

SARCOPHAGUS WITH DIONYSIAN PROCESSION

Artist: Unknown
Date: 3rd Century AD
Dimensions: 250 x 150 cm
Material: White marble
Inventory Number: 18919

Total Cost: € 30.000,00

STATE OF PRESERVATION:

Several dozen fragments were connected by metal nails one to the other and the prolonged outdoor exposure determined corrosion and oxidation of the iron. It will be necessary to remove all the fragments, restore them and replace the oxidized nails with stainless steel ones. During the final restoration, the fragments which had been stored by Galli in the 20th century will be reinserted. Upon completion of the restoration, the sarcophagus will be relocated to an indoor display in the Gregorian Profane Museum to be shown among our collections of valuable Roman funerary sculpture.

RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES:

- Removal of dust
- Removal of metal nails
- Replacement with stainless steel nails
- Restoration of all individual pieces
- Reintegration with stored fragments
- Consolidation of cracks and gaps
- Complete overall cleaning
- Scientific research
- Photographic documentation

This sarcophagus is currently located along the outside wall of the Pio-Christian Museum. It was discovered in 1903 during the excavation work carried out in the Catacombs of Callisto's Cemetery of Balbina. The condition of the piece was poor, it was described as "reduced to tiny pieces," and was thus immediately transferred to the studio of Guido Galli where it underwent a complex restoration. During this first restoration, numerous fragments were reassembled, though at that time it was not possible to reintegrate all of them. Those which remain are currently kept in the storage room of the Marble Restoration Lab.

This beautiful sarcophagus lacks its central piece, but despite its fragmentary look, it remains a specimen of the highest quality. It was initially placed in the Octagonal Courtyard, later in the Cortile della Pigna and finally in its present location. The outer surface of the sarcophagus is decorated with a beautiful and vibrant procession of dancing maenads and Dionysian satyrs. On the right side, Omphale is portrayed in the company of Heracles. These subjects were well known at the time and lend understanding to the iconographic scheme which originally decorated the front of the box. The strong dynamism of the figures, some of which were completed "a tutt'ondo," the use of drills and the powerful expressivity of the imagery suggest a date late in the Severan age, around 330 AD.

