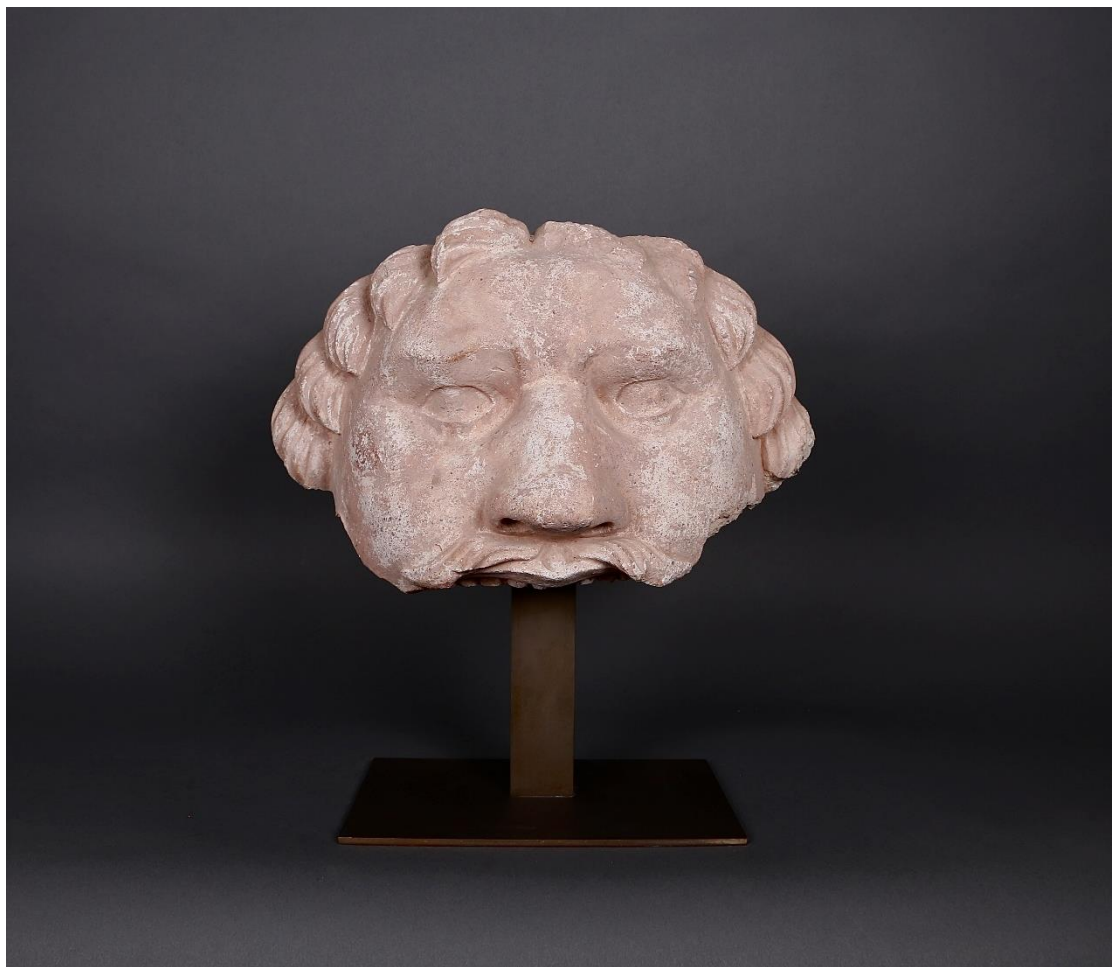


# Galerie Hioco

## Monumental head of a Dvārapāla (P676)



### What do we like in this sculpture?

- Its extraordinary expressiveness and its absolutely unusual monumentality! A rare artwork!
- The smoothness of the modeling: look at the superb rendering of the frowned eyebrows, the slightly sunken eyes and the imposing nose.
- The use of stucco, a material that allows such freedom in the treatment of forms, and the exceptional remains of red polychromy on the gums.

