

# HEAD OF A MAENAD

ROMAN, 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AD  
MARBLE

HEIGHT: 26.5 CM.

WIDTH: 19 CM.

DEPTH: 27 CM.

*PROVENANCE:*

*ON THE EUROPEAN ART MARKET FROM  
THE 1910S.*

*ACQUIRED BY CARLOS CRUZ MONTT  
(1879–1955), SANTIAGO, CHILE.*

*INHERITED BY HIS SON*

*ALBERTO CRUZ EYZAGUIRRE (1910–  
1968), SANTIAGO, CHILE.*

*INHERITED FROM THE FORMER BY HIS  
SON, CARLOS ALBERTO CRUZ CLARO  
(1939–2022).*

*SOLD AS PART OF THE “CARLOS  
ALBERTO CRUZ” COLLECTION,,  
26 GALERÍA JORGE CARROZA, CHILE  
JULY 2025, LOT 143.*



This marble head of a woman, slightly angled to the right, most likely represents a maenad or a nymph. Her idealised face is characterised by full, harmonious lines: a wide forehead, slightly pronounced brow ridges, thin eyelids and large eyes without incised irises. The young woman's cheeks are full and delicately accentuated,

emphasising her youth. Her mouth is small, while her lips, now fragmentary, are parted and full, contributing to her gentle, smiling expression. Her nose and part of her rounded chin are missing. Her hair is one of this sculpted head's most remarkable features, both in its complexity and in its realism.



The sculptor paid particular attention to the treatment of the locks, deeply incised and individually wrought; some having been shaped with a chisel to give a greater effect of depth. All the wavy locks are pulled back into a voluminous chignon, which gives the composition a visual vibrancy heightened by the plays of light and shadow created by the striae of hair. The young woman's hairstyle is also structured by a ribbon that encircles her head twice and crosses under her chignon. The accessory, intended to hold her hair in place, plays a key decorative role by purposefully disrupting the wavy continuity of her hair. The first loop of the ribbon emphasises the volume at the front of the coiffure, creating a subtle contrast between the fuller part and the flatter part just before the chignon. At the back,



two short, wavy locks fall onto her nape, adding an additional lifelike touch. The hairstyle does not hide the woman's ears, which are small and delicately sculpted, highlighting the roundness of her face and accentuating her youthful appearance. The whole piece thus exudes a fresh, gentle aura, typical of idealised representations of women. This head was originally part of a whole statue, probably in full scale.



The work is sculpted from fine-grained marble. It was carefully wrought and some areas of the face – the cheeks and forehead – received an additional polish. The surface displays a warm, nuanced, ancient patina, with ochre and golden-brown tones. The patina, resulting from the natural ageing of the marble and from prolonged exposure to different environments, lends the piece a visual depth while enhancing the shapes and delicate modelling of the face.

Our sculpture can be identified as a maenad or a nymph, as the smiling, animated expression of the female figure's face indicates a connection to the natural world or Dionysus' retinue. Maenads, Dionysus' companions, embodied vitality, freedom and inebriation in Graeco-Roman iconography. They were often represented in motion, dancing or in a trance. Nymphs, secondary deities linked to springs, forests and mountains, shared with maenads a youthful, graceful, vivacious iconography, characterised by a beauty that was idealised but not hieratic.

This head is completely in line with the iconographic tradition of nymphs and maenads. The woman's gentle, youthful, slightly smiling expression, associated with the abundance and vigour of her hair, evokes a jovial, carefree vision typical of those figures. Inspired by classical and Hellenistic Greek models, they enjoyed a lasting success in the Roman period, when they were widely disseminated as decorative sculptures and reliefs, as well as in the domestic arts.



Many comparative works corroborate that stylistic affiliation. Our head particularly resembles the type known as *The Invitation to the Dance* (ill. 1), a Roman copy of a Hellenistic original from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, attested by coins from Cyzicus in Asia Minor and by many copies preserved worldwide. It is a modern recreation of an ancient motif made from plaster casts of ancient fragments and currently preserved at Sapienza University in Rome. Our sculpture very likely belonged to a similarly composed group. Another example serving as a comparison is the group of a nymph struggling to escape from a satyr, a Roman work from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD preserved at the British Museum (ill. 2). The soft modelling and the expressive, animated treatment of the hair are the same. That treatment of the hair, in particular, is a motif that has been widely disseminated in the collections of prestigious museums such as those of the National Roman Museum (ill. 3). Several heads of maenads preserved in major museums can also

be compared to our sculpture, such as the British Museum's smiling head of a maenad, also depicted wearing a ribbon in her hair (ill. 4), and the remarkable relief representing a dancing maenad preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and dating from between 27 BC and AD 14 (Ill. 5). Finally, the hair of our maenad shows formal similarities with some representations of Aphrodite preserved at the British Museum and the Louvre (ill. 6 and 7), particularly the treatment of the hairstyle and the detail of a ribbon crossed under the chignon. However, the expressions of those figures are more neutral and solemn, as opposed to the cheerful, animated mien specific to nymphs and maenads.

The work was documented on the European art market in the 1910s, a time in which many ancient sculptures were added to private collections around the world. It was then acquired by Carlos Cruz Montt (1879–1955), a major figure in the intellectual and artistic life of Chile at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Several works from his collection are currently at the British Museum, notably pre-Columbian ceramics. Our head was then passed down to his son Alberto Cruz Eyzaguirre (1910–1968), then to his grandson Carlos Alberto Cruz Claro (1939–2022) within the same family, attesting to a continuous, careful preservation spanning over a century (ill. 8 and 9).

### Comparatives:



Ill. 1. The Invitation to the Dance, Roman, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century AD after a Greek original from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, marble. Sapienza University, Rome, inv. no. 60.1206.



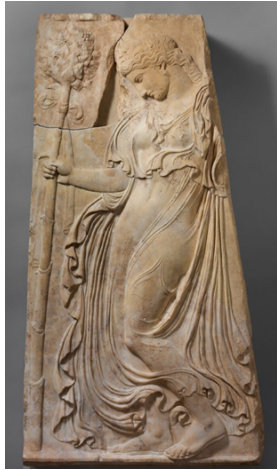
Ill. 2. Nymph struggling to escape from a satyr, Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD after a Greek original from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, marble, H.: 75 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1805,0703.2.



Ill. 3. Nymph struggling to escape from a satyr, Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD after a Greek original from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, marble, H.: 112 cm. National Roman Museum, inv. no. 80005.



Ill. 4. Head of a maenad, Roman, AD 80–120, marble, H: 21.50 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1861,1127.125.



Ill. 5. Relief with a dancing maenad, Roman, 27 BC-AD 14, Roman copy of a Greek original attributed to Callimachus, marble, H.: 143 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 35.11.3.



Ill. 6. Statue of Venus, Roman, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble, H.: 106 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1805,0703.16.

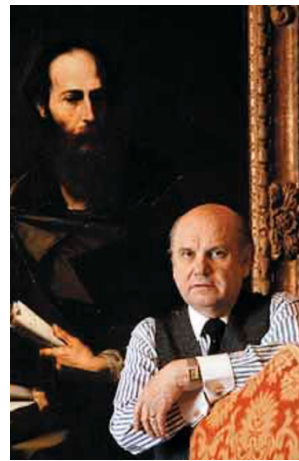


Ill. 7. Head of Aphrodite of Cnidus, Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble, H.: 32.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. N 813.

Provenance:



Ill. 8. Our maenad in the residence of Alberto Cruz Claro in 1978 and 1990's.



Ill. 9. Alberto Cruz Claro (1939-2022).