

PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

ROMAN, SEVERAN PERIOD, CA. LATE 2ND CENTURY AD
MARBLE

HEIGHT: 28 CM.

WIDTH: 22 CM.

DEPTH: 15,5 CM.

PROVENANCE:

*FORMERLY IN THE COLLECTION OF
DR FRANK STANTON (1906-2006),
UNITED STATES, FORMER PRESIDENT
OF THE AMERICAN BROADCASTING
NETWORK CBS.*

*SOLD BY CHRISTIE'S ANTIQUITIES,
NEW YORK, 18 DECEMBER 1996,
LOT NO. 130.*

*THEN FORMER PRIVATE COLLECTION
OF DR. ANTON PESTALOZZI (1915-2007),
IN ENNETWIES MANOR, SWITZERLAND.*



This gentle portrait, with hair as beautiful as it is imposing, represents a young Roman

woman. Her oval face with its exquisite features is enhanced by her fine, almond-shaped eyes. They are surmounted by distinctly carved brows, making shadows and light play across and animate her gaze. Her eyebrows give way to a straight, prominent nose, set above a closed mouth with full lips and a slightly pointed chin. These physical characteristics give the portrait a serene, distinguished expression, probably symbolising her high rank in Roman society. The grey-white marble shows some signs of wear, particularly on the nose, making this portrait all the more authentic.

Her face is framed by finely sculpted hair, which displays all the sculptor's considerable dexterity. Typical of the Severan period (193-235 AD), her hairstyle consists of two sections separated by a central parting. The locks of hair are delicately wavy and cover the young woman's ears, continuing down the nape of her neck. Although the back of the head no longer remains, we can, thanks to many comparative works from the same period, imagine a sophisticated flat chignon (Ill. 1). Also of note is the subtle inclusion of two small locks of hair on each side of her face, which seem to have escaped her hairstyle to caress the young woman's cheeks. This detail indicates that the young woman is actually wearing a wig, from which two locks of her own hair have escaped. These details given by the sculptor are a testament to the portrait's realism and heighten the contrast between the gentle, relaxed, motionless face of the subject and her wavy, heavy, voluminous hairstyle. This portrait thus reflects part of the daily life of Roman women,



who commonly wore wigs to follow the hair trends of their time.



By its resemblance to the portraits crafted during the Severan period, we can date this work to the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD. It is possible that our portrait immortalises the Roman empress Julia Domna. Born in 160 and dead in 217, Julia Domna was the second wife of Septimius Severus, who was then the governor of Gallia Lugdunensis. The couple ruled the Empire from 193 to 211. Known as a patron of the arts, music and philosophy, Julia Domna was a particularly well-liked figure in the Roman Empire. Her official portraits have similar features to ours, including almond-shaped eyes surmounted by prominently carved brows (Ill. 2) and a high, full chin, characteristic of the Severus family, as we can see in the portrait of Julia Mamaea, niece of Julia Domna (Ill. 3). The voluminous hairstyle, and particularly the detail of the wayward locks, is also a common feature in these portraits (Ill. 4 and 5).

However, slight differences in the severity of the traits and the representation of some features should be taken into account, as our portrait is more gentle and harmonious. We may thus consider that this portrait was created for a Roman aristocrat who was a contemporary of Empress Julia Domna and wanted her portrait to draw inspiration from the empress, while retaining a certain originality. It was very common for private portraits to adopt physical and stylistic features from official portraits at that time, as we can see in later female portraits (Ill. 5 and 6). It was a way for Roman men and women to show their power, appear in idealised portraits and, especially, imitate the imperial family, the very symbol of power and elegance.



Our face made an exceptional addition to the collection of Frank Stanton (1906-2006) (Ill. 7), President of the American network CBS and art enthusiast. It was then sold at Christie's

Antiquities in 1996 in a sale dedicated to the Stanton collection, under lot no. 130.

Our portrait then belonged to the collection of Dr Anton Pestalozzi, a lawyer of repute based in Zurich, Switzerland. Known as a great archaeological art collector, he particularly admired Greek and Roman portraits. His collection, housed in Ennetwies manor in Switzerland, included rare works such as a head of Alexander the Great or portraits from the Severan period. Renowned throughout the art market, but also in the archaeological sphere, Dr Pestalozzi's collection was featured in two catalogues, one published in 1995, the other in 2006. Our portrait is included in the second catalogue, meaning that it was acquired by Dr Pestalozzi between 1996 and 2006.



Comparatives:



Ill. 1: Bust of Julia Domna, 2nd-3rd century AD, marble, H.: 66,50 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. MA 1113.

Ill. 2: Head of Julia Domna, 3rd century AD, marble, H.: 62 cm. Musée du Louvre, inv. no. MA 1104.



Ill. 3: Bust of Julia Mammaea, 3rd century AD, marble, H.: 62 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1865,0103,8

Ill. 4: Bust of Julia Domna, 2nd-3rd century AD, marble, H.: 74 cm. Lyon Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. X 482 - 115.



Ill. 5: Bust of a woman from the Severan period, 2nd century AD, marble, H.: 80 cm. Capitoline Museums, Rome, inv. no. 280.



Ill. 6: Bust of a Roman woman from the Severan period, 3rd century AD, marble, H.: 30 cm. Capitoline Museums, Rome, inv. no. 866.

Provenance:



Ill. 7: Frank Stanton, 1947.



Property From the Collection
DR. FRANK STANTON

•130
A ROMAN MARBLE PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN
CIRCA LATE 2ND-EARLY 3RD CENTURY A.D.
Her full round face with lidded almond-shaped eyes, the hair (perhaps a wig) arranged in the *hebutrisur*, a mass of center-parted undulating hair pulled back over her ears, with two small locks protruding onto her cheeks
11 in. (28 cm.) high
Perhaps representing the empress Julia Domna or one of her contemporaries. For a similar example see no. 42 in Kleiner and Matheson, eds., *I Claudia, Women in Ancient Rome*.
Estimate: \$4,000-6,000

Christie's *Antiquities*, New York, 18 December 1996, lot no. 130.

Publications:

- Arachne Online Database no. 1171833



- I. Jucker, *Skulpturen der Antiken-Sammlung Ennetwies* ("Sculptures of the Ennetwies collection of antiquities"), Mainz am Rhein, 2006, Band 2, pp. 69-70, no. 19, pls 39-40.

