

CINERARY URN

ROMAN, 1ST – 2ND CENTURY AD
MARBLE

18TH CENTURY RESTORATIONS INCLUDING THE BASE AND PART OF THE LID

HEIGHT: 35.5 CM.

WIDTH: 46.5 CM.

DEPTH: 26 CM.

PROVENANCE:

IN THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF THE HOPE FAMILY, ACQUIRED BY THOMAS HOPE BEFORE 1804. EXHIBITED AT HIS RESIDENCES IN DUCHESS STREET, LONDON (1804),

THEN DEEPDENE, DORKING (1808).

PASSED DOWN TO LORD FRANCIS PELHAM CLINTON HOPE, 8TH DUKE OF NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYNE, IN 1884.

SOLD AT AUCTION BY CHRISTIE, MANSON & WOODS, LONDON, ON 23

JULY 1917, AS LOT 193.

ACQUIRED BY EDGAR VINCENT D'ABERNON, 1ST VISCOUNT D'ABERNON, AT THE ABOVE MENTIONED SALE.

SOLD BY THE FORMER, ALONG WITH HIS COLLECTION, AT CHRISTIE'S ON 26 AND 27 JUNE 1929 AS LOT 236.

ACQUIRED BY JEAN MIKAS, COLLECTOR AND ANTIQUARY, PROBABLY AT THE PREVIOUS SALE.

SOLD AT THE BRUMMER GALLERY, NEW YORK, ON 2 JULY 1929.

IN THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF W. S. LUDINGTON, COLLECTOR, ARTIST AND FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF ART, ACQUIRED FROM THE FORMER ON 30 APRIL 1930.

THEN BEQUEATHED TO THE SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF ART.

SOLD BY THE MUSEUM AT SOTHEBY'S, NEW YORK, ANTIQUITIES, ON 14 JUNE 2000 AS LOT 105.

THEN SOLD AT CHRISTIE'S, NEW YORK, ANTIQUITIES, ON 8 JUNE 2004 AS LOT 59.



This semi-cylindrical cinerary urn exhibits rich, exquisite decoration sculpted with a chisel. The base of the urn features a fluted frieze engraved with egg motifs, as well as four dolphins sculpted in high relief, arranged in pairs that face each other at the angles. On the body of the urn, there is a festoon of fruits, flowers and foliage, depicted with naturalistic precision, which spans the entire urn. It is held up by rams' horns and attached with ribbons known as *taenia*. These ribbons fall along the body of the urn, forming a delicate loop. Two knots also stand out from the rams' horns, to attach the festoon, but their function is mainly decorative. The festoon depicted on the main face features four birds pecking at fruits, arranged symmetrically. Some shapes and drawings are engraved in the marble,



creating different levels of representation and highlighting the sculptor's technical skill. On this face is also a rectangular *tabula*, on which there is a Latin inscription in capital letters: "D.M. DEMETRIO FILIO DVLCISSIMO QVI VIKIT ANNIS VIII", which means: "To Demetrius, the gentlest of sons, who lived eight years". This cartouche is accentuated by the festoon that surrounds it, making it the main feature of the urn. On the back are other motifs. There are symmetrical representations of birds and bees enjoying fruits and knots that stand out from the festoon, following the example of the main face and underlining the sculptor's pursuit of harmony. Across from each other are also an oenochoe on the left side and a gorgoneion on the right. The head of Medusa is depicted at the centre of a shield, recalling the legend whereby the Gorgon's head was affixed to Athena's shield following her decapitation by Perseus.



The upper part of the urn features a frieze sculpted with petal and wave motifs. The *cinerarium* originally included a lid depicting a scene of one of the Labours of Hercules, which is now missing.

The base and *tabula* were restored in the 18th century, most likely by the famous Italian printmaker and architect Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778). Particularly well known for his representations of Roman antiquities, including his series of engravings such as *Le Antichità Romane* and *Vedute di Roma*, Piranesi's work was carried out against a backdrop of antique restoration, often carried out by artisans and contemporary restorers, when the trend of the "Grand Tour" was at its height.



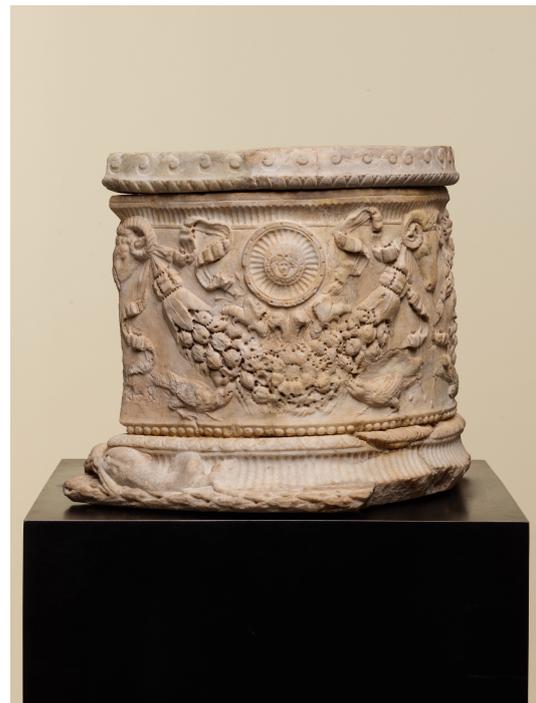
Roman cinerary urns were used to preserve the ashes of the dead. According to the inscription on the *tabula*, this urn housed the ashes of Demetrius, a child who died before his time, at the age of eight. His parents had this urn made in his honour. Urns were most frequently placed within the niches, or *loculi*, of *columbaria*, vast, richly decorated underground spaces that were often commissioned by rich Roman patricians. From the republican period, in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD and particularly during the reign of Augustus, the dominant practice was that of cremation, to the detriment of inhumation. Cremation consists in reducing

