


29

# Statuette of a Mime

225-175 BC

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## Object Details

<b>Catalogue Number</b>	29
Inventory Number	96.AD.166 
Typology	Statuette
Location	Taranto region
<b>Dimensions</b>	H: 18.9 cm; Diam (vent hole): 2 cm

## Fabric

Bright orange in color (Munsell 5 yr 7/8), darker in back (Munsell 7.5 yr 7/6), with a friable consistency, and with many reflective and carbonous inclusions. Extensive traces of polychromy over a thick layer of white slip: bright pink (arms and *kekraphalos* [hairnet]), light pink (face and legs), and red (left foot). The body and the head of the statuette were made with bivalve molds, while the arms, legs, and various secondary elements were worked freehand and applied to the figure before firing. On the back is a circular vent hole.

## Condition

The fingers of the proper right hand and ornamental detail on the hairnet are missing, as is much of the white ground layer.

## Provenance

– 1990, Unknown (sold, *Fine Antiquities*, Christie's, London, July 11, 1990, lot 239, to Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman.); 1990–1996, Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman (New York, New York), donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1996.

## Bibliography

*Fine Antiquities*, Christie's London, sale cat., July 11, 1990, lot 239; H. Mallalieu, "Around the Salerooms," *Country Life* (August 30, 1990), pp. 114–15; *PASSION FOR ANTIQUITIES* 1994, NO. 119, PP. 235–36; *ACQUISITIONS* 1996–98, P. 67.

## Description

The slender character, with skinny arms, stands with its right leg slightly bent and tucked behind; the head is turning sharply to the left. The left arm is poised on the hip while the right arm is outstretched to the side in a declamatory gesture. The figure is wearing a short chiton and cloak that covers the shoulders, then crosses over behind the back and is rolled up around the waist like a sash. Fluttering folds at the sides suggest the figure's dancelike movement.

The hair, arranged in an arch over the forehead, is held back by a *kekryphalos*, the ends of which are knotted over the forehead. The nose is hooked; the large eyebrows are furrowed, forming two creases across the forehead, which is marked by a large protuberance; the gaze is grim.

The chiton and the short cloak rolled over the hips, as well as the headdress and the short boots, are specific features of the costume of Artemis, in keeping with an iconography that originated in the fourth century BC and spread throughout the Hellenistic period in a number of variants.<sup>1</sup>

The arm raised to one side, too, is typical of many statuary types, such as the small statue of Artemis from Piraeus, datable to the third quarter of the fourth century BC.<sup>2</sup> The hand on the hip is also found in various depictions of the goddess, holding either bow and quiver or a torch, a recurrent theme in both Hellenistic coroplastic art and South Italian vase iconography. In particular, the exaggerated, theatrical pose of the character, which seems to parody common iconographies of the pugnacious goddess between the fourth century and the third century BC, might be intended to evoke Artemis herself in the throes of rage over a misdeed or in a querulous stance.<sup>3</sup> In this case, it is likely that the figure represents an actor performing in a "phlyax farce" or hilarotragedy, in the role of either the goddess or a member of her entourage; indeed, phlyax plays owed their popularity to the sort of caricatural deformation and grotesque parody that are expressed in this figure.<sup>4</sup>

Tentatively, this character could be related to the mythological tale of Kallisto, the Arcadian nymph who was a follower in Artemis's virginal entourage; Zeus took her as a lover, however,

and she bore him a son, Arkas; according to a number of sources, Kallisto was then condemned by Artemis and transformed into a she-bear. The sad story of Kallisto was the subject of a tragedy by Aeschylus, now lost, and a comedy by Amphis. Euripides also mentions her in his play *Helen*, but in general the literary sources on the nymph are fragmentary and conflicting. Kallisto was depicted in a number of red-figured Apulian vases that can be dated to a very narrow window of time, from 380 to 360 BC, and possibly linked to political events that involved Arcadia (the constitution of the Arcadian League in 371 BC). In the scenes depicted, probably influenced by literary sources and paintings as well, the nymph is presented wearing a long, gauzy chiton that leaves the shoulders uncovered or, in some cases, showing incipient feral traits that allude to the impending metamorphosis that is her punishment. In this case, the statuette could depict Artemis, who inflicts the punishment on the nymph with an imperious gesture.<sup>5</sup>

