

TORSO OF APOLLO

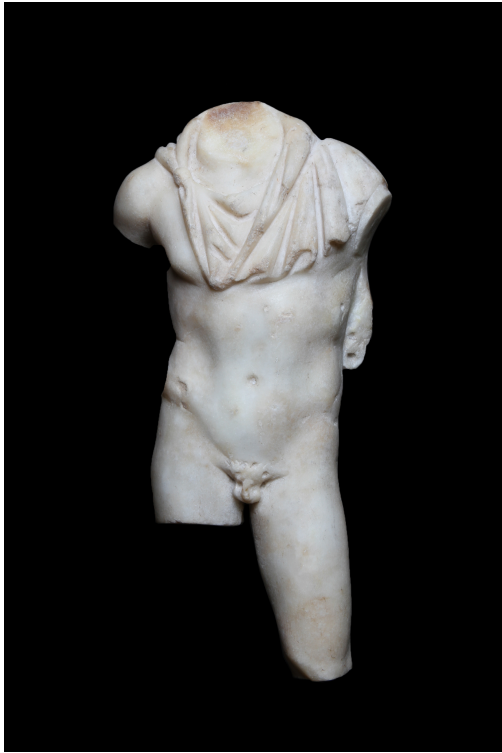
ROMAN, 1ST-2ND CENTURY AD
MARBLE

HEIGHT: 35 CM.

WIDTH: 14 CM.

DEPTH: 8 CM.

PROVENANCE:
FORMERLY PART OF A EUROPEAN
COLLECTION DATING FROM THE 17TH
CENTURY, AS INDICATED BY THE
RESTORATION TECHNIQUES.
THEN PART OF A FORMER BELGIAN
PRIVATE COLLECTION UNTIL 2019.



Carved from beautiful white marble, this Roman torso depicts a young nude man with a slender figure and carefully balanced proportions.

The figure is represented standing in *contrapposto*, following a principle inherited from Classical Greek sculpture: the weight of the body rests primarily on one leg, while the other is freer and slightly relaxed. This distribution of weight creates a subtle displacement of the body's axes. The shoulders and hips are no longer perfectly

parallel; instead, they respond to one another through opposing inclinations that give the body an impression of movement. The pose thus avoids the rigid frontality of an archaic figure and introduces the discreet torsion of the body characteristic of the Classical tradition and its Roman adaptations. Preserved from the neck down to part of the legs, our torso displays a youthful and ideally proportioned anatomy. The upper part of the body is particularly remarkable for the presence of a *chlamys*, a short cloak characteristic of ancient statuary, which envelops the shoulders and falls over the pectorals in broad folds. The drapery is handled with considerable breadth: the folds, at times deep and sharply incised, at others softer, follow the lines of the body and reinforce the movement of the figure. The contrast between the smooth surfaces of the flesh and the more animated treatment of the textile testifies to the sculptor's skill and contributes fully to the aesthetic effect of the work. The abdomen, meanwhile, is softly modelled, with a discreet indication of the abdominal musculature. The navel is delicately marked at the center of this surface, characterised by gentle transitions, while the slightly rounded belly naturally continues into the line of the pelvis. The sculptor therefore does not seek to convey heroic or athletic musculature, but rather the expression of ideal masculine beauty, characteristic of representations of youthful deities in the Greco-Roman tradition.

The lower part of the sculpture preserves the beginning of the thighs down to the left knee. The weight-bearing leg appears more firmly engaged with the axis of the body, while the other would have been released by the transfer of weight, thereby accentuating the



contrapposto and the overall movement of the figure.

On the back, the drapery forms a diagonal running from the right shoulder down to the left hip. The folds, thick and deeply worked, form a mass animated by a subtle interplay of light and shadow. The spine is particularly well indicated, delicately emphasising the dorsal muscles without ever seeking excessive anatomical definition. The buttocks are rounded and softly modelled, contributing to the overall balance of the body.

The surface of the marble displays a brown patina, attesting to its ancient character.



The identification of the figure cannot be established with complete certainty, owing to the loss of the head and attributes. It may, however, represent the god Apollo. He is frequently depicted in the guise of a young man of ideal beauty, characterised by a slender body, harmonious proportions and discreetly suggested musculature. These characteristics are present in our sculpture. The hypothesis of an Apollo therefore

appears the most plausible, although certain representations of Dionysus may display a comparable appearance.



Stylistically, this sculpture bears witness to the profound influence of Greek art on Roman sculpture. During the Imperial period, Roman artists adopted and adapted models created by the great Greek sculptors of the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The *contrapposto*, the supple modelling and the idealisation of the body bring our torso particularly close to the tradition of the 4th century BC, notably the aesthetic associated with Praxiteles and his circle.

Several works help to illuminate this affinity with representations of Apollo. The torso may in particular be compared with the tradition of the Apollo Belvedere (ill. 1), a famous Roman sculptural type derived from a Greek bronze original, generally attributed to Leochares. The statue preserved in the Vatican likewise presents a youthful god with a slender body, animated by a pronounced *contrapposto* and accompanied by drapery that emphasises the movement of the figure.

A comparison may also be drawn with the Pythian Apollo (ill. 2), another type depicting the god in the guise of an idealised young man. Another parallel is provided by a statue dated to AD 96–192, preserved in the Baths of Diocletian at the Museo Nazionale Romano in Rome (ill. 3), in which the drapery is arranged in a similar manner. Finally, a Roman fragment of the 2nd century AD depicting Apollo, preserved at the National Museum of the Union in Alba Iulia, Romania, offers an interesting relief parallel (ill. 4). The figure is likewise associated with a chlamys, demonstrating the enduring presence of this attribute in representations of the god during the Roman period.

Our torso comes from an old European collection, where it had been since the 17th century, as indicated by the restoration techniques. It subsequently entered a Belgian collection, where it remained until 2019.

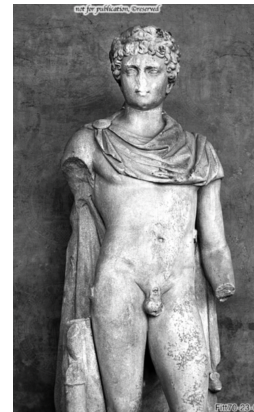
Comparatives:



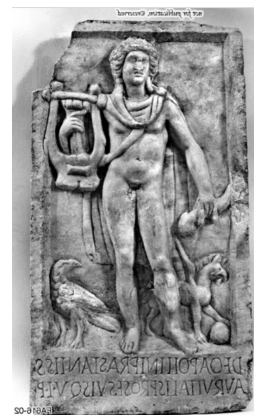
Ill. 1. Apollo Belvedere, after a bronze original by Leochares (c. 330 BC), Hadrianic–Antonine period, H.: 224 cm, Museo Pio Clementino, Vatican.



Ill. 2. Statue of the Pythian Apollo, Roman, 1st–2nd century AD, marble, Museo Torlonia, inv. no. 370.



Ill. 3. Statue of a young man representing Apollo, Roman, AD 96–192, marble, H.: 214 cm, Baths of Diocletian, Museo Nazionale Romano, inv. no. 1076611.



Ill. 4. Fragment depicting Apollo, Roman, 2nd century AD, marble, H.: 51 cm, National Museum of the Union, Alba Iulia, Romania.