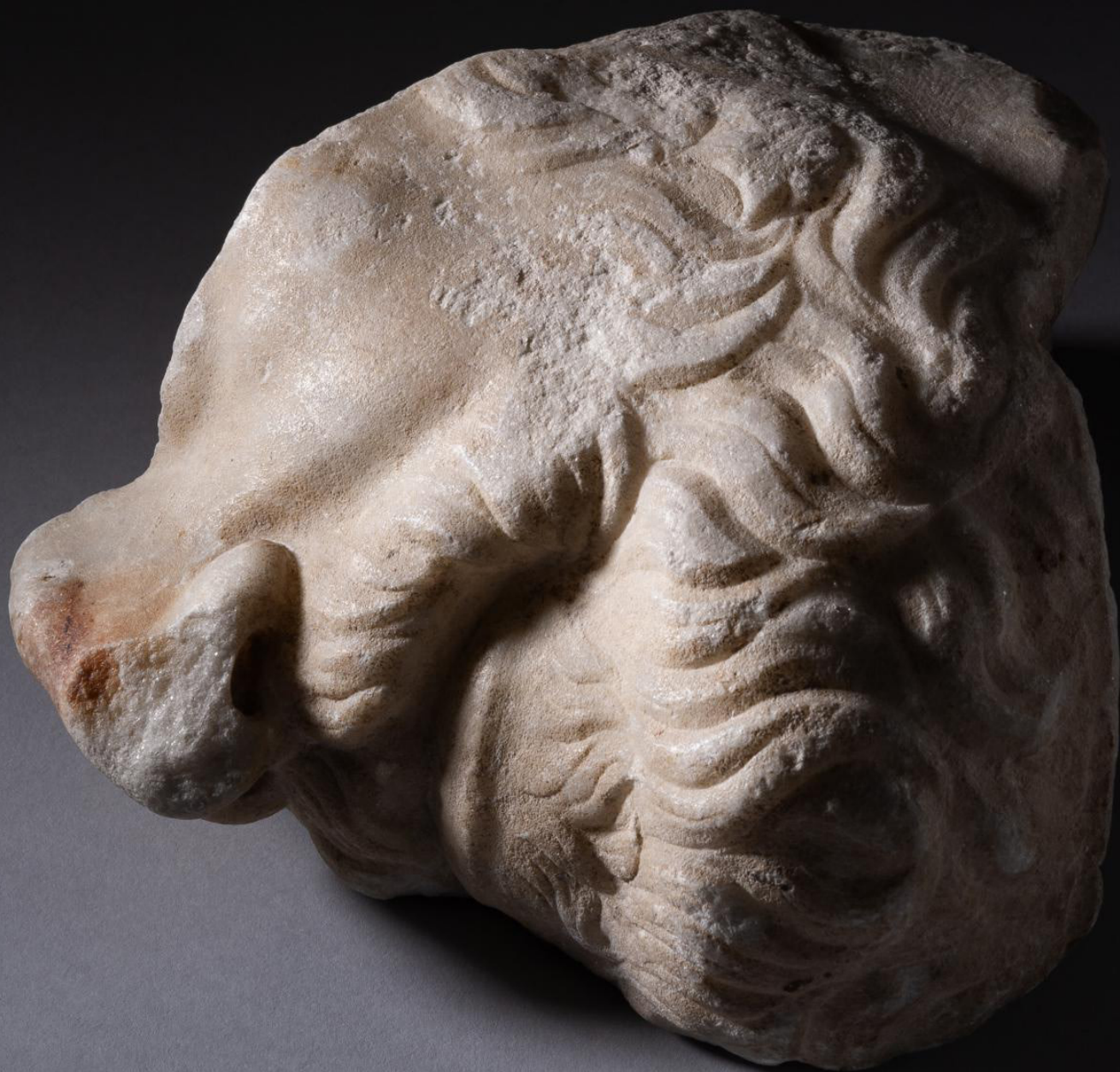


ART ANCIENT



ROMAN MARBLE HEAD FRAGMENT

Possibly depicting Sophocles
Circa 1st - 2nd Century AD
Carved and polished marble
Height: 16 cm

PROVENANCE

Collection of Danish sculptor Jens Adolf Jerichau (1816-1883)