It is unclear whether the character is wearing a mask, but according to Pollux's description, the facial features are more reminiscent of the mask of a *parasitos* (sponger), especially with a view to the decidedly *epigrypos* (aquiline) nose and the furrowed brow with a bump in the middle. But the face may also be supposed to represent the mime's own visage, molded through his acting skill and adept use of make-up.<sup>6</sup>

The piece, reportedly from Asia Minor, has been ascribed to Myrina,<sup>7</sup> but the figure can also be compared with a number of statuettes from the funerary deposits of Taranto, datable between the last quarter of the third century and the first quarter of the second century BC. This was a period in which the coroplastic repertoire was enriched with new typologies characterized by flowing movements and by a dynamic placement of the figure in space. This statuette can also hypothetically be linked to a Tarentine tomb context datable to between the end of the third century and the beginning of the second century BC, on the basis of stylistic comparisons and the type of clay,<sup>8</sup> and in view of the popularity of phlyax farces—especially the plays of Rhinthon, who was active in Taras between the end of the fourth century BC and the beginning of the third century BC—and their influence on Apulian artistic production, in close connection with Dionysian funerary ideology.<sup>9</sup>

## Notes

1. For the iconography of Artemis in the Hellenistic period, see KAHIL 1984, in particular for the fourth century BC, pp. 747–51; for the clothing and the hairstyle with *sakkos* or *kekryphalos*, influenced also by the costumes of Amazons, compare types nos. 172–75, 396, 459, 470, 746, and 1066.
2. For the little Artemis of the Piraeus, see KAHIL 1984, no. 162; for the type with a hand on the hip, nos. 19, 204, 405. This pose is also found in the Hellenistic type of Artemis *dadophoros* (torchbearer); see example nos. 495–503, from Athens, Sicily, and Asia Minor, datable to the fourth or third century BC.

