TOMASSO



Roman (c. 14 A.D. - c. 200 A.D.)

Head of Juno

Marble

38 cm (15 in.) high

The present head is a fine representation of the ancient goddess known as Juno to the Romans and as Hera to the Ancient Greeks, wife of Jupiter/Zeus and queen of the Olympian gods. Her cult was particularly well established in Rome, where she was worshipped as protector of the city's matrons and, more generally, of childbirth. She is thus both representative of sovereignty and fertility.

The youthful, idealised features and serene expression of our figure are typical of the portrayal of deities in ancient Greece and Rome. Specifically, the hair centrally parted, tied back in soft waves that partly cover the ears and crowned by a demi-lune diadem is characteristic of Juno, as visible in other famous statues of the goddess from antiquity, such as the Hera Ludovisi (fig. 1, Rome, Palazzo Altemps) and the Hera Farnese (fig. 2, Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale), both Roman marbles that draw on Greek precedents. The former is considered to be a portrait of Antonia Minor, one of the most influential women of ancient Rome, reflecting a custom of portraying members of the imperial household in the guise of deities. The choice of Juno for Antonia Minor – who was the niece of Emperor Augustus, sister-in-law of Emperor Tiberius, paternal grandmother of Emperor Caligula and Empress Agrippina the Younger, mother of Emperor Claudius, and both maternal great-grandmother and paternal great-aunt of Emperor Nero – reflects the deeply rooted connection between the image of Roman matriarchs and that of Juno, and the ensuing widespread cult of the goddess.

The high quality of the present carving - visible in the subtle rendering of the curls, in the crisp outline of the eyes, in the elegantly parted lips and in the regular arch of the brows - indicates that our head was executed by a skilled artist trained in the heart of the Empire, most likely Rome, between the first and second centuries AD, at the height of the city's power.

The head was purchased in the 1960s by Nane and Christer Wahlgren, who treasured it for decades. Christer Wahlgren (1900-1987) was editor in chief and owner of Sweden's renowned daily newspaper Sydsvenskan. He and his wife Nane acquired the present Junowhile travelling with the artist Henning Malmström (1890-1968), whose collection of ancient portraits is now part of the Malmö Museum.

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