



Pseudo-Seneca

Date

19th century

Primary Maker

Unknown artist

Medium

Cast bronze with inlay on marble base

Description

This nineteenth century bronze bust is a copy of a late first century BCE Roman bronze, which is itself a copy of an ancient Greek original. The Roman bronze, uncovered at the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum in 1754, and now residing in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, was initially identified as the Stoic Roman philosopher Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BCE–65 CE). Most scholars now agree that it is a fictitious portrait, perhaps of the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes (446 BCE–386 BCE) or the Greek poet Hesiod (active c. 700 BCE). The identification of the bust as a portrait of Seneca was partially related to its haggard features, which were thought to reflect the philosopher's stoicism. Copies of this work became popular with artists and intellectuals, even though its identification as a portrait of Seneca was in doubt as early as 1764. The version of the bust displayed here has inlaid eyes, possibly made of ivory.

Dimensions

Overall: 18 × 9 × 11 in. (45.7 × 22.9 × 27.9 cm) Base: 7 1/2 in. (19.1 cm)