

DORYPHOROS TORSO

ROMAN, CIRCA 1ST CENTURY AD
MARBLE

HEIGHT: 70 CM.

WIDTH: 55 CM.

DEPTH: 27 CM.

PROVENANCE:

*FORMER COLLECTION OF DR. B. AND
M.C., SINCE AT LEAST 1910.
SOLD BY MELAIR DUBREUIL
"OBJETS ANTIQUES, COLLECTION DU DR.
B. ET M.C.", DRUOUT, PARIS,
19-21 MAY 1910, LOT 43.
THEN WITH THE WALTERS ART GALLERY,
BALTIMORE (ACC. NO. 23.64)
SOLD BY SOTHEBY'S NEW YORK,
"ANTIQUITIES", 13 DECEMBER 1991,
LOT 110.
WITH THE ROYAL-ATHENA GALLERIES,
NEW YORK, THEN IN THE HERBERT C.
LUST III COLLECTION, CONNECTICUT.
SOLD BY CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK,
"ANTIQUITIES", 11 JUNE 2003, LOT 175.
THEN IN COLLECTION A CALIFORNIAN
COLLECTOR.*



This exceptional sculpture depicts a marble man torso of the "Doryphoros" type. The Doryphoros, or "Spear-Bearer", is a masterpiece created by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos around 440 BC. The bronze original sculpture has now disappeared, but is known through many texts as well as Roman copies in marble (ill. 1-2). It was indeed one of the most reproduced sculpture type during Antiquity, whose ours is a magnificent example. Furthermore, the Doryphoros is the plastic illustration of the Canon, a treatise written by Polykleitos in the mid-5th century BC which theorised his aesthetic views of an ideal body, through a system of precise mathematical proportions and balance. Polykleitos and the other Greek classical sculptors were indeed looking for a perfect anatomic balance, composed of clearly definable lines all related to one another: the hip line echoes the shoulders one, the thoracic arch and the inguen curve are symmetrical, the pectoral width is the same as its distance to the belly button, and the head height is seven times included in the perfect body size. All those very precisely calculated elements can be seen on our torso. The slightly shifting balance that we can see is called contrapposto and is characteristic of Polykleitos' work. The left leg was bent with the heel raised from the floor, whereas the body weight was lying down the right leg, creating this shift around the hips. It is compensated by the reverse tilt of the shoulders, creating a S shape on the torso.



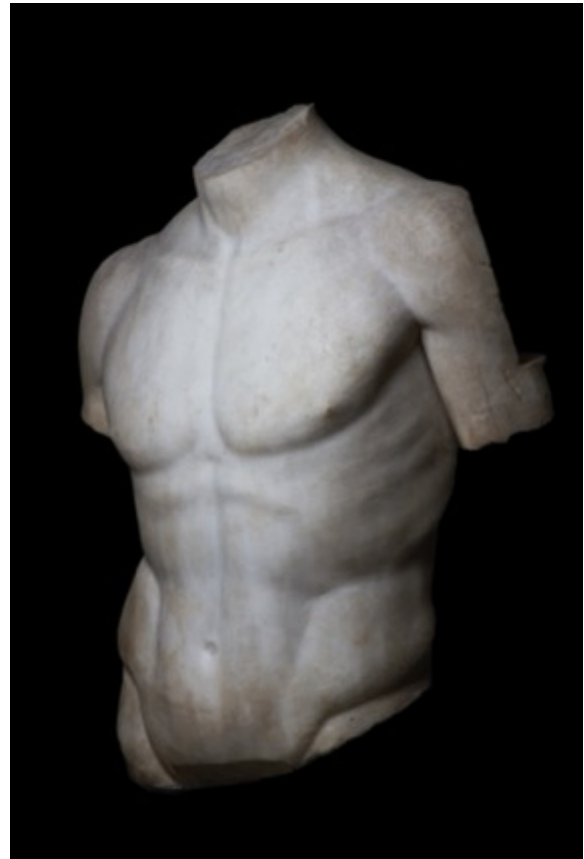
This is called the Polykleitos' chiasmus, and highlights all the abdominal muscles. This position, in between torsion and relaxation, brings a new momentum to the Greek and then Roman sculpture, as opposed to the rather rigid bodies of archaic art. By inventing the contrapposto and this new aesthetic, Polykleitos left his mark on all art history.



Our torso's muscles are very precisely defined, especially pectorals. The abdominal curve is harmoniously suggested, whereas the inguen muscles are very deeply sculpted. The sculptor was inspired by a naturalistic human body representation, but idealised its features. Our sculpture was holding a spear in his left hand and leaning on it, in between movement and rest.

The 'Doryphoros' type enjoyed great popularity in Greece during the 4th century BC and represented the classical way of sculpting the young muscular athletes that

were competing in the Olympic games or other competitions. In Rome, this type continued to be very appreciated: during the Empire, the Doryphoros type was used to depict soldiers, emperors (ill. 3) or gods such as Mercury (ill. 4).



The present torso, with its sharpness and delicacy, its harmonious proportions and elegant movement, is an exceptional testimony to the Roman artists' search for an ideal beauty. It is very comparable to a torso in Paris, another one in Los Angeles (ill. 5-6) and a last one in Vienna (ill. 7). Another basalt torso, from the Uffizi gallery in Florence is also similar to ours (ill. 8). In a French private collection since at least 1910, this torso was sold at Drouot, Paris, before entering the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore (now the Walters Art Museum). It was then part of diverse American

collections, including that of Herbert C. Lust III, a collector known for his drawings by Alberto Giacometti.

A rare example of Roman art, the present torso is a perfect image of what the Ancients were looking for in those sculptures: the eternal beauty of harmonious and athletic bodies.



Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Polykleitos Doryphoros, Roman copy after a Greek original, 120-50 BC, marble, H.: 198 cm. Minneapolis Museum, inv. no. 86.6.

Ill. 2. Doryphoros statue, between 14 and 37 AD, marble, H: 212 cm. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, inv. no. 6011.



Ill. 3. Prima Porta Augustus, Imperial period, 1st century BC, marble, H: 207 cm. Musei Vaticani, Vatican, inv. no. 2290.

Ill. 4. Man torso (Mercury?), Imperial period, 1st century AD, marble, H.: 120 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 01.819 0.



Ill. 5. Torso of the Diadumenos type, 2nd century AD, marble, H.: 85 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. MA 1027.

Ill. 6. Man torso, Roman, 100 AD, marble, H.: 103 cm. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, inv. no. 73-AA-93.



Ill. 7. Man torso, 2nd century AD, marble, H.: 126 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. I 166.

Ill. 8. Man torso, 1st century AD, basalt, H.: 113 cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence, inv. 1914 n°308.

Publications:

- Me. Lair Dubreuil, Drouot Paris, « Objets Antiques, collection du Dr. B. et de M. C. », 19-21 May 1910, lot 43.



- S. Reinach « Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine », Tome IV, Paris, 1910, p. 270, ill. 2.



- Sotheby's New York, « Antiquities », 13 December 1991, lot 110.

- Christie's New York, « Antiquities », 11 June 2003, lot 175.

- This artwork is registered in the Arachne database under the inventory number 1499.

