



MUMMY MASK OF A WOMAN

Plaster with original polychrome
Middle Egypt, possibly Tuna-el-Gebbel/Antinoupolis
Roman Period, Neron-Flavian Time, 55-100 AD
Height 19.7 cm Width 17.5 cm

Funerary mask of a young woman featuring a full round face with large eyes modelled in relief with pupils, cosmetic lines and arched eyebrows painted in black. The nose is long and straight, the mouth delicate with slightly upturned corners. Faint red pigment is visible on the lips and in the nostrils. The very elaborate coiffure comprises: small black curls lining the forehead, corkscrew curls around the ears, a round ringlet toupee and a line of wavy hair with a wreath of pink flowers atop. The woman is wearing pearl earrings. The skin tone is a light pink colour lending the face depth and realism. Like a portrait, the mask may have been modelled on the true features of the deceased woman.

Masks such as this reflect the profound change that the Greco-Roman world brought to Egypt. A more naturalistic depiction of a person's face replaced the stylized art of Egypt's dynastic periods. Hieroglyphs and other symbols, painted on elaborate sarcophagi, fell out of favour. These funerary masks were reserved for the elite who were mummified, and then buried in a simple wooden coffin in small family chapels.

PROVENANCE

Former private collection Coco Chanel (1883-1971) Paris, France; private collection Israel, acquired in 1999 at Sotheby's New York; private collection D.R. New York, USA

LITERATURE

A. Müller: *Ägyptens schöne Gesichter, Mumienmasken der römischen Kaiserzeit und ihre Funktion im Totenritual*, Wiesbaden 2021
G. Grimm: *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, F. Steiner, Wiesbaden 1974
M. F. Aubert & R. Cortopassi: *Portraits funéraires de l'Égypte romaine*, Musée du Louvre, Paris 2004