

Galerie Hioco

Crowned Buddha head (P657)



What do we like in this sculpture?

- The Buddha as universal ruler: bejeweled and crowned, the Blessed becomes "*cakravartin*"!
- The beauty and purity of the fine and serene features contrasting with the richness of the tiara's details.
- This unique contrast of precious materials and colors: the black patina of the bronze is enhanced by the pearl white of the pupils, the whole crowned with gold.

I. Detailed description

Crowned Buddha head (P657)

Gilded bronze with traces of lacquer

Thailand

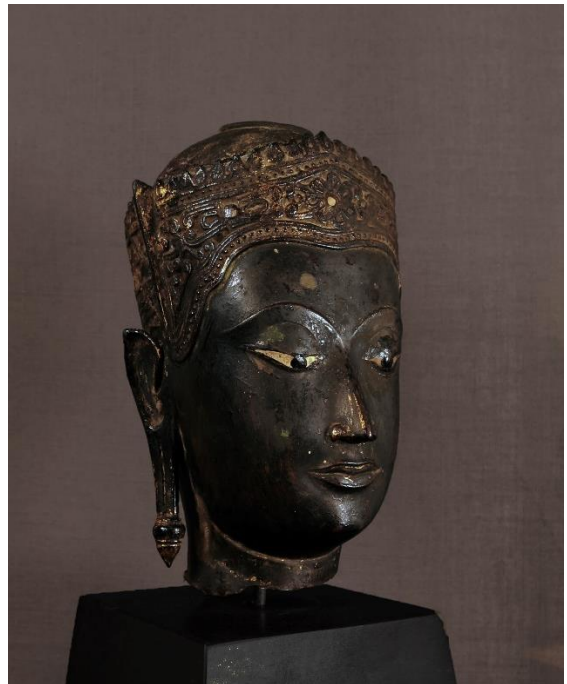
16th-17th century, Ayutthayā kingdom (1350-1767)

H. 21 cm or 8 ¼ in

This representation of Śākyamuni Buddha depicted with crown and jewels is that of the "universal ruler" (*cakravartin*). Although the dominant Buddhist school in the Kingdom of Ayutthayā is Theravada, the strictest and most sober school meaning "School of the Elders", this iconography nevertheless imposes itself as in the other schools of Buddhism. It even becomes emblematic of the period of Ayutthayā, during which it was expanding rapidly, both for conceptual and pietist reasons and for its extremely decorative aspect.

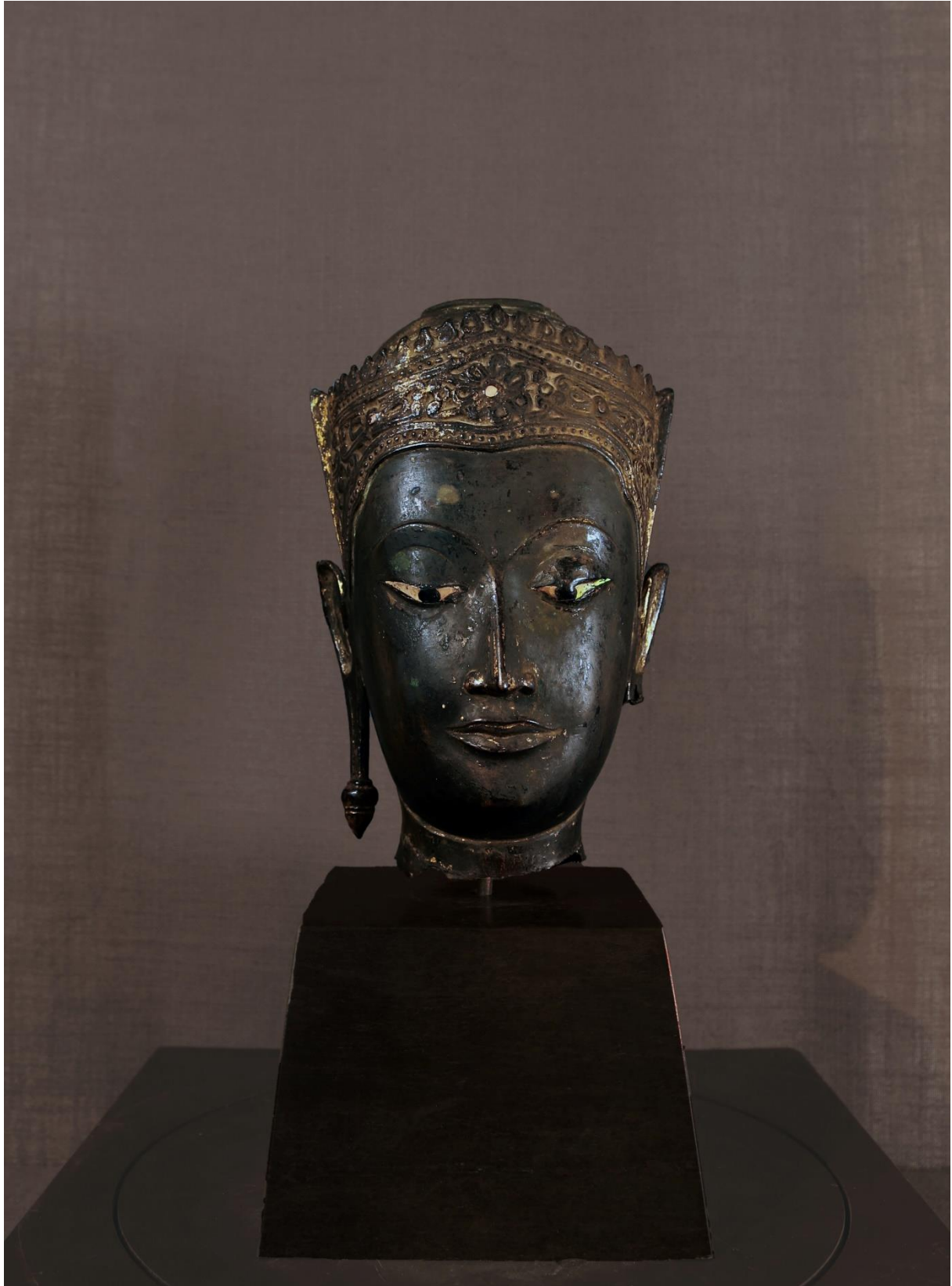
The face perpetuates, yet modifies, the Sukhothai style by making it softer. The nose, for instance, is less prominent, the mouth more smiling and the lips fuller. The hair is braided into a high topknot - now missing – at the top of the head, behind a crown of intricate floral design on either side of small cabochons inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

