

Galerie Hioco

Majestic Sukhothai Buddha head (P663)



What do we like in this sculpture?

- The timeless serenity that radiates from this majestic and imposing face with perfect features.
- A magnificent example of the artistic apogee of Sukhothai, the classical period of Thai art.
- Its remarkable condition: this is truly fortunate that the flame - so often lost - has been preserved!

I. Detailed description

Sukhothai Buddha head (P659)

Bronze

Thailand

Late 14th – early 15th century, Sukhothai kingdom

H. 44 cm or 26 ¾ in

The powerful Sukhothai Kingdom

In the center of Thailand, the powerful Sukhothai Kingdom reached its political apogee during the reign of Ram Khamhaeng (c. 1279 – 1299) and his successors. Sculptors of that period created an original set of aesthetics that became one of the most original styles in Thai art, and one which remained a recurring aesthetic reference until the end of the 19th century. The most beautiful works, however, were created a bit after the period of his political acme and date back only to the 14th or even early 15th century.

The "Classical" period of Thai art

It is to this "classical" period of Thai art that this very beautiful and impressive head belongs, having all the characteristics: perfectly oval face, long aquiline nose, arched eyebrows that continue in the extension of the nose, heavy eyelids over almost closed eyes, hair in tight and well-defined curls. At the top of the skull, above the highly developed protuberance (or *uṣṇīṣa*), stands a flame (*rasmi*), symbol of the spiritual force of the Enlightened. Fortunately preserved, this ornament is an influence of Sri Lankan art. Finally, the smile, discreet and enigmatic, enhances the expression of serene plenitude that emanates from this superb Buddha.

A remarkable quality

The features of the face are of a superb regularity, the incisions drawing the contours of the lips, the eyelids, the nostrils and even the chin are made with great finesse, highlighting the volumes and the curves. The delicate polish of the face also offers a nice visual contrast with the rough aspect of the hair curls in relief. This is a large and impressive head, and the beautiful remains of lacquer and gilding add a variety of shades to the magnificent patina of the bronze: this is truly an exceptional artwork.

II. Image of the piece – front view



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



IV. Image of the piece – left profile view



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V. Image of the piece – back view



VI. Image of the piece – right profile view



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



VIII. Image of the piece – front detail view



IX. Image of the piece – profile detail view



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X. Image of the piece – detail view of the flame



XI. Provenance: in all transparency!

. This piece comes from an English private collection that was built up between the 1950s and 1980s essentially (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.

XII. Condition report: our scientific approach

This imposing Buddha head is made of bronze, dated to the 14th-15th centuries and measures 44 cm in height (or 17 $\frac{3}{8}$ in). Apart from the irregular break at the neck, the work is in an excellent condition. Only a small nick is visible on the bridge of the nose. Remains of red lacquer are still preserved, mainly above the lips and eyes and at the level of the hairline on the forehead. The hair also preserves important remains of black lacquer. Traces of gilding are still visible in some places. No restoration has 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.

XIV. Comparable museum artwork – The Walters Art Museum

A Sukhothai Buddha Head from the former Alexander B. Griswold Collection (54.2766) at the Walters Art Museum in the United States:



CREATOR

- Thai (Sculptor)

PERIOD

2nd half 14th century (Sukhothai)

MEDIUM

leaded bronze with traces of gilding
(Metal)

ACCESSION NUMBER

54.2766

MEASUREMENTS

H: 16 15/16 × W: 7 13/16 × Approx. D:
8 1/4 in. (43 × 19.8 × 21 cm)

GEOGRAPHIES

- Thailand, Sukhothai (Place of Origin)

LOCATION WITHIN MUSEUM

Arts of Asia: Buddhist Art of East and Southeast Asia

XV. Comparable museum artwork – Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET)

A 15th century seated Buddha in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of New York:



Title: Seated Buddha

Date: 15th century

Culture: Thailand

Medium: Bronze

Dimensions: H. 27 in. (68.6 cm); W. 19 1/4 in. (48.9 cm)

Classification: Sculpture

Credit Line: Purchase, The J. H. W. Thompson Foundation Gift and Gifts of friends of Jim Thompson, in his memory, 2002

Accession Number: 2002.131

XVI. 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.