

STATUE REPRESENTING JUNO

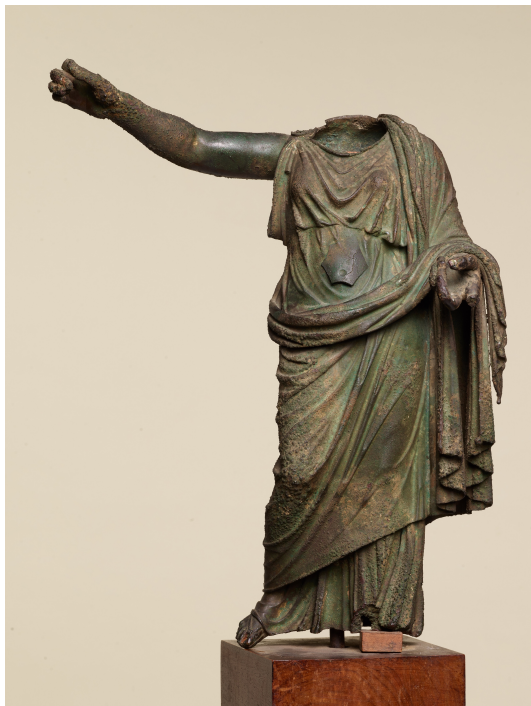
ROMAN, 1ST CENTURY AD
BRONZE

HEIGHT: 56 CM.

WIDTH: 46 CM.

DEPTH: 24 CM.

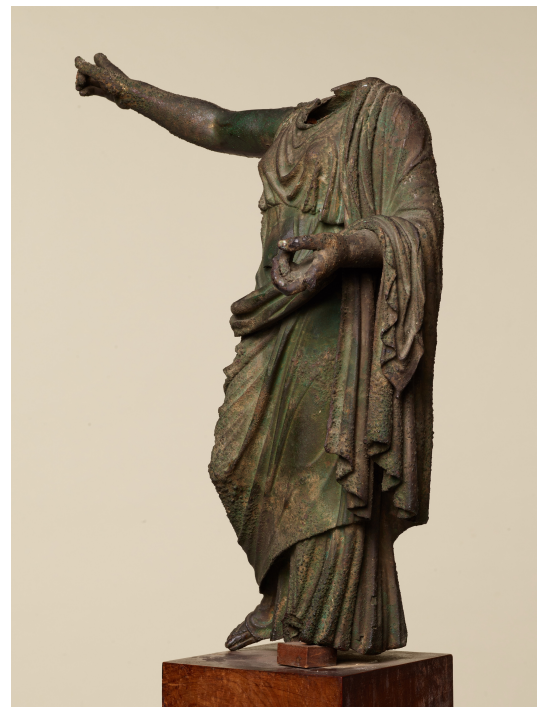
PROVENANCE:
IN A FRENCH PRIVATE COLLECTION
FROM THE 1940S OR 1950S.
THEN IN THE PARISIAN PRIVATE
COLLECTION OF MR G. L. SINCE 1990S.



Our splendid bronze sculpture depicts the goddess Juno, a major figure in the Roman pantheon, worshipped as the queen of the gods and the protector of Rome. Dating from the 1st century AD, it epitomises the height of Roman art and ties in with the great Roman statuary of the imperial period, drawing from both classical Greek art and the religious values specific to Rome.

The goddess is depicted standing, hips slightly canted in a subtle balance that breaks

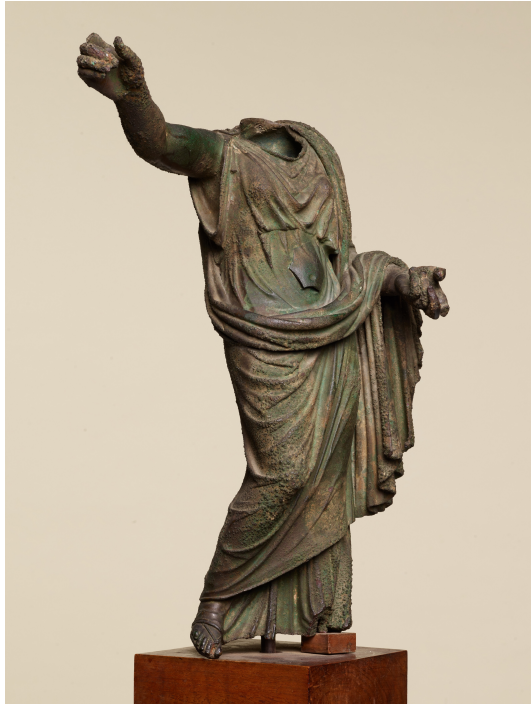
with strict frontality. The weight of her body seems to rest mainly on one leg, while the position of the other, more relaxed, creates a slight shift of the hips, lending the figure the illusion of a living, measured stability. That attitude, inherited from classical Greek statuary, was frequently adopted in Roman art to express dignity and authority, as is the case here with Juno's very measured, almost solemn pose.