3. For the coroplastic pieces, see KAHIL 1984, no. 249 (fragment of a mold from the Athenian Agora, dating from the second century BC); no. 264 (statuette, perhaps from Tanagra, dating from the fourth or third century BC); no. 265 (from Egnazia), and no. 389 (from Rhodes). See also WINTER 1903, no. 5, p. 428, and the statuette from Athens (fourth century BC), possibly depicting an actor, at KAHIL 1984, no. 248. For the pose, see also the statuette, possibly depicting a nymph, in the Museo Civico di Centuripe, inv. no. 580, and the statuette of Artemis with a short chiton in LIBERTINI 1947, fig. 6d; see also a statuette of seated Artemis, wearing a short skirt with broad pleats, in U. Spigo, in *LA SICILIA GRECA* \* 1989, no. 363, p. 172, dating from the second half of the third century BC. For a similar declamatory gesture, compare the terracotta group from Centuripe, datable to 150–50 BC: see G. Falco, “Due gruppi fittili di soggetto teatrale da Centuripe e da Adrano,” *\*MÉFRA* 109, no. 2 (1997), pp. 813–32. See also the statuettes of actors and a series of masks from Myrina, datable to the Late Hellenistic period, in BIEBER 1961a, figs. 372, 379, 386, and a head from Smyrna in BURN AND HIGGINS 2001, no. 2395. For Artemis depicted with hand on hip and an arm thrown out to one side in South Italian vases, see KAHIL 1984, nos. 1287–88.
4. For the phlyax farce, see BIEBER 1961a, pp. 258–300; M. Gigante, “Profilo di una storia letteraria della Magna Grecia,” in PUGLIESE CARRATELLI 1988, pp. 275–81. For depictions of phlyax farce in vase painting, see A. D. Trendall, *Phlyax Vases*, 2nd. rev. ed., *BICS*, suppl. 19 (1967); F. G. Lo Porto, “Nuovi vasi fliacici apuli del Museo Nazionale di Taranto e scene teatrali e soggetti caricaturali su nuovi vasi apuli di Taranto,” *BdA* 49 (1964), pp. 14–20; and F. G. Lo Porto, “Scene teatrali e soggetti caricaturali su nuovi vasi apuli di Taranto,” *BdA* extract (Rome, 1966).
5. For the iconography of the nymph Kallisto, see I. McPhee, s.v. “Kallisto,” *LIMC* 5 (1991), pp. 940–44; for literary sources on Kallisto, see A. Stenico, “Kallisto,” *Quaderni ticinesi* 6 (1977), pp. 79–86. For her iconography in Apulian vase-painting, see A. D. Trendall, “Callisto in Apulian Vase Painting,” *AK* 20 (1977), p. 100, pl. 22, no. 4; L. Rossi, *Ceramiche apule nel museo di Cremona* (Bari, 1981), pp. 31–32; and G. Arrigoni, “Un mito enigmatico: La Lyssa di Kallisto,” in G. Sena Chiesa and E. Arslan, eds., *Miti Greci: Archeologia e pittura dalla Magna Grecia al collezionismo* (Milan, 2004), pp. 236–38.
6. For an analysis of the parasite mask at Lipari, see BERNABÒ BREA 1981, p. 192–94; BIEBER 1961a, pp. 107, 189, figs. 260, 261b; for a terracotta mask from Taranto, found in a funerary deposit, p. 100; for the mask worn by comic actors, see the statuette from the area around the theater of Locri, dating from the fourth century BC, see L. Todisco, “Teatro e *theatra* nelle immagini e nell’edilizia monumentale della Magna Grecia,” in PUGLIESE CARRATELLI 1990, pp. 103–58, no. 178. Enormous curved noses and jug ears were standard features in the depiction of mimes during the Hellenistic period: in this connection, see the terracotta, possibly from Egypt, in H. Kayser, *Das Pelizaeus-Museum in Hildesheim* (Hamburg, 1966), p. 34, fig. 47, and a group of small heads from Smyrna depicting mimic actors in BESQUES 1972, p. 230, pl. 309.
7. See *\*PASSION FOR ANTIQUITIES\** 1994, pp. 235–36.
8. For comparisons with Tarentine coroplastic material, see a statuette from a tomb in the Via Corvisea, assignable to 225–175 BC, GRAEPLER 1994, fig. 220; GRAEPLER 1997, p. 202, fig. 192; WEBSTER 1995, vol. 2, pp. 255. For the pose with the right arm extended forward, see also the satyr-like figure from the funerary deposit of Tomb 7 of the Via Campania in Taranto, datable to the second half of the second century BC, which also presents a technique and a type of polychromy that are quite similar to the present piece: A. D’Amicis, A. Dell’Aglia, and E. Lippolis, *Vecchi scavi, nuovi restauri*, exh. cat. (Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 1991), p. 91, no. 713; and the statuette of Artemis, inv. 4100 from Tomb 2 of the Via Duca degli Abruzzi, in the garden of the church of San Francesco di Paola. In Taranto, one can also find a type of fabric that is orange in color, compact, with reflective inclusions; see IACOBONE 1988, pp. 7–8.
9. M. Gigante, *Rintone e il teatro in Magna Grecia*, *Esperienze* 7 (Naples, 1971), esp. pp. 84–86, 125–27; regarding mentions of the phlyax farce in an artistic milieu, see E. M. De Juliis, “Due crateri apuli con scene teatrali di tipo fliacico,” in D. Adamesteanu, ed., *Studi in onore di Dinu Adamesteanu* (Galatina, 1983), pp. 77–85.