




58

# Mask of a Satyr

200-100 BC

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## Object Details

<b>Catalogue Number</b>	<b>58</b>
Inventory Number	96.AD.305 
Typology	Mask
Location	Sicily
<b>Dimensions</b>	H: 12 cm; W: 15.5 cm

## Fabric

Pinkish in color (Munsell 5 yr 8/4), very porous, with numerous reflective and carbonous inclusions. Polychromy: brownish red (hair and face), orange red (orbital arch and mouth), white (interior of the orbital arch, dentition, and wreath), black (eyebrows), pink (ears); and sky blue (leaves of the wreath).

## Condition

Reassembled from about fifteen fragments, gaps on the nape of the neck, traces of repainting over the original polychromy.

## Provenance

by 1994–1995, Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman (New York, New York), donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1996.

## Bibliography

*PASSION FOR ANTIQUITIES* 1994, no. 291, p. 356; "Museum Acquisitions Between July 1, 1996, and June 30, 1998." *The Report of the J. Paul Getty Trust*, 1997–1998, p. 67.

## Description

The mask depicts a young satyr wearing a wreath, with strongly emphasized facial features and a stern, somewhat threatening expression. The face is round, with a powerful jaw, full cheeks, a short, rounded chin with a dimple in the center, and a wide-open mouth with fleshy, prominent lips; the upper dental arch is visible. The robust nose has enlarged nostrils and an upturned tip with two incisions, one at the base and one in the upper part of the septum. The eyes are staring and hollowed out with convex eyeballs and perforated irises, surrounded by heavy, distinctly marked eyelids; the eyebrows are thick and furrowed; the forehead has a bump in the upper portion and is furrowed by a horizontal crease; the ears are feral and pointed. The hairstyle, which is rendered in the back with fine incisions, rises up over the forehead, where a voluminous wreath, decorated with six ivy leaves and two round pieces of fruit at the center, was applied. There are two suspension holes in the lower part of the nape of the neck.

The mask is configured as a full-fledged scale model of originals that were worn onstage by actors.<sup>1</sup> The wreath was worked by hand and applied before firing. The polychromy, in keeping with tradition, was used to express or emphasize the distinctive character details, such as the red of the male complexion, the white of the eyeballs, or the black of the eyebrows.

The mask seems to echo the general characteristics of the beardless satyr type from New Comedy (*satyros ageneios*, or beardless satyr) described in the *Onomastikon* by Pollux, though in this case the facial features were interpreted with a certain creative license with respect to the Attic prototypes.<sup>2</sup> The type, however, shows notable affinities with the masks of the so-called Vollmer Group of terracottas, according to T. B. L. Webster's classification, datable between the middle of the second century BC and 50 BC; those masks are distinguished by powerfully plastic modeling with marked chiaroscuro effects and expressive emphasis, accentuated by staring eyes and wide-open mouths. Examples of this group have been found in various centers of the Aegean, southern Italy, and Sicily, but it is likely that the type originates from Campania.

The masks related to the Vollmer Group find parallels also in the production of Myrina and Priene: for example, a mask, possibly depicting a parasite and dating back to the second century BC, presents similar characteristics. This means that, especially in the Late Hellenistic period, distinctive elements peculiar to one type might in some cases be transmitted to and used in other typologies as well, since the serial production of masks had increasingly little to do with actual theatrical performances; the iconography, therefore, tended to move toward the generic.<sup>3</sup> In Sicily, examples that could be assignable to this group and which depict various characters from New Comedy were found in Agrigento, San Fratello, and Centuripe.<sup>4</sup>

