

# Galerie Hioco

## The emaciated Buddha (P668)



### What do we like in this sculpture?

- The spectacular vision of this emaciated Buddha, pushing asceticism and the limits of his body to the extreme.
- The rarity of the scene: the image of the emaciated Buddha is well known but the steles depicting him are rare.
- The fusion of Indian and Greco-Roman influences in the service of Buddhist doctrine, all creating this absolutely unique Gandhāran art!

## I. Detailed description

### **The emaciated Buddha (P668)**

*Schist*

*Ancient province of Gandhāra*

*Circa 3rd century*

*D: 22 x 37 cm or 8 5/8 x 14 5/8 in*

### **The Buddha "at death's door": a spectacular iconography**

This impressive representation of Śākyamuni Buddha before his Enlightenment shows him in a state of extreme emaciation. His ribcage, his muscles appear under his taut skin, while his facial features are heavily emaciated, his cheeks hollowed out and his cheekbones protruding. In conformity with the stylistic codes of the Gandhāra school, his wavy hair incorporates his cranial protuberance (*uṣṇīṣa*) - a symbol of his great wisdom - into a bun, while at the back a halo further emphasizes his status as a "great man" (*mahāpuruṣa*). Depicted seated with his hands in his lap in a meditative position (*dhyānasana*), his posture is dramatically still. He is barely clothed in a piece of fabric that falls to the front of the throne. This most total deprivation corresponds to a very specific episode in the life of the historical Buddha: having renounced his princely status and in his spiritual quest to attain Enlightenment, Śākyamuni then engages in a particularly exhausting asceticism leading him almost to death. On either side stand two devotees bearing floral offerings, both dressed in Indian style, the torso bare, wearing a long scarf, rich jewelry and sophisticated headdresses.

### **A typically Gandhāran artwork.**

It was in Gandhāra that the iconography of the Buddha in human form was established, and it was again in Gandhāra that the most spectacular sculptures figuring the emaciated Buddha were made. The Gandhāra school emphasizes the Buddha's last existence, as well as his previous lives or *jātaka*. The texts of the *Lalitavistara Sūtra* (in the case of this stele) or *Divyāvadāna* are literally put into image in this art, which develops a syncretic style. This syncretism is manifested in particular in the presence of Greek pilasters and columns that are used to partition and punctuate the different moments of a narrative, as is the case here. Moreover, the composite capitals with acanthus motifs testify to the Hellenistic and Roman stylistic influence that characterizes this unique art.

### **A rare representation**

If the figure of the emaciated Buddha is an emblematic image of Gandhāran art and undeniably marks the minds by its great visual power, examples of this iconography in museums or private collections remain very rare. A few reproductions of isolated statues can be found in the literature, but narrative friezes are even rarer and this therefore underlines the exceptional character of this one. The great care that has been taken in the representation of the Buddha, the significant size of the figures and the good condition of the piece are all qualities that should be noted.

