

# TORSO OF APOLLO

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

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HEIGHT: 61 CM.

WIDTH: 30 CM.

DEPTH: 22 CM.

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*PROVENANCE:*  
*SOLD BY SOTHEBY'S LONDON, 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY*  
*1969, LOT 108.*  
*PURCHASED BY J. EISENBERG AT THE*  
*ABOVEMENTIONED SALE.*  
*ACQUIRED BY THE*  
*FORT WAYNE MUSEUM OF ART IN 1971.*  
*DEACCESSIONED BY THE FORT WAYNE*  
*MUSEUM OF ART IN 1996.*  
*SOLD BY SOTHEBY'S NEW YORK ON*  
*17 DECEMBER 1996, LOT 61.*  
*THEN IN THE COLLECTION OF ROBERT*  
*NOAKES.*



Sculpted from a magnificent white marble, this Roman torso represents a partly nude, muscled young man. Two wavy locks of hair lie over his right collarbone while a chlamys rests upon his left shoulder. The short mantle, typically worn in ancient Greece, covers the back of our young man and

envelops his upper legs. The folds, which are very accurately fashioned, are deeply carved and flow down his back, covering his buttocks and wrapping around his hips while leaving his genitals uncovered. There is a dynamic opposition between the arched folds that follow the curves of his body and the vertical folds that run down his legs.



The fabric closely hugs the shapes of his body, creating a kind of textural rhythm and hinting at the position of his legs underneath. One is straight, the other bent. Although his arms are now missing, their positions can partly be guessed. The right arm, most likely slightly raised, must have been performing some kind of action – perhaps holding an attribute – while his left arm, more relaxed, seems to have rested along his flank. The quality with which his muscles were represented truly makes this bust stand out. His pectorals are prominent and well defined



while a central vertical line, running from his neck to his navel, follows the axis of the body and accentuates the young man's athletic physique. His abdominals are finely sculpted and converge towards a delicately carved navel. His obliques, which are very distinct, descend diagonally towards his groin, adding to the sensuality of the body. This torso thus evokes the ideal of male beauty as defined by Greek classical tradition and as reinterpreted by Roman sculptors. As for his posture, he exhibits a classic *contrapposto*: the weight of his body was probably resting on his straight right leg (now missing), while the other leg would have been relaxed, resulting in the natural twist of his torso.



On the right side of the drapery, two visible hollows lead us to believe that the statue could have included a support element – possibly a tree trunk or a decorative structure – frequently used in Graeco-Roman statuary to stabilise figures that used *contrapposto*. By its formal and stylistic characteristics, this torso is in line with traditional imperial Roman statuary from the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The lack of preserved attributes makes it difficult to precisely identify the figure. However, several iconographic clues – the

draping of the chlamys, the youthfulness of the body, the elegance of the *contrapposto* and the softness of the sculpting – point to it being a representation of Apollo or Dionysus, who were both frequently depicted as young, beardless men with lithe, idealised bodies, sometimes simply clothed in a chlamys and adorned with now missing attributes (lyre, thyrsus, ivy wreath, etc.).



The fine-grained, slightly shiny marble exhibits a brown patina that attests to the passing of time.

The depiction of the drapery and the torso is reminiscent of a few noteworthy Graeco-Roman sculptures such as the group of Dionysus and a satyr, preserved at Burdur Archaeological Museum in Turkey, dated to between AD 160 and 180 (ill. 1), and that preserved at the Archaeological Museum of Tripoli (ill. 2). The sensual representation of the body, the wavy locks of hair and the god's posture, with his slightly tilted hips, are all commonalities. Another Dionysian figure, from the Albani collection, displays similar characteristics (ill. 3). Turning to Apollo types, again, several points invite comparison: the slight

*contrapposto*, the elegance of the torso and the accuracy of the depiction of the muscular groups recall some representations of Apollo such as that preserved at the Capitoline Museums (ill. 4) and the Roman copies of Apollo Citharoedus, particularly that of the British Museum (ill. 5-6). These statues share the same pursuit of idealisation, combining classical balance with grace.



Nevertheless, the joint of the right shoulder on our torso, which is slightly lowered, indicates that the arm was probably not raised above the head, as in the representations listed above. It must have been in an intermediate position, perhaps reaching ahead or up a little, but without any excessive tension. The most striking parallel thus remains the statue of Apollo discovered at the Roman theatre in Carthage and currently preserved at the National Bardo Museum (ill. 7) in Tunis. It portrays a Pythian Apollo, portrayed in his function of oracular god and vanquisher of the serpent Python in Delphi. The shaping of the anatomy, the depiction of the drapery and, above all, the general posture of our figure suggest that our sculpture could be an Apollo type in line with that iconographic

tradition. Finally, the Apollo at the Hermitage Museum (ill. 8) is another relevant reference. Its frontal position, masterful *contrapposto*, the elegance of the drapery clinging to his left flank and the presence of a support element that seems to prolong the drapery confirm its place in the iconographic tradition.

Our sculpture is from the collection of Jérôme Martin Eisenberg, a famous antiquary and scholar and the owner of the Royal-Athena Galleries in New York. Working in the 1950s, Eisenberg distinguished himself as both a trader and the editor-in-chief of *Minerva*, the archaeology magazine. He was also a founding member of the International Association of Dealers in Ancient Art (IADAA), playing a central role in disseminating and providing expertise on classical antiquities. The piece was sold at Sotheby's London on 1 July 1969 as lot 108 and the catalogue corresponding to the sale was entitled "Catalogue of Egyptian, Western Asiatic, Greek, Etruscan and Roman Antiquities, also Islamic Pottery and Metalwork" (ill. 9). Our magnificent torso was then acquired by Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Indiana, and subsequently sold at Sotheby's New York on 17 December 1996 as lot 61 (ill. 10). It then joined the private collection of Robert Noakes, a renowned designer whose career spanned five decades. He was the founder of Robert Noakes Design in Toronto and played a key role in the development of contemporary design in Canada and across the globe. His interest in ancient art was apparent in his distinct aesthetic sensitivity and his deep commitment to classical artistic heritage.

Comparatives:



Ill. 1. Statue group of Dionysus and a satyr, Roman, AD 160–180, marble, H.: 262 cm.

Burdur Archaeological Museum, Turkey,

Ill. 2. Statue of Dionysus with a satyr, Roman, marble, Archaeological Museum of Tripoli, Libya, inv. no. 1107831.



Ill. 3. Statue of Dionysus, Roman, 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, marble, H.: 164 cm. Albani collection, Rome, Italy, inv. no. 757.

Ill. 4. Statue of Apollo, Greek, 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, marble, H.: 229 cm. Capitoline Museums, Rome, inv. no. 628.



Ill. 5. Apollo Cithardestes, Roman, AD 175–200, marble, H.: 110 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid, inv. no. E000155.



Ill. 6. Apollo Citharoedus, Roman copy of a Hellenistic original from ca 200–150 BC, marble, H.: 228 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1861.0725.1.

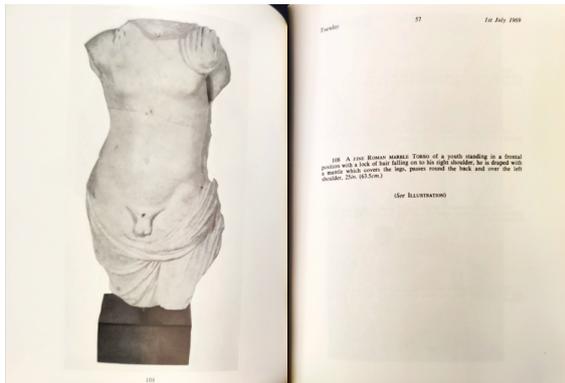


Ill. 7. Apollo, Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble, H.: 172 cm. Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. GR-1747.

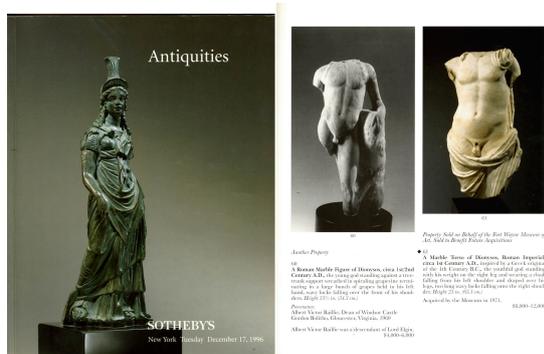


Ill. 8. Statue of Apollo from ancient Carthage, Roman, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble. National Bardo Museum, Tunis, Tunisia.

Provenance:



Ill. 9. Sotheby's London catalogue, 1 July 1969, "Egyptian, Western Asiatic, Greek, Etruscan and Roman Antiquities, also Islamic Pottery and Metalwork" – lot 108.



Ill. 10. Sotheby's New York catalogue, 17 December 1996, "Antiquities" – lot 61.