

Diana Matar

Tête à Tête 2019

Pigment Prints, Editions of 8

Horizontal images: 51.5 x 64 cm / 20 x 25 in

Vertical images: 52 x 42 cm / 20.5 x 16.5 in

Tête-à-Tête by Diana Matar

In May 2019, I was offered an Artist's Residency at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, which holds an extensive collection of Greek and Roman antiquities. In the Museum I studied works by artists who, centuries earlier, had represented the human form. Personalities portrayed in mosaics excavated from Pompeii and heads cast into ancient coins. Warriors' expressions caught during a battle on the famous Darius Vase (340-320 BC) and the half-scratched face of Zeus in a 1st Century fresco. But mostly I looked at sculpture. I would circle them, stop and stare into their eyes. Face to face, these classic figures were animated and poignantly contemporary. More than gods or Olympians, through the lens, I saw unique psychologies and imperfections: individuals with scars, physical deformities, emotional complexities, and vulnerabilities.

In one of the grand halls, there were several busts of Marcus Aurelius, as well as sculptures of Claudius, Tiberius, Hadrian and Caesar. But it was the modest bust of an unknown boy that interested me most. I looked through my lens and he seemed to be returning my gaze.

Over the years, I have noticed that to make a truthful portrait, the best exchange between photographer and subject is one with no preconceptions. When the photographer opens the lens, there must be an authentic connection between the two. During the weeks I spent at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, I photographed the sculptures as if they were living people. By looking closely at them, I felt they were collaborating with me. It is why I call the work *Tête-à-Tête*. In French the phrase means something slightly different from the English 'face to face'. *Tête-à-Tête* does not suggest being in front of each other, instead, it implies an exchange of confidences and a state of mutual sympathy. I cannot think of a better term to describe the encounters I had with these unique and vivid personalities carved into stone centuries ago.

A major installation of Diana Matar's series *Evidence* was shown in the exhibition *Conflict, Time, Photography* at Tate Modern, travelling to Museum Folkwang Essen; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, 2014 - 2015. Her first monograph, *Evidence*, was published in 2014 by Schilt Publishing, Amsterdam and was chosen by New York Times Photography Critic as best book of the year. *My America* was exhibited at the Musée de la Photographie Charleroi, Belgium, in 2020 and will be the subject of a book to be published by GOST Books. Diana Matar's work is held in many public collections including: Victoria & Albert Museum, London; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; George Eastman Museum, New York and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art.



