



Fitment carved as a horse's head

On display

Title/Description: Fitment carved as a horse's head

Born: 0100 c. - 0300 c.

Measurements: h. 35 x w. 98 x d. 10 mm

Accession Number: 561

Historic Period: 2nd century, 3rd century, Roman Period (c. AD 100-300)

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1974

This curved piece, possibly a handle, is carved in fine high relief with the head of a horse, its neck outstretched. The back is flat and plain. The horse wears a headstall with a cheek-strap decorated with roundels. A hole behind the teeth and another, broken, at the extreme left edge of the fragment, were evidently made to take rivets, fixing the piece to some other object. A vertical hole drilled in the upper edge is presumably for the attachment of an ear, carved and fitted separately.

A piece of similar size and design but with different details, said to be from the area of Alexandria, is in the Schimmel Collection in New York (Muscarella, 1974: no. 234). It is, however, in the round, forming a handle with a pistol-like grip. It is wrongly identified as the former specimen in the MacGregor Collection (see Sotheby's, 1922: lot 678), which is half the size and different in its details. Another comparable example, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, comes from the excavations of W. B. Emery in the Sacred Animal Necropolis at Saqqara. There are thus four known examples of such bone carvings extant.

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from Peter Sharrer in 1974 out of funds provided by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury.