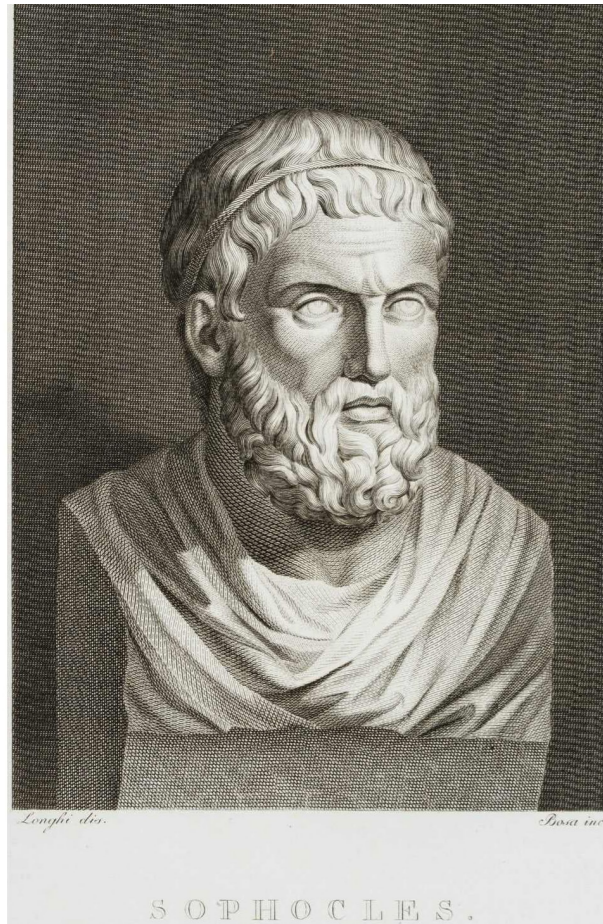
Sold at the Jerichau estate sale in 1884, lot 47-50

Subsequently with Danish philosopher Prof. Claudius Wilkens (1844-1929)

Danish private collection, by inheritance.

This fine Roman marble head preserves the proper left side of the face of a middle-aged man, with broad nose, soft lips, and bearded chin. The short beard and sideburns have been finely carved with a flat chisel, to render the soft, wavy strands of hair. The cheekbone, under eye, and nasolabial folds have been delicately modelled in the marble by a skilled hand. In a letter from 1975, the former director of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, suggested that the head could depict the Ancient Greek tragedian Sophocles.





The Tragedian

During his long and celebrated career, Sophocles (c. 496-406 BC) brought numerous technical and artistic innovations to the dramatic arts. He perfected the tragic genre by enhancing the psychological aspects of his plays, as well as focusing on the nature of human feelings and the helplessness of men in front of their fate. Of the 123 tragedies he wrote, only seven survive in their complete form, most notably the three Theban plays: *Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*. Undoubtedly the most gifted tragedian of his generation, Sophocles was honoured by the Athenians as a hero after his death and in later centuries.

'The Athenians have statues of tragic and comic poets in their theatre, most of the poets being unknown ... Of the famous tragedians, Euripides and Sophocles have statues..'

Pausanias, Description of Greece I.21.1



Jens Jerichau (1816-1883)

This fragment once belonged to Danish sculptor Jens Adolf Jerichau (1816-1883). After working as an apprentice, he was admitted to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in 1831, to study painting before beginning to sculpt in 1836.

After graduating from the Academy in 1837, Jerichau lived for a time in Rome, where he worked in the studio of his famed contemporary Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844). His early works, such as *Hercules and Hebe* (1846), are strongly Neoclassical in style. However, it was his *The Panther Hunter* (1846), with its dynamism and emotion, that brought his international breakthrough, and earned him several prestigious commissions from Denmark and abroad.

It is most likely during his time in Rome - the Eternal City - that the artist acquired the present piece, and it formed part of his fine collection of ancient art. A reflective and melancholic character, Jerichau created a powerful *oeuvre* inspired by his admiration for classical fragments.

2 Sculptor Jens Jerichau, *the Artist's Husband*, by Elisabeth Jerichau Baumann, 1846. Oil on canvas, 142 x 95 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.



3 J. A. Jerichau, *The Panther Hunter*, 1846. Bronze, 209 x 105 x 65 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.



4 Claudius Wilkens (1844-1929) at his office desk, surrounded by his collection.