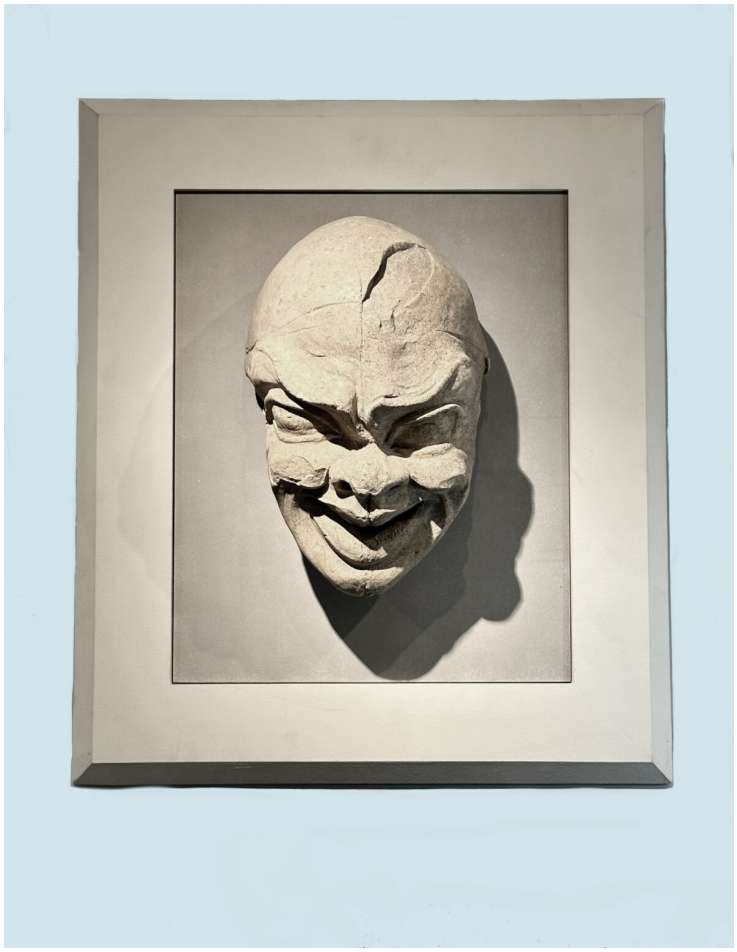
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NEW YORK

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Greek Terracotta Theater Mask

An ancient Hellenistic Greek large terracotta theater actor mask depicting a smiling bald man with furrowed brow, wide eyes and gnarled features in deep relief.



Ca. 3rd century BC.
Height: 10 1/2 in. (25.7 cm).

The Athenian playwrights Menader and Philemon started a movement known as New Comedy in the 4th century BC. The popular new comedies reflected a more worldly Hellenistic view with diverse characters and new settings. The theaters of the Greek colonies of Southern Italy were evidently adorned with masks of favored characters from these works. In the 2nd century AD, the scholar Julius Pollux of Naucratis, recorded in his Onomasticon forty-four different types of New Comedy characters and there specific theatrical masks. Pollux's mask 25, representing a cook as a bald man identifies this piece.

Formerly in a New York private collection; acquired from Ward and Co., New York in 1998.

inventory number: 9745

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