## I. Detailed description

### **Monumental head of a Dvārapāla (P676)**

*Stucco*

*Ancient province of Gandhāra*

*3rd-5th century*

*D. 24 x 36 cm or 9 ½ x 14 ¼ in*

#### **A monumental head with an enigmatic iconography**

This rare stucco face, unusually imposing in this Gandhāran art, does not leave one indifferent. Paradoxically, its fragmentary condition makes it even more expressive. The obvious width of the face is accentuated by the short strands of hair on either side of a median parting. In the center, the particularly prominent nose seems to reduce the size of the forehead, while the eyebrows frown over wide-open, narrowed and recessed eyes. Finally, just below a thick moustache, a whole row of well aligned teeth can be seen! Who is this character? It is difficult to make a definite identification, but the face of a door guard (Dvārapāla), kept in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (see below), could be related to this one. Both have that open mouth and menacing look that are features found on these temple protectors. Their fierce appearance dissuaded enemies and bad souls from entering the religious edifices.

#### **Stucco: a great freedom of treatment**

This amazing expressiveness is made possible by the use of stucco. Used in Gandhāra, as at the sites of Taxila and Hadda, stucco was employed masterfully. Statues were cast in molds and the resulting forms were then finished with a spatula. This technique allows a great plasticity in the treatment and to obtain, as here, faces with an incredibly smooth modelling. The rendering of the eyes, the nose, and the frown of the eyebrows, with a particularly sensitive carving, are very beautiful examples. A thin engobe - still apparent on the whole surface - covered the piece, hiding any disparity and bearing a rich polychromy of red, black and ochre, of which remains are visible here at the level of the eyebrows and the moustache. The red pigments covering the gums are exceptionally well preserved!

#### **Architectural decoration in Gandhāra**

This monumental head must have been part of the decoration of the monasteries. The Gandhāran monasteries had two types of areas: courtyards accessible to devotees and crowded with all sorts of ex-voto monuments, such as reliquary tumuli (stūpa) and chapels, and beyond that an area reserved only for monks. In the public areas, the bases of the stūpa, the door and window surrounds, the plinths and sometimes even the risers of the stairs bore numerous reliefs, juxtaposing decorative motifs and apologetic narrative scenes. If this figure is indeed a Dvārapāla, it would have flanked a doorway and protected the entrance.

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. Images of the piece – views of details



## IX. Provenance: in all transparency!

- . This piece comes from a European 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.

## X. Condition report: our scientific approach

This Gandhāra sculpture is made of stucco, dated from circa 3rd-5th century and measures 24 x 36 cm or 9 ½ x 14 ¼ in. The face is fragmentary since the entire lower jaw is missing. The back of the head has no carved parts, unless they have disappeared. Only the core is visible. The whole must have belonged to a monumental sculpture, probably carved in very high relief. The modelling of the face is very well preserved. Some small losses are evident at the level of the moustache and the hair strands, but this is quite logical given the age of the work. Small asperities are also visible on the whole surface. The face was originally entirely covered with a limewash layer, applied as a preparatory ground for polychrome decoration that once covered sculptures of all materials. The coating created a smooth and homogeneous surface, so it is logical that having partly disappeared, the face and the hairstyle have a rougher-looking surface. This coating was covered with polychromy and traces of ochre color are still visible on the moustache and eyebrows in particular. Underneath, the red pigments that covered the gums are particularly well preserved. 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.*

## XI. Comparable artwork – The Metropolitan Museum (MET)

A door guardian in the Metropolitan Museum in New York :

### Door Guardian (Dvarapala)

ca. 4th century

Pakistan (ancient region of Gandhara)

📍 On view at The Met Fifth Avenue in [Gallery 236](#)

Similar armored guardian figures were found flanking a doorway of a monastery at the Gandharan site of Thareli; clearly, this example also had significance as a protective deity. It is interesting that the monks chose to integrate such non-Buddhist deities into the embellishment of their monastic residences. The appearance of such protectors probably can be linked to the growing importance of the war god Skanda in the late Gandharan tradition.



**Title:** Door Guardian (Dvarapala)

**Date:** ca. 4th century

**Culture:** Pakistan (ancient region of Gandhara)

**Medium:** Stucco

**Dimensions:** H. 18 in. (45.7 cm); W. 10 3/4 in. (27.3 cm)

**Classification:** Sculpture

**Credit Line:** Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1991

**Accession Number:** 1991.132

## XII. 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.