

Rome, mid-16th century

Apollo Reclining
Gilt bronze

Dimensions: h. 13.4 x 24 x 10.5 cm (5¼ x 9½ x 4⅛ in)

Overall including the wood socle: h. 21 x 28 x 12 cm (8¼ x 11 x 4¾ in)

Reclining and partially draped, *Apollo* here evokes the similar pose of the antique marble figure representing the River God *Tigris* in the Musei Vaticani, Rome. The exact origins of this marble and of its restoration are obscure,[1] though it seems to have arrived at the Belvedere either under Pope Julius II (1503-13) or Clement VII (1523-34).[2] By the time that Maarten van Heemskerck drew it during his visit to Italy of 1532-36/7,[3] it had been restored to its present appearance and was functioning as part of a fountain,[4] said by Vasari to have been designed by Michelangelo.[5] The River God's left arm is bent to support him, while his right elbow rests on his upper thigh and his right forearm is raised slightly to hold an urn on his leg just above the knee.

Reclining in the opposite direction, the present *Apollo* rests the hand of his raised left arm on top of his lyre, balanced vertically on his upper thigh. His right elbow rests on a tree stump, while his extended hand languidly fondles his quiver. His eyes gaze upwards as he looks over his right shoulder. His right knee is raised and his feet are crossed at the ankles. He wears elaborately strapped sandals *all'antica* that extend half way up his calves.

Apollo's pose reappears in reverse in a drawing in Princeton, The Art Museum (inv. 44.263) of a *Young Woman Reclining Holding a Spherical Object* attributed to Marcantonio Raimondi c. 1501-03.[6] This drawing resembles the *Apollo* in a number of details, such as the manner in which the locks of hair curl and fall to the shoulders, the form of the straps on the sandals and the crevice-like folds of the drapery beneath the legs. Her languid expression and the gesture of her left hand almost mirror *Apollo*. The drawing persuasively evokes the appearance of the now missing pendant to the present bronze, thus indicating that the figure represented is most likely Venus.[7] While Wendy Steadman Sheard has proposed that the "spherical object" held by the *Young Woman Reclining* … might be a water jug, it would seem more probable that it instead represents the moon, one of the attributes of Apollo's twin

sister Artemis, also known as Diana.

The form of the present statuette indicates that it was intended to adorn a piece of furniture, and gilt bronzes are known to have been used in this way in Italy as early as the mid-sixteenth century. A cabinet bearing the emblem of Philip II of Spain, signed and dated “IOANES GIAMIN FECIT IN ROMA 1561”, is surmounted by a pair of gilt bronze reclining male figures on the scrolled pediment.[8] Furniture makers in Milan and Brescia collaborated with local armourers such as Lucio Piccinino to produce fine cabinets that were exquisitely decorated with damascene in gold and silver and iron, and these prestigious objects often also bore gilt bronzes.[9] Such a *stipo*, with gilt bronze figures placed in niches on the cabinet, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, is dated to the second half of the sixteenth century.[iii] Reclining gilt bronze figures are also to be found on top of another *stipo* in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, signed and dated by Giuseppe de Vico in 1567.[10] The finest such surviving Roman cabinet, created for Pope Sixtus V in about 1585, is the magnificent Sixtus Cabinet at Stourhead, Wiltshire.[11] Made of ebony, it is adorned with many pietra dura plaques and gilt bronze statuettes and appliqués. It was bought in Rome by Henry Hoare and is recorded in an inventory of Stourhead of 1754.[12]

The *Apollo* is most likely to have been made by an artist familiar with antique sculpture recently unearthed in Rome, as well as the modern techniques of bronze casting and gilding that were being developed in northern Italy.[13] The present statuette bears a pronounced resemblance in some details to a small gilt bronze figure of *Paris* in the Rhode Island School of Design, described as sixteenth-century, North Italian.[14] These include the modeling of the body, the distinctive definition of the aureoles around the nipples and similar sandals. Although they are evidently not by the same hand, the sculptor of the *Apollo* was clearly influenced by north Italian *bronzisti* working at that time.[15]

More closely related however, particularly in facture, are some casts of a *Seated Hercules* by the “Ciechanowiecki Master” who was probably active in Rome in the late sixteenth century.[16] A particularly fine example of the *Seated Hercules* in the Quentin Collection is, like the present *Apollo*, also thinly cast and very finely tooled, and the base is similarly highly worked. While the *Seated Hercules* and the *Apollo* were not necessarily created by the same sculptor, or even at the same time, it does appear that they were cast by workshops using very similar methods of production and finishing.

