

HEAD OF ARTEMIS

GREEK, HELLENISTIC, 3RD – 2ND CENTURY BC
MARBLE

HEIGHT: 10 CM.

WIDTH: 8 CM.

DEPTH: 9 CM.

PROVENANCE:

*FORMER EUROPEAN PRIVATE
COLLECTION SINCE THE 1940S BASED ON
THE MOUNTING TECHNIQUES.
FORMER FRENCH PRIVATE COLLECTION
ACQUIRED PRIOR TO THE 2000S.*



This delicate female head, carved in the round from fine-grained white marble, displays a youthful face of harmonious proportions, characteristic of Hellenistic Greek sculpture. The oval face, slightly inclined to the left, is animated by features of remarkable softness. The almond-shaped

eyes, with finely modelled eyelids, are set beneath subtly defined brows, while the full, delicately rounded cheeks emphasise the sitter's youthful appearance. The nose, now partially worn, was originally straight and regular. The small mouth, with its full lips slightly parted, lends the face the expression of a fleeting, suspended moment imbued with quiet gravity. The short, gently rounded chin completes this idealised image of serene youth.



The hairstyle constitutes one of the most remarkable features of the sculpture. Broad, undulating locks frame the face before being



swept back into a low chignon. A ribbon (*taenia*), still discernible in the modelling, encircles the head and secures the hair, whose slight fullness above the temples creates a particularly harmonious sense of volume. At the crown of the head survive the remains of a now-lost knot, while a small circular hole may indicate the former attachment of an inserted element. This most likely supported an applied attribute—perhaps a crescent moon or a diadem, both now lost. The locks, deeply drilled and subsequently refined with the chisel, create a subtle interplay of light and shadow that animates the marble surface and attests to the sculptor's technical virtuosity. The ears remain largely concealed beneath the abundant hair. The neck, preserved only to a limited height, terminates in a clean ancient break at its base, indicating the early separation of the head from the remainder of the statue. Through the balance of its volumes, the delicacy of its modelling and the refinement of its coiffure, this work exemplifies the technical mastery achieved by Greek sculptural workshops during the Hellenistic period.

The sculpture is carved from fine-grained white marble, the surface of which retains traces of its original polish, now softened by the passage of time. It displays a homogeneous ivory-toned patina with slight ochre hues, punctuated by fine calcareous concretions. Ancient wear is visible on the most prominent areas, particularly the nose, lips and the summit of the coiffure.

On the basis of its physiognomic type, idealised features and raised hairstyle, this head may be associated with Hellenistic representations of the goddess Artemis,

although the absence of her traditional attributes—quiver, bow, diadem or crescent moon—requires a degree of caution. Daughter of Zeus and Leto, and the twin sister of Apollo, Artemis was the goddess of the hunt, the wilderness and the protector of young women. In Greek sculpture, her image evolved during the Hellenistic period towards more elegant and expressive representations, in which the richness of the coiffure became an integral component of the feminine ideal of beauty.



Several sculptures display close stylistic affinities with the present head, notably a head of Artemis in the British Museum (fig. 1), dated between 325 and 275 BC, whose treatment of both the face and the hairstyle reveals a comparable search for softness in the modelling. The monumental bronze head in the Archaeological Museum of

Piraeus (fig. 2) also provides a convincing parallel in the arrangement of the swept-back coiffure. This iconographic type continued into the Roman period, as illustrated by the small marble head from Cyrene (fig. 3) and another example in the British Museum (fig. 4), both of which demonstrate the enduring popularity of these Hellenistic models. Finally, the Roman copy after a Hellenistic original known as the *Artemis Rospigliosi* in the Louvre Museum (fig. 5) illustrates the longevity of this iconographic scheme into the Imperial period.

Dating to the 3rd–2nd centuries BC, this sculpture belongs to a period in which Greek workshops developed a sculptural language characterised by an increasing naturalism and a renewed sensitivity in the rendering of facial expression. Faces became softer and more refined, while hairstyles, executed with ever greater virtuosity, emerged as essential compositional elements. This head most probably belonged to a small votive statue or modest-scale sculpture intended for a sanctuary, a domestic setting, or a private cult space.

Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Head of Artemis, Greek, Hellenistic, 325 B.C. – 275 B.C., marble, H.: 16,50 cm. British Museum, inv. no. 1859,1226.90.



Ill. 2. Head of Artemis, Greek, Hellenistic, first half of the 3rd century B.C., bronze, height: 155 cm. Piraeus Museum, Athens.



Ill. 3. Head of Artemis, Roman, 1st century CE, marble, H.: 10 cm. Museum of Antiquities, Cyrene, Libya. Arachne ID: 1069810.



Ill. 4. Head of Artemis, Roman, 120–180 CE, marble, H.: 32 cm. British Museum, inv. no. 1873,0820.736.



Ill. 5. Artemis of the so-called "Rospigliosi" type, Roman work, 2nd century A.D., marble, height: 163 cm. Louvre Museum, Paris, inv. No. Ma 559.