A certain tendency to be more decorative is visible in Ayutthayā art from the very beginning. This tendency becomes more accentuated as the centuries pass. The extreme delicacy of the face, the marked relief of the tiara, the stylized curving ears and the very high bun all lend this head a particularly appealing air. This decorative style was the rage in Bangkok after 1782.



***This representation of Buddha
is that of the “universal ruler”***

II. Image of the piece – front view



III. Image of the piece – three-quarter view



IV. Provenance: in all transparency!

- . This piece comes from a Swiss private collection (by repute).
- . We are always very cautious and diligent about the provenance of the artworks we offer. Ensuring the seriousness and reliability of the information given by the former owners is one of our priorities and we then guarantee this origin by engaging our responsibility.
- . In order to reinforce this guarantee, we systematically verify that these artworks have not been registered as missing or stolen. As Interpol has granted us the right to directly consult their database of stolen or reported items, we verify by ourselves and issue a certificate attesting to this.

V. Condition report: our scientific approach

This Buddha head is made of bronze, dated from the 16th-17th century and measures 21 cm (or 8 ¼ in) high. The pyramidal bun is lost and the lower end of the left ear is missing. The face has some remains of gilding, especially on the nose, mouth and eyebrow arches, as well as remains of black lacquer, clearly visible on the proper left eye. More lacquer and gilding remains are visible on the crown and ears. At the back, on the base of the neck, two holes allowed the fixation of the head on a body made separately. A circular crack is visible around the top cavity and appears to be stable. The mother-of-pearl inlays on the eyes and cabochons may have been replaced in a more recent period. No other restorations have been detected.

Please note that since we are not conservators or restorers, it must be understood that any condition report we made is a subjective qualified opinion, even if we do our best efforts. Prospective buyers should inspect the piece to satisfy themselves as to condition.

VI. Comparable museum artwork – The Victoria & Albert Museum

A crowned Buddha head belonging to the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (IM.64-1927):



Head of the Buddha, Bronze, Ayudhya, Thailand, 17th century.

The crowned head of the Buddha with round face, long lobed ears with lotus-bud earrings, small sharply-defined mouth and curved nose, wing-like eyebrows, lotus-petal eyes, with "whites" of mother of pearl and pupils of black composition. The head covered with a low crown ornamented with conventional floral-motives, with sockets for jewels. On the top of the skull was a triple *ushnisha*, of which two tiers are broken away, as is the back of the head. The surface is well patinated.

The crowned Buddha has been a recurrent theme in Thai sculpture since the Khmer-Lopburi type appeared in the mid-12th century. The figures are adorned in a simplified version of the 12th-century type but retain the richly decorated crown, with the skull protuberance (*ushnisa*), missing on this example, above. The Ayudhya style appears to draw as much on the earlier Lopburi school as it does on its immediate predecessor, the Sukhothia school.

[Read More](#)

- Height: 7.5in
- Width: 6in
- Depth: 5.25in

VII. Comparable museum artwork – The Walters Art Museum

A crowned Buddha head, kept at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (inv. 25.1):



CREATOR

- Thai (Sculptor)

PERIOD

15th-16th century

MEDIUM

bronze
(Sculpture)

ACCESSION NUMBER

25.1

MEASUREMENTS

H: 13 3/4 x W: 9 3/4 x D: 9 1/8 in. (34.9 x 24.7 x 23.2 cm); Object on base H: 22 1/16 x W: 9 3/4 x D: 9 1/8 in. (56 x 24.7 x 23.2 cm)

GEOGRAPHIES

- Thailand, Ayutthaya (Place of Origin)

VIII. Our guarantees: for a serene acquisition!

- More photos will be sent to you on request.
- In case of purchase, we will establish an invoice that you can pay by bank transfer.
- You will receive our certificate of authenticity with the photo of the artwork, its detailed description and the mention of the provenance.
- We will define together the shipping modalities and we will take care of all customs formalities if you live outside of France.
- If you do not like the piece, we give you the possibility to return it to us and we will assist you with the resulting terms and conditions.



Historic City of Ayutthaya (Thailand) - © UNESCO