

DECORATIVE THEATRICAL MASKS

Artist: Unknown
Date: 1st-2nd Century AD
Dimensions: ca. 8 x 7,5 cm
Material: Bronze
Inventory Number: 65604, 66634, 67831

Total Cost: € 5.975,00

STATE OF PRESERVATION:

The surface of the masks is completely encrusted with organic residues and bi-products of bronze corrosion. Part of the decoration is missing.

RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES:

- Cleaning and elimination of the corrosive salt bi-products
- Systematic cleaning of all the surfaces
- Stabilization of the residual products of corrosion
- Consolidation of the fractures and filling of existing lacunae (small holes)
- Protective final varnish
- Photographic documentation

Theatrical productions were very popular in Greek and Roman culture and as a result greatly influenced their artistic styles. Actors in masks and theatrical scenes can be found depicted on basic crafts, sculptures, mosaics, paintings and objects of daily use. A grammarian and sophist of the age of Commodus (2nd century AD), named Giulio Polluce, described the different types of masks for theatrical genres - tragedy, comedy and satirical drama - in his work *Onomastikon*.

The Greek word for mask, *prosopon*, qualifies it as a face, namely the "other" face compared to that of the actor, with specific characteristics that determine their expression. In Rome, the masks were made specifically for each performance and had characteristics of mobility and vitality similar to that of the human face, unlike Greek masks which were fixed. The three bronze masks of the Profane Museum most likely date from the 1st or 2nd century AD. They could also have served as decorative elements; the restoration will clarify their use.

The first mask (inv. 65604) is small and represents a Bacchante with hair tied by small bunches of grapes, relating it to the Dionysian world. The second mask (inv. 66634) is a medium size and the third (inv. 67831) is the largest. The second two masks represent two types of slaves mentioned by Polluce in the "new comedy."

