

# Galerie Hioco

## Guanyin Head (P699)



### **What do we like about this sculpture?**

- The delicacy of its ornamentation
- Its imposing appearance, enhanced by a serene and peaceful expression
- The softness of the finely sculpted features

## I. Detailed description

### **Guanyin head (P699)**

*Limestone*

*China*

*Ming period, 15th century (1368-1644)*

*H. 35 cm or 14 inch*

### **A representation of Guanyin**

This remarkable head is a representation of the goddess Guanyin, the feminised aspect of the bodhisattva (i.e. a being who has attained enlightenment, but who renounces Nirvana to help other living beings attain enlightenment) Avalokiteśvara. Indeed, the latter was worshipped fervently throughout Asia, as it was believed that he gave children to barren women, and sons to families with only daughters.

In China, after the 10th century, among the common people, Avalokiteśvara would be confused with a Taoist goddess known for protecting children from childhood diseases. This goddess goes by various names including the epithet *Nainai Niangniang*. Under this influence of mixed beliefs, Avalokiteśvara metamorphosed into Guanyin, a feminised aspect of the Bodhisattva, and was elevated in China to the rank of Goddess of Mercy.

### **The finesse of an ornamental sculpture**

Guanyin is depicted here with a very gentle, serene and meditative expression. Her hair is delicately curled on top of her forehead, surmounting the ūṛṇā (symbol of vision in the divine world). Her arched eyebrows fall on almond-shaped eyes with half-closed lids. The mouth is fleshy, carefully hemmed. The cheeks and chin are round, in an almost juvenile appearance. The ears are adorned with carved flowers, acting as jewels, while the head is split by a high tiara, decorated in its centre with a figure of Buddha sitting in Namaskara Udra on a lotus, surrounded by a mandorla. It is probably a representation of his master, the Buddha Amitābha.

Around it are carved scrolls and lotus petals. On either side of the mandorla are medallions engraved with the ideogram of the sun on the left and the moon on the right. The whole forms a rich and dynamic whole.

### **A goddess with a popular cult**

Guanyin is an extremely popular goddess; known to cure all diseases, she also has a protective function. She is very popular and is often depicted in private homes, but also in Chinese public statuary. Like these various representations, this imposing head radiates an aura of serenity that is typical of the goddess; we cannot recommend this remarkable piece enough.

II. Photo of the artwork – frontview



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III. Photo of the artwork – left three-quarter view



IV. Photo of the artwork – backview



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V. Photo of the artwork – right three-quarter view





VI. Photo of the artwork – profile view



VII. Photo of the artwork – detail view





## VIII. Provenance : in all transparency !

- . This piece comes from an English private collection.
- . We are always very vigilant about the provenance of the works 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 check that these works have not been registered as missing or stolen. As Interpol has granted us the right to consult their database directly, which lists stolen or reported pieces, we verify this ourselves and issue a certificate to prove it.

## IX. Condition report : our scientific view

This 15th century Guanyin head is carved in grey limestone. Measuring 38cm high, it is in a good state of conservation. However, the ornamental flower on the right ear of the statue is missing, as well as the left part of the tiara, which is badly eroded. A furrow runs along the central part of the face, without altering the features, which are legible and well preserved. No restoration has been detected.

*Please note that we are neither conservators nor restorers, and therefore any condition report we submit is a subjective analysis that we issue with reservation, even though we take it very seriously and professionally. Potential buyers are invited to examine the piece themselves to ensure its condition.*

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X. Comparable artwork – Musée Guimet (French National Museum of Asian Art)



**Guanyin with five esoteric buddhas in tiara**

*Marble*

*China*

*14th-15th century*

*70cm*

## XI. Our guarantees : for a serene acquisition !

- More photos will be sent to you on request.
- In case of purchase, we will issue an invoice which you can pay by bank transfer or by cheque.
- Our certificate of authenticity with a photo of the work, a detailed description and the mention of the provenance will be given to you.
- We will define together the transport modalities and we will take care of all the customs formalities if you live outside 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 arrangements.