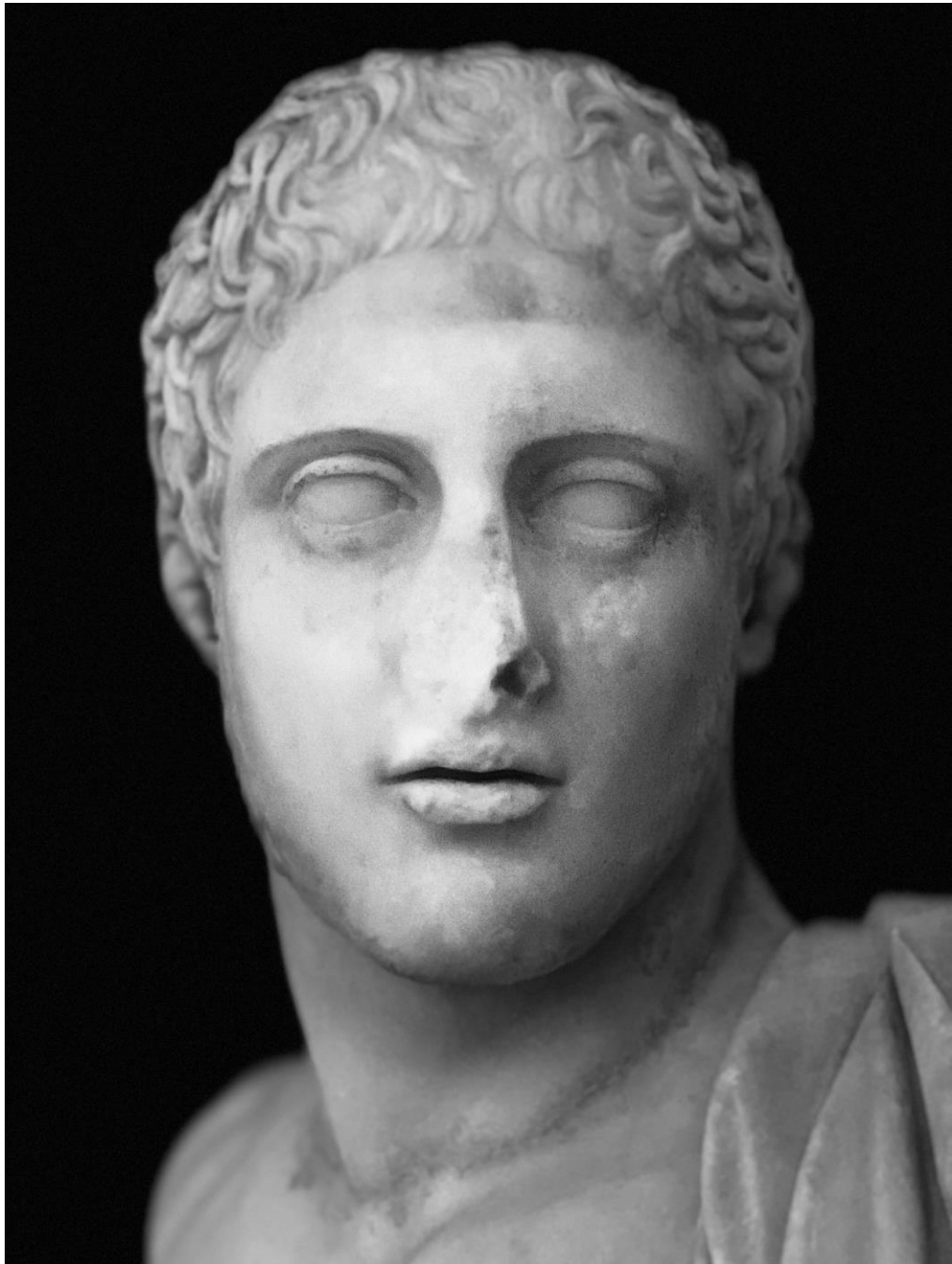
No.1

Dionysus

No.2

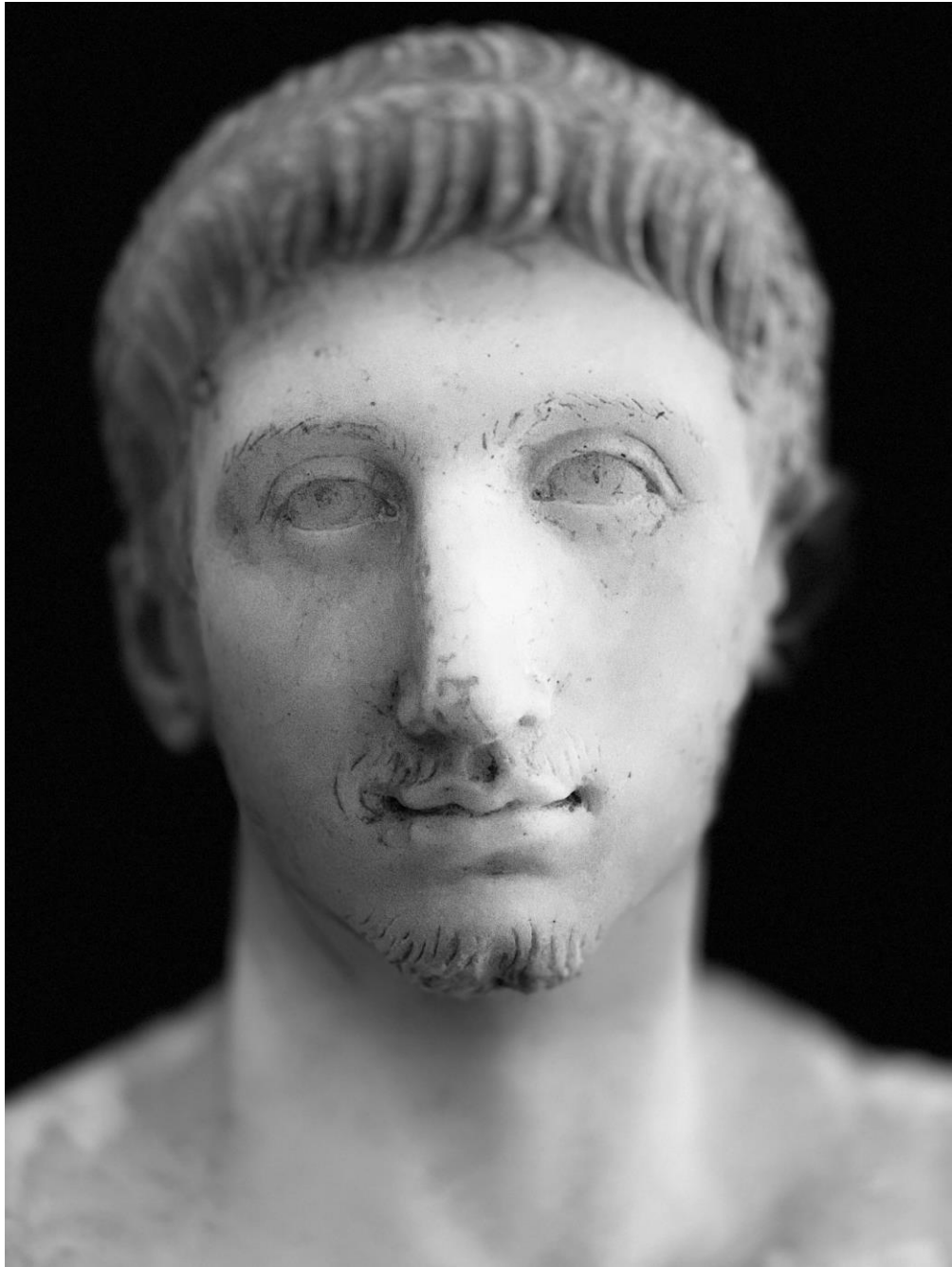
