Finch & Co



AN ANCIENT ROMAN PAINTED PLASTER WALL FRAGMENT FROM POMPEII OR HERCULANIUM

AN ANCIENT ROMAN PAINTED PLASTER WALL FRAGMENT FROM POMPEII OR HERCULANIUM
LAST QUARTER 1ST CENTURY BC – 1ST CENTURY AD
SIZE : 16.5 CM HIGH, 14 CM WIDE, 2.5 CM DEEP – 6½ INS HIGH, 5½ INS WIDE, 1 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

APHRODITE ENGAGED IN TOUCHING HER NECKLACE, STARES OUT AT THE VIEWER WHILE EROS PEEPS AROUND HER SHOULDER, THE TIPS OF HIS WINGS JUST SHOWING. THIS DELIGHTFUL PAINTING IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE LATE 2ND STYLE THAT DEVELOPED IN POMPEII IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE 1ST CENTURY BC. THIS WAS THE GREAT CREATIVE PERIOD OF ROMAN WALL PAINTING AND ESTABLISHED THE BASIS OF MOST OF THE SUBSEQUENT REPERTORY OF WORK. MYTHOLOGICAL PANEL PICTURES WERE A PROMINENT FEATURE OF MANY VILLA WALLS IN POMPEII AND HERCULANIUM AND COULD BE TERMED 'OLD MASTER COPIES'. THEY WERE BASED ON GREEK ORIGINALS AND IN THE 19TH CENTURY THEY WERE OFTEN STUDIED EXCLUSIVELY AS EVIDENCE OF THESE NOW LOST GREEK PAINTINGS. HOWEVER, THEY ARE FREE VARIATIONS UPON AN ESTABLISHED THEME AND NOT MERELY STRAIGHT FORWARD COPIES, AND THEY ARE NOW STUDIED IN THEIR OWN RIGHT AS PAINTINGS WHICH ARE AS ROMAN AS THE WALLS WHICH THEY ONCE ADORNED. IT SEEMS THAT EVEN THE EDUCATED ROMAN HYPNOTIZED BY THE PREVAILING TASTE AND FASHION FOR GREEK ART WAS NOTORIOUSLY BLIND TO HIS OWN COUNTRY'S ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT.