

# TORSO OF APOLLO

ROMAN, 1<sup>ST</sup>-2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY AD  
MARBLE

HEIGHT: 92 CM.

WIDTH: 51 CM.

DEPTH: 26 CM.

*PROVENANCE:*  
*FORMER EUROPEAN COLLECTION OF*  
*THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, BASED ON THE*  
*RESTORATION TECHNIQUES.*  
*THEN IN A FRENCH PRIVATE*  
*COLLECTION FROM THE 1960S, IN A*  
*PROPERTY IN ALLIER.*  
*THEN PASSED DOWN AS AN HEIRLOOM IN*  
*THE 2000S.*



A young man with an athletic physique is depicted through this appealing marble torso. It could be an adaptation of Praxiteles' Apollo Sauroktonos. The young man is portrayed in an energetic attitude, bust leaning to the left and right hip tilted

upwards. He seems to be leaning on something.



His musculature is showcased through prominent obliques and lightly pronounced abdominals. In the middle of his abdomen, a shallowly carved navel seems to be integrated into the surrounding muscular structure, with clear-cut contours that add to the athletic appearance of his body. His partially conserved left arm is held out from his body, as indicated by the position of his shoulder. It used to rest on a tree trunk, part of which still remains. His right arm is positioned along his body. A slight mark on his hip suggests that his right elbow or forearm could have rested there.



The shoulders of the young man are draped in a chlamys, a light mantle worn in antiquity by the Greeks and then the Romans, which covered the upper shoulders. Similarly, to the famous Apollo Belvedere statue (Ill. 1) conserved in the Vatican, the mantle was often twined around one arm, bestowing a noble appearance upon the wearer. Here, the garment is tucked around its wearer's shoulder and forms a lovely knot before cascading down. Fastened over our statue's chest by a button, the chlamys covers his pectorals with wide folds that are deeply carved into the marble. It then continues on over his upper back with slightly less accentuated folds. This dynamic drapery technique, characteristic of Graeco-Roman statuary, gives our fabric a certain realism and illustrates the exceptional mastery of the artists of the time, who were capable of transforming hard stone into a fabric that looks soft and supple.



The line running down the middle of our young man's back, delicately etched and with a particularly athletic aspect, makes the statue look all the more strikingly realistic. Unlike that of an adult man, whose muscles would be more pronounced and salient, our torso, despite a great many athletic features, is softly shaped and radiates a palpable sensuality. Each feature is placed subtly and thoughtfully to create a lifelike illusion that emanates beauty. That sensual aspect is also due to the twist of the bust and the delicacy with which the spine unfolds, coming to an end at particularly defined lumbar muscles and round buttocks. The young man's bust and pelvis are narrow and almost of the same width. His right hip is tilted upwards slightly, delicately indicating his waist, and his legs are close together, in a position that, while static, conveys both seduction and charm. This ancient statue brilliantly embodies the art of 'contrapposto', a technique developed by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Its distinctive pose is characterised by a subtle distribution of the weight of the body, creating a balance that is both dynamic and natural. The young man's right leg would have supported his weight, while the left would be slightly bent and ahead of the right. That arrangement creates a harmonious tilt of the hips, accentuated by a twist of the torso. The right shoulder is held back slightly, in contrast with the forward left leg, creating a rotation of the body. Contrapposto, with the shoulders and hips moving in opposite directions, gives the figure an illusion of movement and life. The body's position, with its weight resting on the supporting leg and the other leg bent, is a brilliant demonstration of the technical and

aesthetic mastery of the Graeco-Roman sculptors of the time.



The original brown patina gives the statue a certain aura, conferred by centuries of wear and attesting to its age and history.

Graeco-Roman art attached great importance to the representation and glorification of the masculine body, particularly through sculptures depicting young men. Although the identification of our work is difficult, it seems to be a variant of Praxiteles' Apollo Sauroktonos (Ill. 2). As in that famous representation, our statue displays a relaxed, nonchalant attitude. The slimness of the young man's figure, with his narrow pelvis, is reminiscent of the slender sinuosity of Praxiteles' Apollo. A key feature is that the young man of our sculpture is leaning on a tree trunk, a detail directly inspired by Apollo Sauroktonos. Details such as the way the chlamys is worn, the

discreet muscles and the movement and grace of the body only lend credence to the hypothesis that our statue is a representation of Apollo, or was, at the very least, inspired by the same aesthetic ideal. Praxiteles, one of the most famous sculptors of ancient Greece, lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. He was particularly renowned for his graceful, lifelike representations of gods and mythological figures. Apollo Sauroktonos, one of his most famous works, depicts the god Apollo about to kill a lizard. The statue is admired for its relaxed pose and the innovative way Praxiteles captured a moment of potential movement in a static posture. The tree trunk against which Praxiteles' Apollo was leaning has often been interpreted as both a structural and a symbolic element, adding to the visual and narrative dynamic of the sculpture.



Another sculpture, the Torso of Apollo, displayed within the collections of the

Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung Berlin (Ill. 3), also seems to have commonalities with our work, particularly in the movement of the body.

In conclusion, our statue, by its posture, musculature and illusion of movement, is in keeping with the tradition of Graeco-Roman art and could portray Apollo.

Our statue was part of a French private collection from the 1960s and was housed in a property in Allier. It was passed down in the 2000s. We also note that the surfaces of the neck and limbs were once prepared for restoration, although those restorations are now missing, indicating the intention to conserve and preserve it at a certain time.

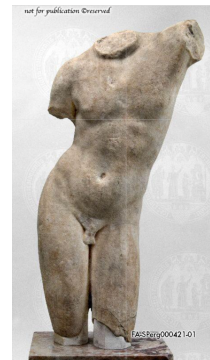
Our magnificent torso thus brilliantly illustrates the art and technique of Graeco-Roman sculptors. Through the use of contrapposto, anatomical precision and the realism of the drapery, this work emanates a sense of movement and a vitality that have spanned the ages, attesting to the exceptional mastery of the artists of the time.

## Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Apollo Belvedere, after a bronze original by Leochares (ca 330 BC). Hadrianic – Antonine period, H.: 224 cm, Museo Pio Clementino, Vatican.

Ill. 2. Apollo Sauroktonos, after the bronze original by Praxiteles in 350 BC, Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, H.: 167 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Ill.3. Torso of Apollo, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung Berlin, Germany.

## Provenance:



Ill. 4. Our torso in a private property of Allier (France) in the 1990s.