

STATUE OF A *DIOSCURI*

ROMAN, 1ST CENTURY AD
MARBLE

HEIGHT: 79 CM.

WIDTH: 41 CM.

DEPTH: 21,5 CM.

PROVENANCE:
FORMER COLLECTION OF
MARTIN ANTOINE RYERSON (1856-1932)
OFFERED TO THE ART INSTITUTE OF
CHICAGO IN 1897.
IN THEIR COLLECTION UNTIL NOW.



This male torso depicts a Dioscuri in a frontal position. He is represented standing, in a contrapposto position. His right leg is bent while the weight of his body rests on the left. His pelvis and right shoulder are angled downwards while his back is slightly curved. The body thus forms an “S” emphasizing his nude heroic figure. The abdomen is gently

outlined displaying his flexed abdominals. A faint line is drawn down from his chest to the top of his navel. His lower abdomen slightly protrudes. The flexed pectoral muscles are hidden by his drapery, only the sides of each muscle visible to the eye. On each side of his waist, a pronounced concave reveals his contracted obliques and ribs but also a hint of his muscular shoulders.

This torso of Dioscuri is represented with thick muscular thighs. His incomplete legs stop just below his knees, which are represented in realistic detail with each crevice highlighted, an attestation to the artist's craftsmanship. Attached to his left knee is a remnant of marble, most likely a decorative base offering support. His left hip has a small fragment attached as well, representing a horse harness clutched at his side. This torso of Dioscuri is now missing its head, a testament of the passage of time. As most depictions, it is presumed that the head would be decorated with a somber gaze and luscious curls framing his face. The torso's absent right arm would be posed raising a sword. His left arm is bent at his side accentuating his robust bicep that is decorated with a single mortise and two long incisions. His left arm comes to an end just above his wrist with the left hand absent. Although the torso's back is covered by his elegant drapery, hints of his backside appear on the sides. The back of his bent right thigh reveals his flexed hamstring and muscular buttock. He is wearing a beautiful drapery

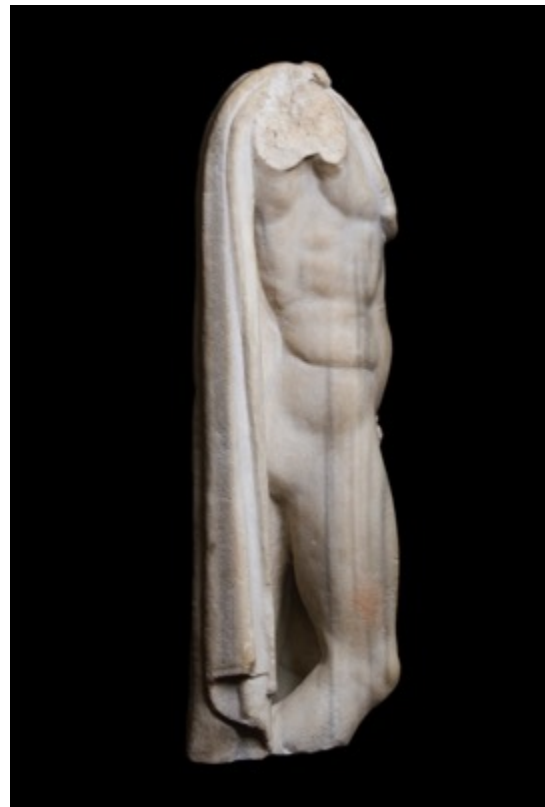


held by a fibula on the right shoulder and which falls upon his chest, over his back, and down to his ankles. The sophisticated drapery is decorated with realistic folds sticking to Dioscuri's body. The marble is aged with a beautiful patina mixed with colors of white and light brown. Within the precious stone, streaks of grey decorate the body thus finely detailing and underling his athletic physique.



The Dioscuri were the twin-half-brothers Castor and Pollux in Greek and Roman mythology. Accounts of the brothers' births vary as they were said to be born from an egg like their sister Helen of Troy and Clytemnestra. Being the patrons of sailors, they succored shipwrecked sailors and received sacrifices for favorable winds. They were the children of the mortal Leda and either Zeus, the king of the gods, or

Tyndareus, Leda's mortal husband and the king of Lacedaemon. To share their immortality with one another, Pollux requested Zeus to transform both twins into the constellation Gemini, later deemed their Latin epithet. Both brothers were fine horsemen and usually represented wearing a chlamys and leading a horse. The two most important examples of that iconography are the two sculptures of the Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome (ill. 1). Other examples can be found in Paris and Berlin (ill. 2-3). Their cult was introduced in Rome around 484 BC where a temple dedicated to their name was later built in the Roman Forum.



The sculpture was part of the collection of Martin A. Ryerson, an American lawyer, businessman, philanthropist and art collector (ill. 4). He served on the Board of Trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation, and as honorary President of the Art Institute of



Chicago. He collected sculptures and paintings of important artists such as Renoir and Monet. At his death, his art collection was donated to the Art Institute of Chicago, including our torso (ill. 5).

Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Dioscuri, Roman, 1st century AD, marble, H.: 580m. Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome.



Ill. 2. Dioscuri, Roman, 2nd half of the 2nd century AD, marble, H.: 143 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. Ma 300.

Ill. 3. Dioscuri, Roman, 1st half of the 1st century AD, marble, H.: 135 cm. Antikensammlung, Berlin, inv. no. Sk 530.

Provenance:



Ill. 4. Louis Betts, Portrait de Martin A. Ryerson, 1913. Art Institute, Chicago, inv. no. 1933.1183.



Ill. 5. The torso housed in the Art Institute of Chicago.

