

PANTHER TRAPEZOPHOROS

ROMAN, CIRCA 1ST – 2ND CENTURY AD

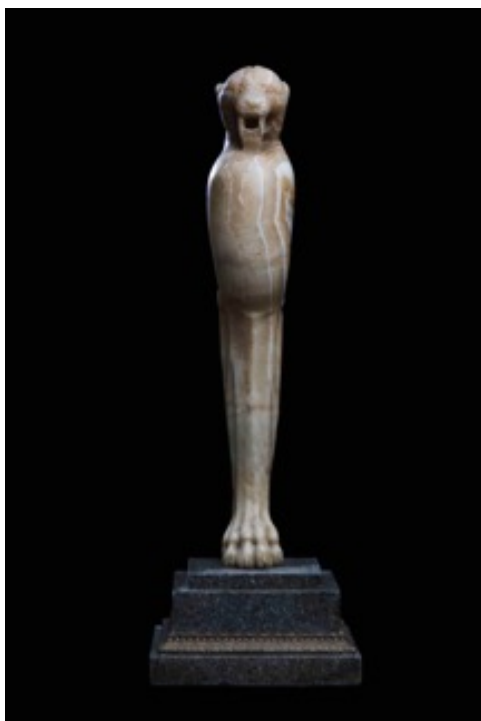
ALABASTER
RESTORATIONS

HEIGHT: 63,5 CM.

WIDTH: 13 CM.

DEPTH: 25 CM.

PROVENANCE :
IN A 19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN
COLLECTION BASED ON RESTORATIONS
AND TECHNIQUES.
SOLD AT CHRISITE'S, LONDON, ON 11
MAY 2000, LOT 57.
PURCHASED FROM ALAIN CHENEL
ANTIQUITÉ, FRANCE.
IN A SWISS PRIVATE COLLECTION FROM
11 JUNE 2000.



This magnificent, sculpted alabaster trapezophoros represents a panther, mouth

slightly open to display its teeth. It ends in a feline paw with sharp claws, and the ensemble is mounted on a more recent pedestal of grey granite with golden bronze mouldings.

A monopodium is a table with only one leg. It may also be called a trapezophoros. These items of furniture can take various forms, whether animalistic (felines, griffons, sphinxes) or figurative (deities, captives...), with or without plant motifs.

Under Alexander the Great, these items were works of art in and of themselves, and were sculpted in precious materials such as ivory, coloured marble or bronze inlaid with gemstones. Monopodiums were very popular at the time of the Roman Empire. They struck a perfect balance between aesthetics and usefulness and were placed in the *atrium* or *triclinium* (banquet hall). Patricians thus showed their desire to imitate the splendour of Hellenistic interiors in their own residences.

Our trapezophoros is made of alabaster. This yellow marble has a translucent aspect



that can take on various hues, from red to pink to brown. Alabaster originated from Asia Minor, and was widely used by Roman artists. Its colour and the hues of the various veins greatly pleased rich patrons. Its use here is exceptional: the finesse of the carving, the smooth finish and the way the alabaster was cut, and thus the position of the veins, all make this item unique and demonstrate the exceptional technical mastery of the artist. Moreover, monopodiums generally feature imposing felines, whose heads end in acanthus leaves with various plant motifs. Here, the sculpture is finer and more elegant and the simplicity of the decoration emphasises the panther's delicate features.



Monopodiums were found pleasing in the 18th and 19th centuries, when they reappeared in houses. Like our sculpture, they were set on pedestals and a marble top was added.



Ill. 1. Lion trapezophoros, Roman, brown alabaster, H.: 52 cm, Sir John Soane's Museum, inv. no. BR13.



Ill. 2. Trapezophoros sculpted with the protome of a panther, imperial era, alabaster, H.: 90 cm, Capitoline Museums, Rome, inv. no. MC324.