the deceased to ashes, which are most often preserved in urns, while inhumation means burying the bodies of the dead, which, in that time, often rested in sarcophagi. There were hundreds of *columbaria* around Rome, including that of Pomponius Hylas. The growing interest in the practice was due to the lower cost of the technique, as well as the decisions made by Emperor Augustus, who, faced with an ever-increasing population, developed a construction policy by reforming Rome's archaic laws on inhumation. That period was thus marked by a rise in the production of cinerary urns and a break with Greek funerary decoration. Although the Greeks were the first to adopt the practice of cremation in the 5th century BC, they preserved the ashes of the dead in terracotta vases, decorated or painted with mythological scenes.



The iconography of our urn is mostly symbolic. Its decoration is richly sculpted – meticulous, detailed and elaborate. At the end of the 1st century AD, urns were decorated in the Augustan style, which drew on a repertory of plant, animal and ornamental motifs and included some mythological subjects. It also featured both

festoons of fruits and wreaths, the origin of which dates back to the Hellenistic period, starting in the 3rd century BC. The first traces of the motifs can be found in Asia Minor, in Pergamon, with an example on one of the façades of the temple of Demeter (ill. 1). However, the Romans went on to refine the festoon by adding a profusion of naturalistic and ornamental elements and motifs, as could be observed on public buildings during the Augustan period (ill. 2).



Festoons evoke festivities and sacrificial rites, symbolising purification and offerings to the gods. Held aloft by the heads of rams, sacrificial animals, they were a motif common to many urns in the republican period, such as those preserved at the British Museum (ill. 3) and the Vatican (ill. 4). Plant motifs such as flowers, fruits and leaves symbolise prosperity and fertility. A very close link thus becomes apparent between sacrificial rites and nature. The motifs were intended to please the gods and are thus emblematic of Roman funerary iconography.

The head of Medusa represented on our urn has an apotropaic function. As the guardian of the border between the worlds of the dead and the living, she protected the ashes of the

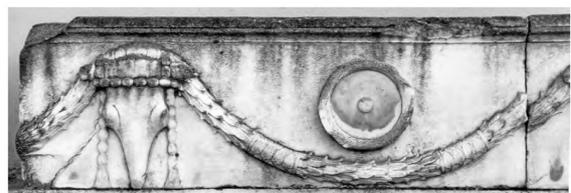
deceased. The motif also featured on other kinds of funerary paraphernalia such as sarcophagi – on that of the Walters Art Museum, it occupies a central place (ill. 5). The purpose of that iconography was, thus, to enable the deceased to pass safely to the afterlife. To that end, many rites were associated with funerary practices, for example, celebrations such as the *Parentalia* and *Rosalia*, during which urns were covered in flowers and libations.



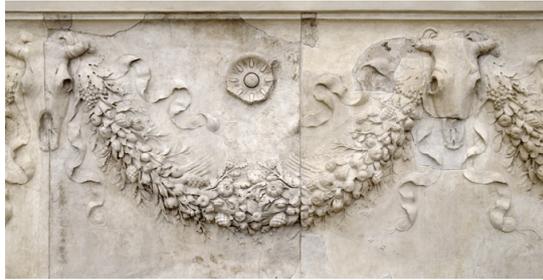
This cinerary urn was acquired by Thomas Hope (1769–1831 – ill. 6), a wealthy Anglo-Dutch collector. It was purchased before 1804, probably during his Grand Tour, a long, initiatory journey, particularly in Italy, whereby those who undertook it rediscovered the Roman antiquities that so fascinated the European nobles of the 18th and 19th centuries. While travelling, he began to amass his private collection, which included our urn, as well as the famous Hope diamond. Following its purchase, the urn was exhibited in his residences, first in the Statue Gallery of his house in Duchess Street in London (ill. 7), then in his home in Deepdene in Dorking, where it

