



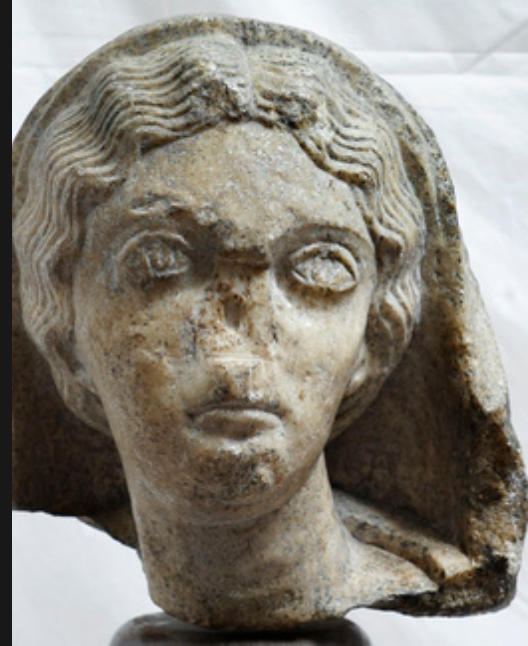
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## OBJECT OF THE SEASON

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# ROMAN SCULPTURE

Sculpture in the Roman world was far more than mere artistic expression; it served as a vital tool for political and social cohesion. In contrast to Greek idealization, Rome embraced a pragmatic realism, utilizing portraiture to preserve family lineage and historical relief to chronicle the Empire's triumphs. These works filled both public and private spaces, acting as vehicles for state propaganda and objects of religious devotion. Ultimately, stone and marble were used to give a face to power and to immortalize the collective memory of a civilization deeply rooted in public life.



# ROMAN SCULPTURE IN SIRMIIUM

## Female Portrait Head

Repository: Archaeological Museum, Zagreb

Material: White marble; Height: 28.5 cm

Chronology: AD 160–180 (Antonine period)

A portrait of a young distinguished woman characterized by an oval facial structure, a high forehead, and a restrained mouth. The chin is short, with a pronounced submental fold (double chin). Two distinct venereal folds (wrinkles) are visible on the neck. The coiffure consists of wavy hair framing the face, partially obscured by a palla (veil) draped over the head and shoulders. It shows that Sirmium's elite followed the latest fashion trends from Rome to the letter.



1. <https://lupa.at/21094/photos/1>

## Fragmentary Portrait of a Tetrarch

Repository: Museum of Srem, Sremska Mitrovica

Material: Egyptian Porphyry; Dimensions: 12.5 × 7.3 × 6.4 cm

Chronology: Late 3rd or early 4th century AD

Provenance: Temple within the Imperial Palace complex

This fragment, preserving the orbital region, nose, and mouth, adheres to the rigid iconographic canons of the Tetrarchy. The head exhibits a characteristic cubic geometry. The eyes are wide and almond-shaped with heavy lower lids and graphically incised irises. The mouth is composed of full, compressed lips, with deep nasolabial folds transitioning into smooth, beardless cheeks. The portrait perfectly captures the rigid, powerful aura of the Tetrarchy.

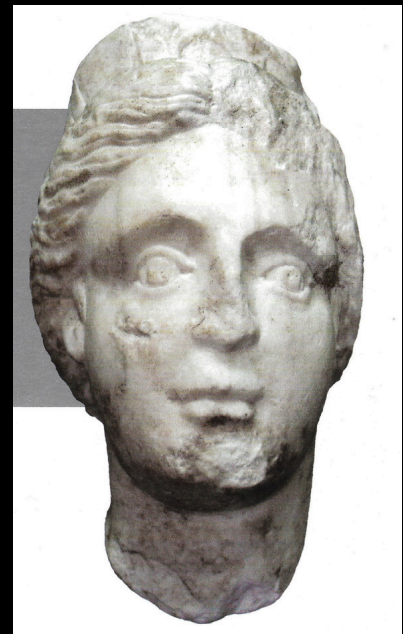


2. Popović I. 2017, *Porphyry, Power of Emperors and Dignity of Gods*, p. 115, cat. 1b.

## Tyche (City Personification)

Repository: Museum of Srem, Sremska Mitrovica  
Material: Carrara marble; Height: 19.5 cm  
Chronology: Late Antiquity (4th century AD)  
Provenance: Imperial Palace complex

A head representing Tyche, the tutelary deity of the city. The sculpture is identified by the corona muralis (mural crown) atop the head, symbolizing the city's fortifications. Tyche was the city's divine guardian – a personification of the city's strength and safety during the 4th century.



