

STATUETTE OF A DANCING SATYR

Hellenistic, 2nd-1st century B.C.

Bronze

H: 15.3 cm (6 in)

Reference: 7801



The figure represents a young beardless, naked satyr, mostly recognizable to the elongated and pointed shape of his ears and to the panther's skin draped on his left forearm: this skin is one of Dionysos usual attributes. As the god of wine, satyrs and maenads accompany him constantly in his joyful processions and his excessive drinking, and occasionally his acolytes are dressed with a similar skin. The satyr stands upright and lithely moves on tiptoe, as if he were dancing: the weight of his body rests on the left leg, outstretched forward, while the right foot barely touches the ground. The movement of his arms is very loose (the right one is raised and the left one lowered) and his hands are open with the fingers extended, but no attributes indicate the exact activity of the satyr; maybe was he simply dancing or playing castanets.

Despite the position, which recalls certain figures pouring wine from a jug (right hand raised) into a phiale (left hand lowered) to make a libation or simply to serve a drink to guests at a banquet, the impression of grace and agility emanating from this work seems to exclude such a static activity; the position of the satyr hands would also lead to a similar conclusion.

Stylistically, it is necessary to bring attention to the remarkable quality of this statuette, which has an excellent parallel in a figurine from the former Pomerance Collection: the body's proportions are correct; the attitude of the satyr, whose body makes a quarter-turn on its vertical axis (this movement is amplified by the position of the head turned to the left), is particularly realistic and well rendered; the legs and torso musculature is richly detailed; the face is very expressive; the hair is abundant and highly elaborated.

CONDITION

This full cast statue is whole and in excellent condition; the left

forearm, broken, has been reattached. The surface of the metal, of dark brownishblack color, is smooth and very well preserved.

PROVENANCE

Ex- Belgian private collection.

PUBLISHED

Sotheby's Antiquities, New York, December 8, 2000, n. 110.

EXHIBITED

Brussels, Tour et Taxi 2006, n. 18.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

D.G. MITTEN – S.F. DOERINGER, *Master Bronzes from the Classical World*, Mainz / Rhine, 1968, p. 128, n. 130. *The Pomerance Collection of Ancient Art*, New York, 1966, p. 110, n. 127.

On satyrs, see:

Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae VIII Supp. (LIMC), Zurich, 1997, s.v. Silenoi, pp. 1108-1133.