Head of Poseidon / Antigonos Doson
Greek
Greece, Hellenistic period, 227-221 BC
Bronze: 11 3/8 x 7 3/4 x 9 1/2 in. (28.9 x 19.7 x 24.1 cm)

Museum purchase funded by Isabel B. and Wallace S. Wilson

Larger-than-life-size Greek bronze statues were the undisputed masterworks of antiquity. They were the focal points of temples and important public places and served as models and inspiration for the classical sculptures that we know today.

Unfortunately few statues from antiquity have survived in complete form with distinguishing attributes or characteristics. Coins of the period are often an important way to identify gods, royals, and important persons.

Our famous Hellenistic head was a case in point. Internationally recognized as a bronze masterwork, his identity was unclear. An exceptionally fine silver coin, minted during the rule of Macedonian king Antigonos Doson, 227-221 B.C., solved the mystery. The world conqueror Alexander the Great and his successors associated themselves with the gods. Antigonos Doson coins portray him as Poseidon, god of the sea, a reference to his reestablishment of Macedonian supremacy over the sea. The bronze head and silver coin both have fine facial bone structure, deep-set eyes, full open lips, and baroque curls of hair and beard that suggest the turbulence of sea waves. The windswept locks are barely bound by the fillet that serves as crown. The head and coin define the height of Greek portraiture: god and

Online Resources:
Hirsch Library Online Catalog
The Metropolitan Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Articles: (full-text access available on-site; off-site access available through your school library or Houston Public Library)

Print Resources:
Poseidon and the Sea: Myth, Cult, and Daily Life
Greek Bronze Statuary
Greek Bronzes
Early Hellenistic Portraiture: Image, Style, Context
Making Sense of Greek Art
Bibliography

Object Specific Information


General Surveys of Greek Art


Macedonian History


Hellenistic and Macedonian Art


Poseidon and Mythology


Technique of Ancient Greek Sculpture


This reference guide is just the tip of the iceberg on helpful resources in the library's holdings. Many of the suggested resources above have their own bibliographies. Each of these may lead you to another resource that would also be helpful in your research here in the museum or in another library. To find additional resources, use keywords such as "Macedonia" and "Hellenistic" in the online catalog and in periodical indexes. Once you find a few relevant titles, pay attention to the subject headings to identify similar materials. Examples of useful subject headings are:

- Mythology
- Art, Hellenistic
- Greece, History
- Bronze sculpture, Greek
- Coins, Greek

For guidelines about writing it may be helpful to look at Sylvan Barnet’s *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, which includes tips for looking, reading, and writing about art. Ask for it at the reference desk. At every stage of your work, please allow the library staff to help you. Contact us at 713-639-7325 or hirsch@mfah.org