

Votive Head of a Man

C. 1st Century B.C. - 1st Century A.D., Yemen

27 x 14 cm (10 $^{5}/_{8}$ x 5 $^{1}/_{2}$ inches)

Alabaster

This male head with an oval face surmounts a long neck. The nose is long and fine, the straight mouth is signified by a simple engraved line with raised small lips and a beard collar underlines the lower part of the face, along the chins. Large almond-shaped eyes are hollowed out and traces of stucco are still present, evidence of a past inlay. The eyebrow incisions were certainly enhanced with bitumen or stucco inlays. These representations embody the memory and the symbolic presence of the deceased and were probably were inserted in small cubic bases or in niches dug in the upper part of steles, bearing the name of the dedicant, within temples.

It has been suggested that this head originates from Ḥayd bin ʿAqīl, the cemetery of Tamnaʿ, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Qatabān.

Literature:

Architectural Digest, November 1979

House & Garden, March 1985

John Richardson, John Richardson at Home, with photographs by François Halard, Oberto Gili, Horst and Derry Moore, Rizzoli, 2019.

Sotheby's London, Ancient Sculpture and Works of Art, 17th December 2020, lot 73

John Richardson. A Scholar Collects, Sotheby's 2020.

David Aaron Ltd, 2023, No. 26.