



A ROMAN MARBLE HEAD OF HELIOS,  
AFTER ALEXANDER THE GREAT

IMPERIAL, CIRCA 2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY AD  
Height: 19.5 cm



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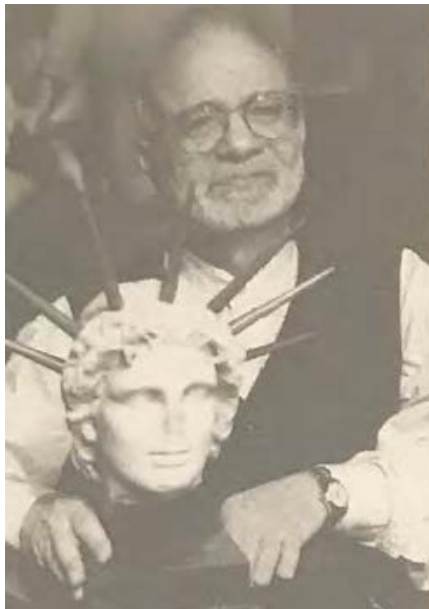
The under life-size head of the sun-god is depicted in a type inspired by Alexander the Great with masses of long curling hair falling around a creased forehead and strong brow line. He was originally shown wearing a diadem, probably made from bronze, with the drilled holes remaining for insertion of separately made sun rays.

#### PROVENANCE

François Antonovich Collection, Paris before 1996  
Christie's London, 5 October 2000, lot 98  
with Royal-Athena Galleries, New York, 2005  
The Jeff Hunter Collection, New York

#### PUBLICATIONS

F. Antonovich, *Les metamorphoses divines d'Alexandre*, 1996, pp. 88 & 344.



François Antonovich



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Greek marble metope showing sun god Helios in a quadriga; from temple of Athena at Troy circa 300-280 BC Altes Museum, Berlin

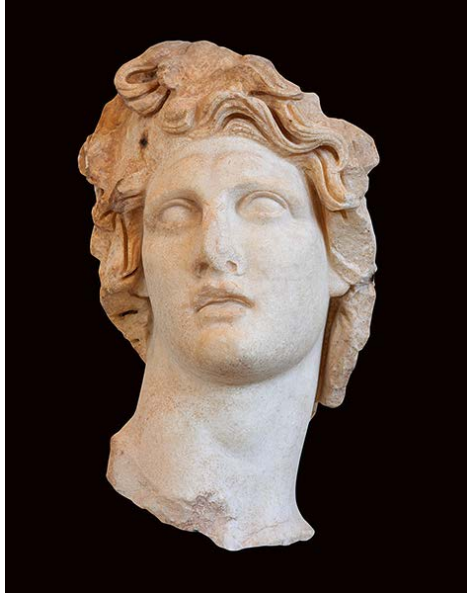
## LITERATURE

Helios, the ancient Greek sun-god, was said to drive his chariot each day from east to west across the sky, mirroring the movement of the sun. He is usually depicted wearing a radiate crown symbolising the rays of the sun.

One of the titles given to Alexander the Great was Helios, and depictions of the sun god from the Hellenistic period onwards were heavily influenced by portraits of Alexander. The surviving portraits of Alexander the Great are noteworthy for the wide range of styles employed to portray his unique physiognomy. The treatment of his leonine hair, for example, can be long and wavy on some portraits, while others emphasise the characteristic anastole or cowlick. Some show the Macedonian ruler with a pronounced crease in the forehead as with this image of Helios-Alexander.

Portraits of Alexander continued to be made throughout the Hellenistic period and beyond into Imperial Rome. The Roman love of important historical characters, coupled with their insatiable demand for ancient works of art, meant that portraits of Alexander and Alexander as Helios continued to be popular well into the Roman Imperial period. By this time, images of Helios were entirely conflated with those of Alexander. The head of Alexander-Helios presented here, has Alexander's characteristic wild thick hair, secured with a diadem, signifying royalty, around his head. There are holes in the band where a metal radiate crown would have been attached, symbolising the rays of the sun. Based on the deep drill work for the hair, this classical and idealised portrait of Alexander-Helios is likely dates to the Hadrianic period.

For further discussion, see A. Stewart, *Faces of Power, Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics*. For a similar Roman period portrait of Alexander see Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona. Inv. no. 461.



Greek marble head of the god Helios,  
Hellenistic, Archaeological Museum, Rhodes



Profile of Greek marble head of the god Helios,  
Hellenistic, Archaeological Museum, Rhodes



Roman marble head of Alexander the Great, National  
Archaeological Museum, Tarragona



Greek marble head of Alexander the Great, Hellenistic,  
British Museum,

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