3. Popović I. 2012, *Sirmium, Marble sculptures*, p. 110, cat. 36a

## The Sirmium Sundial

Repository: Museum of Srem, Sremska Mitrovica  
Material: Pohorje marble; Height: 162 cm  
Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century AD  
Provenance: Western Necropolis (Mausoleum)

A monumental sundial supported by a tripartite sculptural group. Atlas is depicted supporting the spherical gnomon on his shoulders. On the reverse, the figures of Hercules and the giant Antaeus are engaged in a wrestling grasp. Hercules is identified by the lion skin draped over his shoulders. The iconography captures the climactic moment of the myth. Hercules is shown lifting Antaeus off the ground—the only way to defeat him, as the giant gained strength from touching the Earth.



## Conclusion

The sculptural corpus of Sirmium serves as a material record of the city's socio-political evolution within the Roman Empire. From the refined marble portraits of the 2nd century to the rigid, symbolic porphyry of the Tetrarchic era, these artifacts reflect the shifting priorities of Roman artistic expression. The presence of high-quality imports, such as Egyptian porphyry and Carrara marble, underscores Sirmium's status not merely as a provincial center, but as an imperial residence and a pivotal crossroads of the Late Roman world.



4. <https://lupa.at/5719/photos/1>  
<https://lupa.at/5719/photos/10>

# ROMAN SCULPTURE IN RUTA VÍA DE LA PLATA

## Right leg of a Mercury (Gijón)

In Roman homes there was an altar, the lararium, where the protective spirits of the household (the Lares, Penates, and Manes) were venerated. They received special worship on festive days, and offerings were made to them at every daily meal.

Any family celebration began with the offering of perfumes and flower garlands to these deities. Other protective gods were also venerated, such as Fortuna and Mercury.

One of the pieces on display at the Museum of the Roman Villa of Veranes is a fragment of a bronze sculpture corresponding to the right leg of a Mercury. Broken above the knee, with two very stylized little wings on either side of the ankle and small incisions marking the toes, this figure, dated between the 4th and 5th centuries AD, would have been used on the aforementioned altars of worship.

## La Gitana (Mérida)

The selected sculpture is a female portrait in marble known as "La Gitana," dated to the 1st century AD. This bust is one of the most outstanding pieces in the sculpture collection preserved at the National Museum of Roman Art in Mérida.

It is a private funerary portrait, whose main function was to commemorate the deceased. It was once polychromed, although no traces of paint have been preserved.

The name by which this sculpture is known comes from its distinctive hairstyle, which does not correspond to any specific fashion. Although the updo is similar to that worn by young women of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, it features a fringe of long S-shaped strands and ends in two side locks that curve over the cheeks. This constitutes an exceptional stylistic feature that likely reflects an indigenous or local influence.

In addition to the realism with which the young woman's face has been depicted and the local influence, one can also observe the perforation of the earlobes, presumably for the wearing of earrings.



## Male Statue of the Hüftmantel (Medina de las Torres)

Repository: Dehesa Castillejo, Los Cercos, Medina de las Torres (Badajoz), Contributa Iulia Ugultuniae

Material: White marble

Dimensions: maximum height 104 cm; width 80 cm; depth 46 cm

Chronology: 1st century AD, possibly during the reign of Claudius

References: Ortiz Romero, P. (2002); Garriguet, J. A. (2004), 72-73, pl. 1.4

Fragment of a male statue of the Hüftmantel type. A sculpture in the round, of dimensions far larger than life-size, representing a standing male figure with a bare torso and the lower part of the body covered by a cloak wrapped around the hips and falling over the legs. From this manner of wearing the cloak derives the German term Hüftmantel (Hüfte, hip, and Mantel, cloak), used to designate sculptures of this type.

Conceived to be viewed from the front, the folds on the back—unseen as the statue would have been placed against a wall or within a niche—are only lightly sketched, although they still suggest the line separating the buttocks. The piece is highly incomplete, having lost the head, the upper part of the torso, and the lower extremities from the knees down, and it also shows breaks in the folds. Despite this, some traces of red pigment remain among the folds on the right side of the cloak.

No attribute can be identified that would allow the figure to be definitively recognized. Due to the arrangement of the cloak, which leaves the chest exposed, as well as its colossal size, it may represent a male deity such as Apollo or Dionysus, a heroized individual honored by the city with a commemorative monument, or—more likely—the living emperor himself in a deified form. The loss of the head prevents verification of the presence of *infulae* (ribbons) that adorned the imperial laurel crown and fell over the shoulders, which, unfortunately, have not been preserved either.

In 1869, the piece entered the museum, having been recovered during the archaeological campaign carried out in 1845 by the Commission of Monuments of Badajoz.



© photo: Marian García Palacios

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