Juno's body is enveloped in a large, complex drapery consisting of a long tunic called a *stola* and a thick mantle in the Greek style, a *palla*, which she is wearing over the top, thrown over her shoulder and wrapped around her waist. The *stola*, a traditional female garment made of wool, was worn

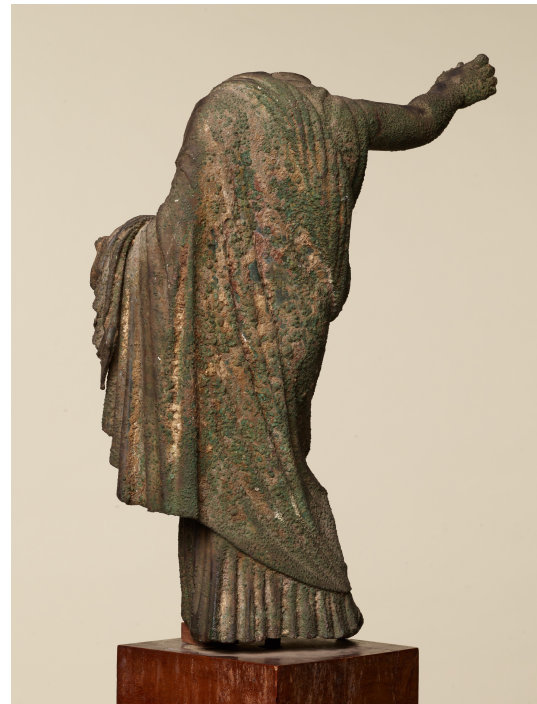


cinched at the waist and generally had long sleeves, although that is not the case here. The *palla* resembled a big, quadrangular shawl, which was worn freely draped and unfastened. The treatment of the drapery constitutes one of the work's most remarkable stylistic features.



The folds are arranged according to a clear, hierarchical structure: wide vertical sections alternate with thinner, deeply incised folds, creating a masterful visual rhythm, as well as a subtle play of light and shadow. That arrangement of the drapery is reminiscent of the Greek statues of the end of the classical period, particularly those of clothed divine figures, in which the fabric played a structural rather than decorative role. However, the density and thickness of the fabrics reflect a more Roman aesthetic, with monumentality and solemnity prevailing over the idealised airiness of Greek models. Here, the treatment of the fabric reveals a remarkable command over matter: the fabrics seem both heavy and supple, hugging the contours of the goddess' body without ever directly exposing them. That stylistic choice is perfect for representing Juno, a sovereign and protective deity whose

iconography traditionally emphasised her dignity and reserve. At the front, the drapery is arranged in diagonal and vertical folds that converge towards her belt, accentuating the structure of her torso and the verticality of her figure. It is thus easy to recognise the *stola*, fastened at Juno's shoulders by *fibulae*. Its fabric forms an overfold at the chest with the belt placed beneath it. The garment falls quite low, to her feet, only the right of which has been preserved. It is shod in a delicate sandal with leather strips that go from each side of her foot and meet between her two first toes. The wide folds of her *palla* are visually different from those of the *stola* by their strict verticality, as well as the thickness of the material. The drapery covers her left shoulder, falls down our goddess' back, comes up at her right hip and enfolds her lower body before draping over her left forearm, hanging down on either side.



Her arms contribute significantly to the dynamic of the composition. One is lifted and outstretched in a gesture of majesty while the other, lowered and folded, must have held an attribute that is now missing, perhaps a sceptre as a symbol of her divine authority or a patera. Her hands, both indexes of which

are missing, are firmly and plainly modelled, the expressiveness of her gestures prevailing over decorativeness. At the back, the mantle falls in large, continuous swathes, accentuating the monumentality of Juno's silhouette. The contrast between the complexity of the drapery at the front and the fluidity of that at the back attests to an entirely three-dimensional conception of the sculpture, which was intended to be viewed from several angles. Finally, the articulation of the arms and legs shows remarkable technical skill. Through them, the sculptor was able to give an impression of movement and life.



This masterful, large-scale work illustrates the majesty and power of the queen of the gods, often associated with marriage and the protection of women. Juno held a central place in Roman mythology. She was the wife of Jupiter and one of the Capitoline triad alongside Jupiter and Minerva, embodying supreme female authority. She protected legitimate marriage, fertility and women and also watched over the civic community and the prosperity of the Roman state. Although she was assimilated with the Greek goddess Hera, Juno had a specifically Roman

identity, closely linked to the notion of *matrona* and the continuity of family lines. She presided over the major stages of women's lives, from their birth to their matrimonial union, and was invoked both in public ceremonies and in the private sphere.