stood in the Theatre of Arts, a room built specifically to house his ancient works (ill. 8 and 9). Lord Francis Pelham-Clinton-Hope, 8th Duke of Newcastle (1866–1914 – ill. 10), his great-grandson, inherited both his collection and his estates in 1884. The collection was then passed to Lily Hammersley, Duchess of Marlborough, whose nephew, Winston Churchill, regularly visited her at the property in Deepdene. However, due to financial difficulties, the collection was dispersed in 1917. Our urn was sold at Christie, Manson & Woods, in London on 24 July 1917 in the sale entitled “Ancient Greek and Roman sculpture and vases, being a portion of the Hope heirlooms”, as lot 193 (ill. 11). It was bought by Lord Edgar Vincent D’Abernon, a former member of the British Parliament. He then sold it, in a sale that included most of his collection, at Christie, Manson & Woods, in June 1929 (ill. 12). The antiquary and collector Jean Mikas probably purchased the work at the same sale to resell it a few days later, on 2 July 1929, to the Brummer Gallery in New York (ill. 13 and 14). It remained there for nearly a year, until Wright Saltus Ludington, a collector, artist and one of the founding members of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, purchased it (ill. 15). He then bequeathed it, along with much of his private collection, to that very museum (ill. 16). After it had been exhibited at the museum for several decades, it was put up for sale at Sotheby’s in New York on 14 June 2000 and then again at Christie’s in New York on 8 June 2004.

Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Trabeation frieze of the façade *in antis* of the temple of Demeter, Greek, 302–263 BC, marble, Pergamon, Turkey.



Ill. 2. Ara Pacis, Roman, 1st century BC, marble, Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome, Italy.



Ill. 3. Burial chest, Roman, AD 69–79, marble, H.: 25.20 cm. British Museum, London, 1772.0301.9.



Ill. 4. Cinerary urn of C. Pupillius Rufus, Roman, 2nd half of the 1st century AD, marble, H.: 57 cm. Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican, MV.10584.0.0.

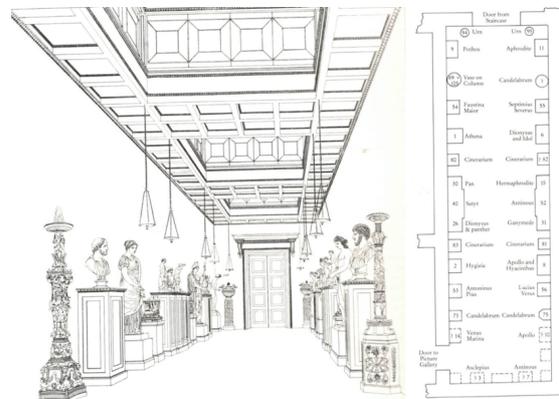


Ill. 5. Sarcophagus with Victories, Roman, ca AD 210, Thasian marble, H.: 115.6 cm. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 23.36.

Provenance:



Ill. 6. Sir William Beechey, *Thomas Hope*, 1798, oil on canvas, H.: 2.216 m. National Portrait Gallery, NPG 4574.



Ill. 7. Illustration of the Statue Gallery, Duchess Street, London, ca 1804, as published in *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration Executed from Designs* by Thomas Hope, 1807 (our urn is no. 81).



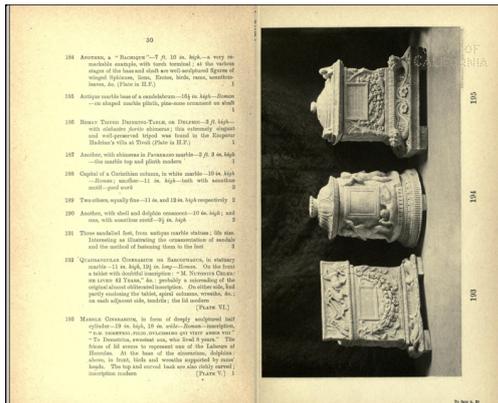
Ill. 8. Photograph of Thomas Hope's residence in Deepdene, Dorking.



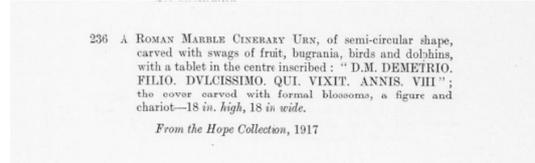
Ill. 9. Penry Williams, *Theatre of the Arts*, 1826, watercolour, as published in *Illustrations of the Deepdene, Seat of T. Hope Esqre., 1825-26*, by John Britton, London Borough of Lambeth, Archives Department (our urn is the second from the right, in the first row).



Ill. 10. Photograph of Lord Francis Pelham-Clinton-Hope, 8th Duke of Newcastle.



Ill. 11. Sales catalogue extract, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 24 July 1917, "Ancient Greek and Roman sculpture and vases, being a portion of the Hope heirlooms", lot 193.



Ill. 12. Sales catalogue extract, Christie's, 26-27 June 1929, "Catalogue of old French furniture, objects of art and porcelain, the property of Viscount D'Abernon", lot 236.



Ill. 13. Photograph of the front of the Brummer Gallery in New York.

Ill. 14. Extract of the Brummer Gallery's sales inventories.



Ill. 15. Extract of the Brummer Gallery's invoice for the urn, in the name of Wright Saltus Ludington, dated 30 April 1930.



Ill. 16. Photograph of Wright Saltus Ludington at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art.