Unidentified Portrait





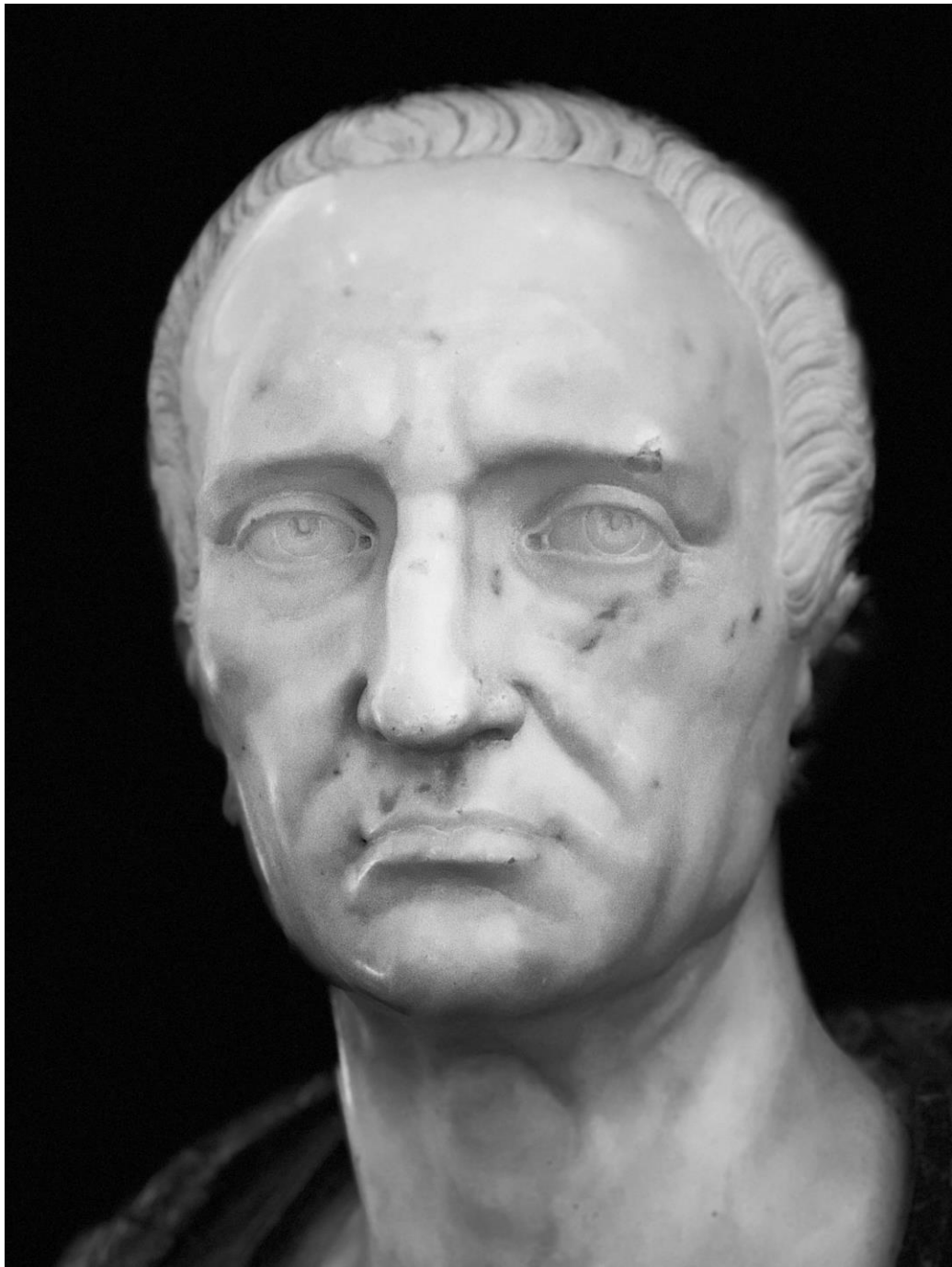
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No.4