# Galerie **Hioco**

II. Image of the piece – front view



# Galerie Hioco

III. Image of the piece – left three-quarter view



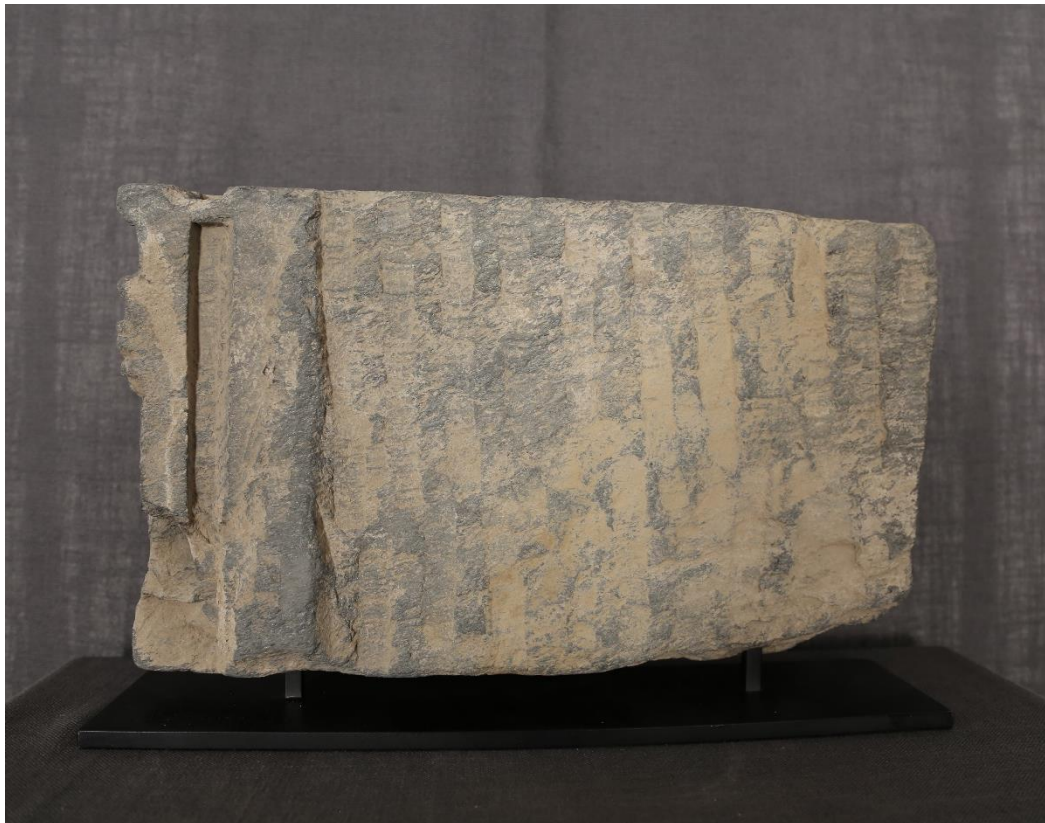
# Galerie **Hioco**

IV. Image of the piece – right three-quarter view



# Galerie Hioco

V. Image of the piece – profiles and back views



## VI. Provenance: in all transparency!

- . This piece comes from a private collection, acquired in the 1960's (by repute) and thence by descent.
- . 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.

## VII. Condition report: our scientific approach

This Gandhāra relief, dated to circa the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, made of schist and measuring 22 x 37 cm or 8 5/8 x 14 5/8 in, was part of a larger frieze. The block has been reduced in thickness, with material cleaved from the rear and left side. The top part has been polished and a hole at the right end indicates that another sculpture was to have been placed on top. Some losses are obvious but quite logical given the age of the artwork and the known fragility of the protruding parts: the lower left and rear right corners are missing as well as part of the base of the Buddha throne and the base of the stele in general, including parts of the feet of the donors. Other slight losses are visible in the upper decorative friezes and in the vegetal motif between the left donor and the Buddha. Erosion of the column and its frame is evident.

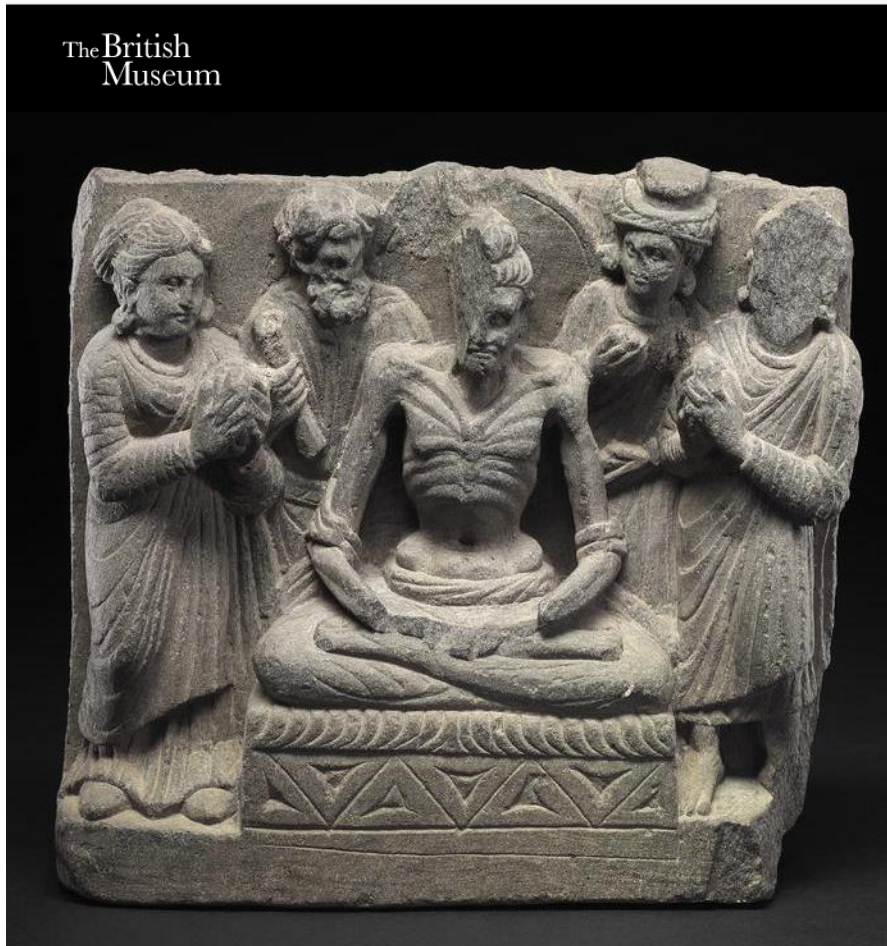
All of these breaks are old, as evidenced by their weathered surface. The sculpted surface bears in its major part silt deposits or sand concretions which give this sand color to the schist. The condition of the piece is consistent with schist carvings of the Gandharan period.

