

# BUST OF A SATYR

ROMAN, FLAVIAN PERIOD, CA. LATE 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AD

*ROSSO ANTICO* MARBLE

BUST AND PEDESTAL FROM THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.

HEIGHT: 62 CM.

WIDTH: 37 CM.

DEPTH: 23 CM.

*PROVENANCE:*

*PROBABLY COLLECTED BY JOHN SPENCER,  
1<sup>ST</sup> EARL SPENCER (1734-1783), ALTHORP,  
WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.*

*SEEN BY C. VERMEULE AND  
D. VON BOTHMER IN JULY 1955  
AT ALTHORP HOUSE.*

*THENCE BY CONTINUOUS DESCENT IN THE  
SPENCER FAMILY, ALTHORP, UNTIL AT  
LEAST 1973.*

*PETER A. PAANAKKER (1925-1999), LOS  
ANGELES, ACQUIRED IN THE UK, MID TO  
LATE 1970S.*

*PRIVATE COLLECTION, LOS ANGELES,  
ACQUIRED IN THE LATE 1980S.*

*BONHAMS LONDON, « ANTIQUITIES »,  
3 APRIL 2014, LOT 50.*

*THEN NORTH-AMERICAN PRIVATE  
COLLECTION UNTIL PRESENT DAY.*



This beautiful red marble head depicts a young satyr. His youthful face is slightly turned to the left, highlighting his round, full face. Under a smooth but heavy forehead, his almond-shaped eyes are surmounted by a very thin eyebrow line, almost flat, joining on both sides the base of a large nose with an almost geometrical tip. Even larger in its lower part, the nose is enclosed by two high cheekbones, under which two dimples are deeply carved. His mouth shows a clear smile, almost naughty, represented with two thick lips which ends go upwards. The mouth is ajar, letting the upper teeth visible.



A full, round chin completes this visage, separated from the lower lip by a delicately carved dimple. This smile causes a contraction of the side muscles, accentuating the impression of fleshy cheeks. The stylized hair of our satyr is very dense, divided in thick strands presenting relatively the same girth. Within the locks, every hair is carved and presents an undulating movement, as if the wind were rushing through it. However, despite this apparent agitation of the hair, the coiffure seems extraordinarily ordinate. At the edge of this hair, two small, symmetric horns are placed in line with the eyes – these horns being the element indicating that this head is that of a satyr. The pointy ears, the other characteristic elements of the satyr iconography, are visible on either side of the head, partially covered by the hair mass. So as the head, the neck is thick and seems contracted, with a fleshy aspect.



The antique head has been completed with an 18<sup>th</sup>-century *rosso antico* bust and a marble pedestal. Originally, our satyr head was very likely part of a large statue depicting him with an animal-skin garment attached around his shoulder. This head pertains to a satyr type, based on a Hellenistic original known from at least five extant Roman copies, including one in the villa Albani (ill. 1), that shows, indeed, similar features such as the contracted muscles of the cheeks, which is a characteristic element of the iconography of the laughing satyr. Many examples of statues depicting a laughing satyr are known, notably in the British Museum (ill. 2 & 3) and in a private English collection (ill. 4).

The type of marble used for our splendid sculpture is a red-colored marble type called *rosso antico*, a fine grained, highly-compacted limestone ranging in color from a light red to a dark purple quarried in Taenarum, modern day Cape Matapan in the Peloponnese, hence its Latin name *marmor taenarium*. The first use of this type of marble is attested in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, for vases and oil lamps. It is only under Domitian's and Hadrian's reigns that the use of red marble reaches its peak. Due to its difficult extraction, the material remains rare, nevertheless, its use spreads out of the Roman Empire's borders. It thus becomes a symbol of its patron's wealth and can be used in the making of very precious artworks. Amongst these beautiful objects, we can cite two examples of life-size (or larger than life-size) statues representing satyrs, one in the Capitoline Museum (ill. 5) and the second in the Doria Pamphilj gallery (ill. 6), both in Rome, and one satyr herm in Berlin (ill. 7).



This bust was likely collected by John Spencer, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Spencer (1734-1783) during his Grand Tour in the 1760s (ill. 8). C. Vermeule and D. Von Bothmer saw it during their visit to Althorp House on July 1955; they described mentioning the old restorations: *“Replica of the Head of the Polyclitan Pan [...]. The right horn, the back of the head including the satyr’s ears, and the bust with nebris are restored”*.

Like their relatives, the Dukes of Marlborough, the Spencers were voracious collectors of ancient art. The notebooks of John, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Spencer (1758-1834), preserved in the British Library, recount his penchant for the ancient world and his travels around Italy. Althorp, the Spencer’s ancestral home in West Northamptonshire where this bust resided until at least 1973, was also home to Lady Diana Spencer from the early 1970s until her marriage to Charles, Prince of

Wales, in 1981. The satyr bust was then acquired in the 1970s by the Los Angeles businessman Peter A. Paanakker (1925-1999). It was next part of a private collection of Los Angeles, acquired in the late 1980s, until April 2014 when the sculpture was sold at Bonhams London (ill. 9). It remained in a North-American private collection until present day.



#### Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Statue of a satyr, Roman, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, Marble, H.: 155 cm. Villa Albani Torlonia, Rome, no. inv. MT 21.





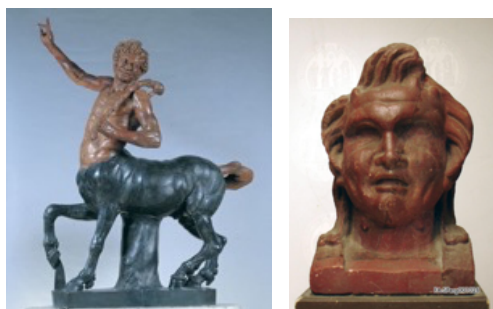
Ill. 2. Head of a satyr, Roman, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble. British museum, London.

Ill. 3. Statue of young satyr, Roman, 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, after a Hellenistic original, marble. British museum, inv. no. 1973.0103.8.



Ill. 4. Head of a satyr, Roman, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble. Private collection, Castle Howard, Yorkshire, England.

Ill. 5. Statue of a faun, Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, after a Hellenistic original, *rosso antico* marble. Musei Capitolini, Rome, inv. no. MCo657.



Ill. 6. Statue of a centaur, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, *rosso antico* marble and black marble. Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome.

Ill. 7. Herm bust of a satyr, Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, *rosso antico* marble. Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung, Berlin, inv. no. Sk 273.

## Provenance:



Ill. 8. John Spencer (1734-1783)



Ill. 9. Bonhams London, « Antiquities », 3 April 2014, lot 50.



Ill. 10. Arachne Online Database no. 1060644.



## **Publications:**

- C. Vermeule and D. Von Bothmer, *American Journal of Archaeology*, October 1956, vol. 60, p. 322.
- A. Scholl, ed., *Die antiken Skulpturen in Farnborough Hall sowie in Althorp House, Blenheim Palace, Lyme Park und Penrice Castle*, Mainz am Rhein, 1995, p. 12-13, no. A2, pl. 1,3.
- Arachne Online Database no. 1060644 (ill. 10).

## **Exhibitions:**

- Art Institute of Chicago, *Dionysos Unmasked: Ancient Sculpture and Early Prints*, 11 June 2015-15 February 2016.
- Art Institute of Chicago, *Of Gods and Glamour: The Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Art*, 14 June 2016-19 April 2022.