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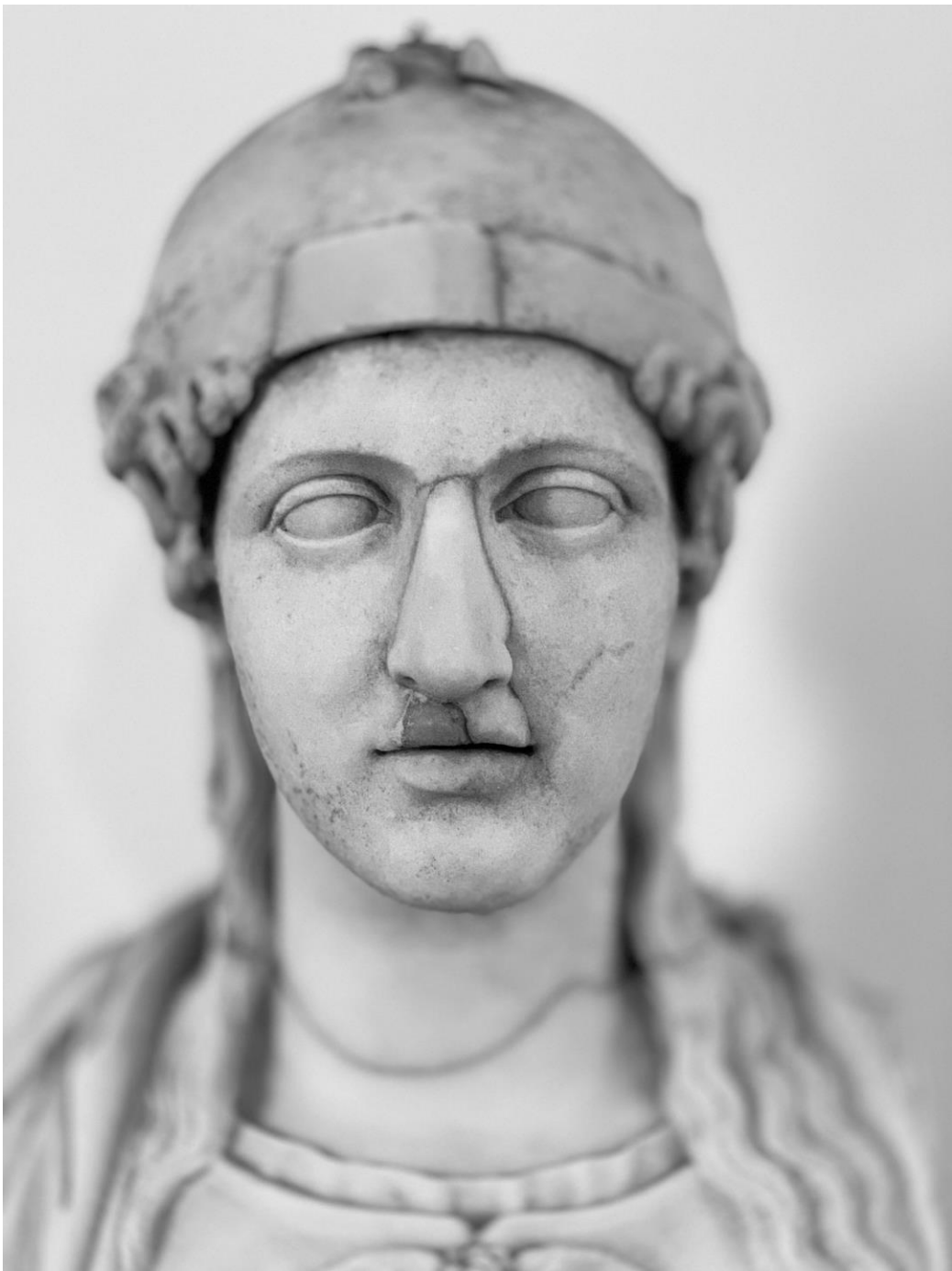