No restoration has been detected; note only that a thin crack is visible on the side of the column.

*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.*

## VIII. Comparable artwork – The British Museum

A representation of the emaciated Buddha kept at the British Museum in London (1880.67), measuring 20 cm wide:



### Description

Panel showing the seated and emaciated Bodhisattva flanked by gods and worshippers.

### Cultures/periods

[Kushan](#)

### Production date

2ndC-3rdC

### Production place

Made in: [Gandhara \(Pakistan\)](#)

Asia: South Asia: Pakistan: Gandhara (Pakistan)

### Findspot

Found/Acquired: [Jamalgarhi](#)

Asia: South Asia: Pakistan: North West Frontier Province: Mardan District: Jamalgarhi

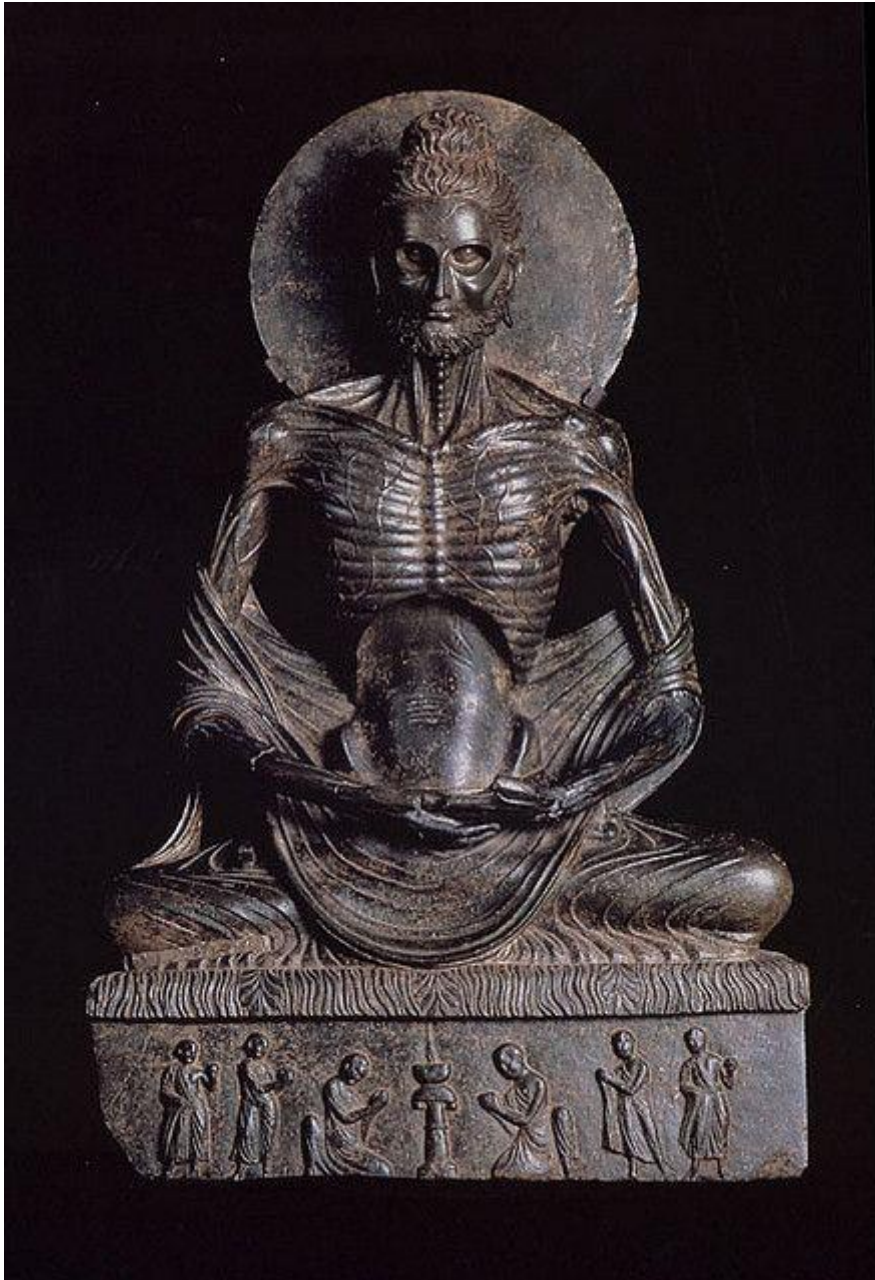
### Materials

[schist](#)



IX. Comparable museum artwork – The Lahore Museum

The famous emaciated Buddha belonging to the collections of the Lahore Museum in Pakistan (schist, 4th-6th century, found at the site of Sikri):



## X. 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.