The rareness of large-scale ancient bronzes gives this sculpture a particular importance. In antiquity, bronze was a precious material, often recovered and remelted, particularly from the end of the Roman Empire. As a result, only a few large bronze statues have endured through the centuries. Made through the complex technique of lost wax casting, this work illustrates the high level of expertise achieved by Roman workshops, capable of producing large-scale sculptures that were solid, elegant and expressive. Lost wax bronze casting, based on Greek techniques, consisted in first creating a wax model, which was often very detailed, sometimes created around a clay core for large statues. That model was then covered in several layers of clay to form a mould, then heated to melt and evacuate the wax, leaving a hollow mould in the exact shape of the wax model. Molten bronze, an alloy consisting primarily of copper and tin, was then poured

into the still hot mould. Once the metal had cooled, the mould was broken to reveal a unique work that still required finishing touches such as polishing, the correction of any defects and, sometimes, the addition of inlays. The technique enabled Roman artisans to obtain solid, highly realistic, hollow sculptures that were particularly suitable for monumental statuary and portraits.



A few metal patches can be seen on the surface of our Juno, the most visible being that on her abdomen, hexagonal in shape and inserted into the bronze to fill a gap. It even constitutes an amusing detail: a slight hollow at her navel, although the latter is naturally invisible, as it is covered by the fabric of her clothing. The patch exhibits visible details in the form of folds in the fabric and the lab analyses we ordered showed that the back of it displays traces of corrosion identical to those on the bronze surface. The restoration is thus undoubtedly ancient, as that technique has been documented in other examples of large-scale, ancient bronze statues. The practice consists in creating a space around the area to be restored by drilling halfway into the wall of the statue and

pouring molten metal into the hole. Furthermore, as is rather common in lost wax casting, some parts of our Juno were cast separately and soldered onto the main piece, particularly the bent left arm and the head, which is now missing.

The bronze surface is covered with many concretions and an ancient patina, with green, brown and sometimes bluish hues, resulting from the slow, natural oxidation of the metal over the centuries. That patina, now highly valued, represents a tangible testament to the age and authenticity of the work. It also reveals the quality of the alloy and the technical mastery of the ancient artisans. The concretions recall the singular fate of ancient sculptures, often altered by time and successively buried and reused. The plastic qualities of our superb Juno, coupled with the abovementioned technical qualities, enable us to say the work is a high-quality production, probably from an experienced workshop that was able to combine Greek heritage, Roman traditions and the symbolic requirements linked to the depiction of a major deity. While there is no known large-scale bronze representation of the deity, there are a few examples of marble statues that portray Juno in the same authoritative posture, particularly the Farnese Juno preserved at the Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli (ill. 1) and the “Juno of Smyrna” preserved at the Château de Versailles (ill. 2). Stylistically, the bronze portrait of Agrippina the Younger from Herculaneum (ill. 3) strongly resembles our Juno and constitutes a comparable example of large-scale bronze statuary. However, a multitude of bronze statuettes in Juno’s image are preserved in various museums worldwide (ill. 4-7) and attest to the popularity of the goddess, particularly in the home, where such works were displayed as votive objects.

Our sculpture was probably intended for a sacred space such as a temple or sanctuary, or a public place of high symbolic value, and would have been used to worship the goddess and perform religious rites. It illustrates the fundamental role of divine images in Roman religion, in which the material presence of the gods contributed to the balance between the mortal and divine worlds. Presently, this work constitutes an exceptional testament to the art and culture of imperial Rome.

Our magnificent bronze is from a French private collection, amassed between the 1940s and 1950s. That provenance attests to the persisting interest in ancient art in the 20th century. Our sculpture was then added to the Parisian private collection of Mr G. L. in 2004, where it remained until 2024. Through his ownership of the work, he joined the ranks of the discerning collectors who preceded him.

Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Statue of Juno, of the “Ephesus-Vienna” type, known as the Farnese Juno, Roman, 1st century AD after a Greek original from the 4th century BC, marble, H.: 224 cm. Farnese collection, Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, inv. no. 6027.

Ill. 2. Statue of Juno known as the “Juno of Smyrna”, Roman, 2nd century AD, marble, H.: 210 cm. Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, inv. no. MR 250.



Ill. 3. Portrait of Agrippina the Younger discovered in the theatre of Herculaneum, Roman, AD 37, bronze, H.: 195 cm. Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli, inv. no. 5612.



Ill. 4. Statuette representing Juno, Gallo-Roman, bronze, H.: 16.9 cm. Musée Rolin, Autun, inv. no. B310.

Ill. 5. Statuette representing Juno, Roman, imperial period, bronze, H.: 17.2 cm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, inv. no. bronze.50.



Ill. 6. Statuette representing Juno, Roman, 1st-2nd century AD, bronze, H.: 12.6 cm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, inv. no. bronze.49.

Ill. 7. Statuette of a goddess, probably Ceres or Juno, Roman, ca AD 50-75, bronze, H.: 32 cm. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, inv. no. 84.AB.670.