed, one arm held against her chest. There were, however, variations in the representation of the faces. The so-called melon coiffure was the same, but the features were more or less idealised depending on the desires of the patron. These sculptures were generally placed in public places on an honorary basis and represented important women belonging to the local elite. They could also be found in a funerary context, as is the case of the sculpture at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens (Ill. 2). Finally, gorgeous examples of portraits of young women wearing their hair in this very characteristic style are currently conserved at the Louvre and in private collections (Ill. 3-4).





Our head was photographed by the archaeologist and art trader Paul Arndt (1865-1937), which attests to its presence on the European art market in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was then added to the collection of the banker, collector and trader André Level (1863-1946) and remained in his family following his death.

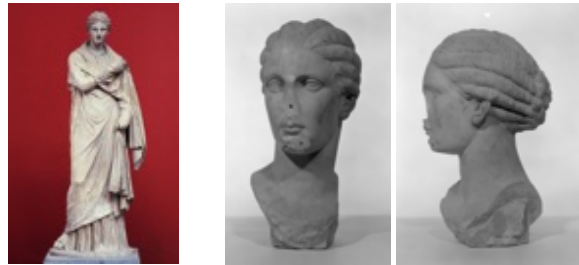


Our head, Arndt archives, Institute of Archaeology, Friedrich Alexander Universität Erlangen Nürnberg, Nuremberg.

### Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Statue of a woman of the “Small Herculaneum Woman” type, Roman based on a Greek original from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, marble, H.: 181 cm. Archaeological Museum, Dresden, inv. no. Hm 327.



Ill. 2. Funerary statue of the “Small Herculaneum Woman” type, copy based on a Greek original dated to 300 BC, marble, H.: 175 cm. National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

Ill. 3. Head of a woman of the “Small Herculaneum Woman” type, 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble, H.: 42 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. Ma 4921.



Ill. 4. Head of the “Small Herculaneum Woman” type, Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble, H.: 23 cm. Formerly in the Renand-Chapet collection.