In other centers, as well, masks have been found that refer to characters other than the one represented by the Getty mask, but which are comparable on the basis of stylistic peculiarities and especially the emphasis on plasticity. At Lipari, for instance, there are a number of small masks, datable to the first half of the third century BC, with a convivial wreath, large staring eyes, and round eyeballs, which exhibit the distinctive characteristics of the group. A female mask found in Adrano is datable by stratigraphic evidence to the third century BC and is characterized by powerful plastic modeling; another mask with the same characteristics at the British Museum, possibly depicting a parasite and datable to the second century BC, has tentatively been assigned to Sicily.<sup>5</sup> As for the possible archaeological context, it should be emphasized that, according to the current state of research in Sicily, in particular at Adrano and Morgantina, the most substantial group of theatrical materials comes from the settlement areas; in Lipari, by contrast, theatrical terracottas are documented almost exclusively in funerary contexts. Such is the case also at Centuripe, where, between the third and the second century BC, masks are a recurring feature in funerary deposits, expressing most clearly the intimate relationship between the cult of the dead and Dionysian rituals.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, masks and statuettes of actors are attested in the sanctuaries of Demeter and Kore, deities linked with Dionysos in cult practices; thus one finds evidence of several cults within a single sanctuary, in keeping with a syncretistic approach attested in the Hellenistic period.<sup>7</sup> Hypothetically, the Getty mask can be assigned to Sicily and is most closely comparable with the production of Centuripe in the second century BC.<sup>8</sup>

## Notes

1. On the use of masks in theatrical practice, see U. Albin, *Nel nome di Dioniso: Vita teatrale nell'Atene classica* (Milan, 1991), pp. 75–77. For the masks at Lipari and Centuripe, see BERNABÒ BREA 2002, pp. 9–12.
2. For a description of the mask of a beardless satyr, see J. Pollux, *Onomastikon* 4.1.42; and L. Bernabò Brea and M. Cavalier, *Maschere e personaggi del teatro greco nelle terrecotte liparesi* (Rome, 2001), p. 52, fig. 40. On local interpretations of the Attic prototypes in a number of centers in Sicily, such as Morgantina and Lipari, see BELL 1981, pp. 67–69.

3. For an analysis of the Vollmer Group, see WEBSTER 1995, vol. 1, p. 63; vol. 2, pp. 236–38.
4. WEBSTER 1995, vol. 2, pp. 236–37, 3NT 2a/b, 3NT 3a/b, 3 NT 4; see also the two examples of *satyros ageneios*, of which one is certainly originally from Centuripe, in BERNABÒ BREA 2002, figs. 109–10, with facial features similar to this one. See the masks of New Comedy male characters, probably from Sicily, in BREITENSTEIN 1941, pl. 86, nos. 719–20; and the theatrical mask, perhaps originally from Caltavuturo, in C. Angela Di Stefano, “Nuove accessioni al Museo Nazionale di Palermo,” *SicArch* 12 (1970), pp. 25–30, esp. p. 30, fig. 10.
5. BERNABÒ BREA 1981, pp. 127–29, H 6; also BURN AND HIGGINS 2001, no. 2246; for the female theatrical mask from Adrano, see G. Lamagna, “Terracotte di argomento teatrale da Adrano,” *SicArch* 33 (2000), pp. 221–46.
6. On the function of theatrical masks at Lipari, see BERNABÒ BREA 1981, pp. 21–27; for Centuripe, MUSUMECI 2010, pp. 104–6; WEBSTER 1995, vol. 2, pp. 60–64; and BERNABÒ BREA 1971–74. On the presence of theatrical terracottas in funerary deposits, see also the finds in Taranto: GRAEPLER 1997, pp. 231–34.
7. In this connection, see the observations of L. Todisco, “Teatro e *theatra* nelle immagini e nell’edilizia monumentale della Magna Grecia,” in PUGLIESE CARRATELLI 1990, pp. 103–58; also J. R. Green, “Dedication of Masks,” *Revue Archeologique* 2 (1982), pp. 237–48. Performances and playful behavior must have played a major role in the practice of the Demeter cult; in this connection, see PORTALE 2008, pp. 33–37; HINZ 1998, pp. 47–48, 229–30; and BELL 1981, pp. 97–98 and 67–73.
8. On masks originally from Centuripe, see BERNABÒ BREA 2002, pp. 103–6, and MUSUMECI 2010, pp. 94, 100–101.