

FEMININE DRAPERY

ROMAN, 2ND CENTURY AD
MARBLE

HEIGHT: 185 CM.

WIDTH: 58 CM.

DEPTH: 47 CM.

PROVENANCE:
FORMERLY IN AN AMERICAN PRIVATE
COLLECTION, PROBABLY ACQUIRED
BETWEEN 1980 AND 1990.
SOLD AT SOTHEBY'S NEW YORK,
"ANTIQUITIES", 14 JUNE 2000, LOT 87.
LATER IN A FRENCH PRIVATE
COLLECTION, VILLA CHANTARELLA,
CAP D'ANTIBES.



This impressive, larger than life marble sculpture, represents a woman standing gracefully. She stands majestically, wrapped in a sumptuous cloth that evokes the elegance of Roman art. She is gently leaning on her left leg, leaving her right leg bent and slightly behind her. In the past, her right foot must have been raised, brushing against the ground, as shown by the bent knee. In doing

so, her left hip is raised while her right side is slightly lowered, which contrasts with the shoulder line and creates a characteristic diagonal known as *contrapposto*.



Her outfit is just as remarkable, as it is composed of several layers of draping. The ankle-length *chiton*, a lightweight garment that hugs her body, is finely sculpted in deep vertical folds that flow down to the ground, subtly revealing her left foot. Over it, she wears a *pallium*, a piece of clothing that is draped from the crook of her left elbow to her right shoulder. In the past, the garment went up and was worn like a shawl on the right side of the head. Her chin, turned slightly to the left, reveals a spiral of curls emerging from her fragmented veil. Holding the tip of



the *pallium* in her right hand, she seems to be trying to cover her neckline, bringing her hand towards her mouth. This hand gesture is typical of the *Pudicitia* genre, attesting to her restraint, dignity and grace. Finally, the different lengths of fabric subtly intersect at the back of the statue, showing a smooth and even volume.



Despite its larger-than-life size, our statue is most remarkable for its draping. The thick *chiton* falls into heavy vertical folds accentuating the slender look of the sculpture. The pleats of the tunic alternate between deep cuts carved with a hand drill and more superficial waves made with a chisel, which bring the surface to life and catch the light. The fabric between the right shoulder and the forearm has soft cascading pleats, contrasting with the V-shaped pleats at the neckline. The left side of our statue has numerous volumes, along with deep and dense pleat work, while the waist is delineated by a thick belt providing depth.

The left flank is covered with a fabric cascading down to the middle of the thigh. Deep folds falling in soft arches are carved out of the thick fabric, bringing volume to our magnificent statue. The right side, on the other hand, is distinguished by its finesse and delicacy, with a *pallium* that follows the feminine curves. Arched and ample pleating accentuate the graceful and slender silhouette. Not unlike the Cleopatra in Delos (ill. 1), the wet drape follows the movement of the right leg, revealing the knee. Similarly audacious, the neckline of our sculpture is much more pronounced than the *Pudicitia* genre usually allows (ill. 2). Therefore, our statue perfectly combines the grace and restraint of the statuary on display at the Budapest Museum (ill. 3) with the passion of the Walters Museum (ill. 4). This rich variety in volume and draping brings energy, grace and a unique natural quality to our monumental sculpture, demonstrating the extent of the sculptor's skill.

This type of statuary, developed as early as the 3rd - 2nd century BC, comes to us from the Hellenistic period. A personification of virtue and modesty, this genre is characterized by specific arm positioning — one is usually pressed against the body across the torso, just under the breasts; the other, bent, rests on the first hand. The forearm rises towards the head, which is usually veiled. In this genre, several categories can be distinguished based on the support leg and how the arms are positioned (ill. 2). Instead of coming under the elbow, the left arm of our elegant statue probably must have extended, illustrating a variation on the *Pudicitia*. A sculpture on display at the Walters Museum (ill. 3) has the same type of variation as ours. Often, the woman shown in

this way is wearing a veil, further emphasizing her modesty. Representing sexual modesty, the term *Pudicitia* derives from the Latin word *pudor*, which is the sense of shame that regulated behavior to what was socially acceptable. *Modesty* was often a defining characteristic for women.

Comparatives:



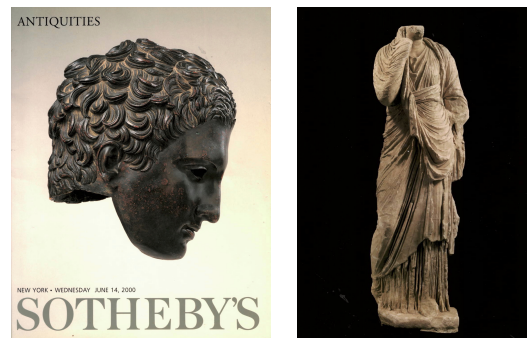
Ill. 1. Cleopatra & Dioscorides, Greek, 137-138 BC, marble, H.: 148 cm. Archaeological Museum, Delos, inv. A7763.

Ill. 2. Variations of the Pudicitia in M. Bieber, *Ancient Copies Contributions to The History of Greek and Roman Art*, New York University Press, New York, 1977, Plate 102 and 103.



Ill. 3. *Pudicitia*, 2nd century AD, marble, height. 172 cm. Museum of Fine Art, Budapest.

Ill. 4. Standing woman in the *Pudicitia* genre, 1st century BC, marble, 194 x 68.4 x 46 cm. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.



Ill. 5. Sotheby's New York, 14 June 2000, lot 87.