No.5

Unidentified Portrait

No.6

Athena Parthenos



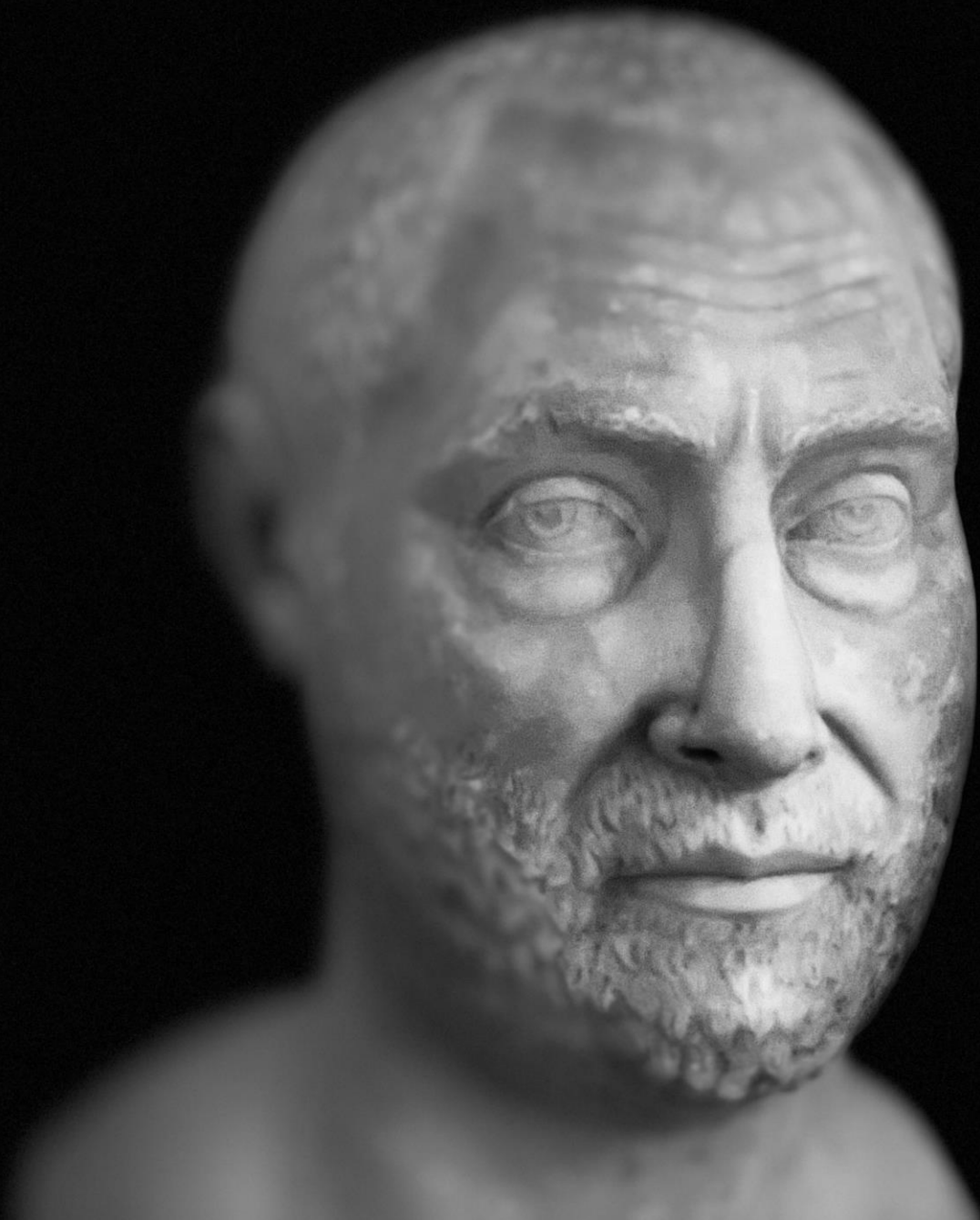


No.7

Unidentified Portrait

No.10

Unidentified Portrait



No.12

Unidentified Portrait





No.13

Unidentified Portrait

No. 16

Unidentified Portrait



No.46

Unidentified Portrait





No.54

Caracala

No.58

Unidentified Portrait



No. 59

Unidentified Portrait





No. 70

Marcus Aurelius

No.78

Unidentified Portrait



No.98

Tiberius