1. In 1880, Adolf Michaelis argued that it reached the Belvedere by 1513 in a fragmentary state, soon after which it was restored as a complete statue which could be identified as the River God, Tigris. Cited in C. Hülsen & H. Egger, *Die Römischen Skizzenbucher von Marten van Heemskerk im königlichen kupferstichkabinett zu Berlin*, Berlin, 1913, vol. II, p. 17, fol. 28.

2. F. Haskell & N. Penny, *Taste and the Antique. The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900*, New Haven & London, Haskell & Penny 1981, p. 10.

3. Hülsen & Egger 1913, vol. II, p. 17, fol. 28 & p. 33, fol. 62. For a large reproduction of the drawing see B.H. Wiles, *The Fountains of Florentine Sculptors and their Followers from Donatello to Bernini,* New York, 1975, fig. 62.

4. For its context among contemporary Roman fountains, see E.B. MacDougall, "*L'Ingegnoso Artifizio*: Sixteenth Century Garden Fountains in Rome" in "*Fons Sapientiae. Renaissance Garden Fountains*", Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, vol. V, 1978, p. 90 and pl. lll, fig. 5.

5. V. Bush, *The Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento*, Ph.D. thesis, Columbia 1967, this ed. New York & London, 1976, p. 69, n. 65 & fig. 58.

6. F. Gibbons, *Catalogue of Italian Drawings in the Art Museum*, Princeton University, Princeton, 1977, vol. I, p. 163, no. 505 & vol. II, fig. 505, cited in *Antiquity in the Renaissance*, exh. cat., ed. W.S. Sheard, Northampton MA., Smith College Museum of Art, 6 April – 6 June 1978, no. 18; *Bologna e l'Umanesimo 1490-1510*, exh. cat., eds. M. Faietti & K. Oberhuber, Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale; Vienna, Albertina, 1988.

7. See note 2.

8. Given to the Monasterio de Guadalupe (near Cáceres, Spain) by Philip II in 1589, where today it is to be found on the high altar. A. González-Palacios, *Arredi e Ornamenti alla Corte di Roma, 1560-1795*, Milan, 2004, pp. 32-33.

9. A. González-Palacios, *Il Tempio del Gusto. Le arti decorative in Italia fra classicismi e barocco. Il Granducato di Toscana e gli Stati Settentrionali,* Milan, 1986, vol. I, p. 251.

10. Ibid., vol. II, fig. 530.

11. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 251-252 & pl. XXXVIII.

12. S. Swyfen Jervis & D. Dodd, *Roman Splendour English Arcadia*, National Trust, 2015, see pp. 62-107.

13. Ibid., p. 198.

14. It is intriguing to note that the posthumous inventory (1542) of Isabella d'Este's Grotta and studiolo includes "*un Apollo col suo instrumento*" among the "*Cose di Brongio sopra il Cornisotti*", see Allison 1993/4, p. 304. "The Bronzes of Pier Jacopo Alari-Bonacolsi, called Antico", *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien,* vol 89/90, neue Folge, LIII/LIV, 1993/94, pp. 35-310, p. 304.

15. Rhode Island School of Design, Museum of Art (inv. 73.079, h. 17.7 cm), see Sheard 1978, no. 34. A gilt bronze statuette described as "*Venus Prudentia or Caritas*" in Cleveland, Museum of Art (inv. 48.171, h. 18.3 cm), is comparable to the Paris, although the base of the bronze is a later addition, and the left hand and its attribute have been restored see W. Wixom, *Renaissance Bronzes from Ohio Collections*, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975, no. 109; and Sheard 1978, no. 38.

16. See P. Wengraf in, M. Leithe-Jasper & P. Wengraf, *European Bronzes from the Quentin Collection*, New York, The Frick Collection, 28 September 2004 – 2 January 2005, pp. 246-251, no. 26.

Literature:

Facture:

A fire gilt, thin walled lost wax cast, the base metal having a high copper content. The surface of the bronze is lightly wire brushed and the highly defined surface detail was mainly modeled in the wax.