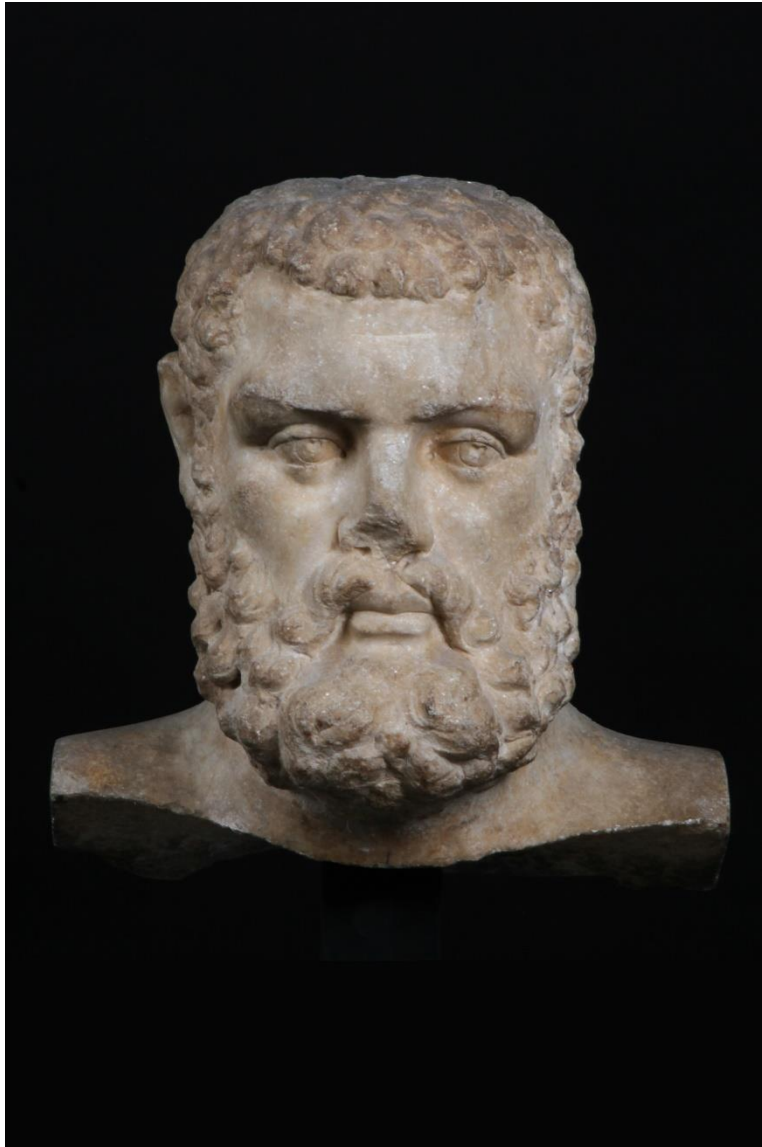


TRINITY FINE ART



ROMAN, MID 2nd CENTURY A.D.

Head of Hercules

Marble
36 cm high

PROVENANCE

Private collection, Sweden since the 1900s

15 OLD BOND STREET. LONDON W1S 4AX. +44 (0)20 7493 4916
info@trinityfineart.com

TRINITY FINE ART

This head of Hercules has a peculiar shoulder shape: it was, indeed, originally at the top of a herm pillar. These types of herm pillars at first only depicted the god Hermes and were placed along roadsides and crossroads in order to guide travellers. From the Classical Age (5th – 4th Cent. B.C.) they multiplied in Greece, and from there to all across the Mediterranean. Soon, other gods were represented as herm pillars, like the deified hero Hercules (ill. 1 and 2). Embodying physical strength, those “hermeracae” would be displayed in palaestrae and gymnasia.



Ill. 1: Herm with the head of Hercules, dedicated by Philiades son of Neon. Found at the Gymnasium of Messene, 3rd century BC. Marble. Greece, Archaeological Museum of Ancient Messene.



Ill. 2: Hercules Herm, marble, 199 cm, Roman, 2nd century AD. Rome, Palazzo Altemps, Inv. no.8611

In accordance with tradition, Hercules is here depicting as a middle-aged man with a beard. We can perceive the signs of aging in the wrinkles across his forehead, but the portrait is at the same time an idealized one. The hero is resting, his gaze lost, maybe meditating on the exploits he accomplished. We can feel in this portrait both his physical strength and his strong personality, highlighted by the delicate rendition of his eyes, with carved pupils. These features are very typical of 2nd century AD Roman portraiture, and the execution of our head is close to several examples of the same period (ill. 3 and 4).

TRINITY FINE ART



Fig. 3: Herm of Hercules, Hever Castle, England (in. G. Astor, *Statuary and Sculpture at Hever Castle*, 1969).

Fig. 4: Hercules carrying his son Telephus (detail of the Head), marble, circa 130 AD. Paris, Louvre Museum, Inv. MR219.

Fig. 5: Bust of Hercules, Roman, 2nd century AD, marble. London, British Museum, Inv. no. 1776,1108.2.