

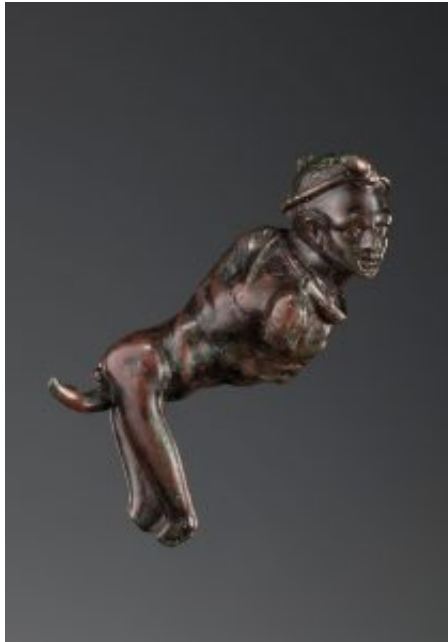
# STATUETTE OF A NUDE DANCER

Greek-Hellenistic, 2nd century B.C.

Bronze

Height: 8.3 cm

Reference: 20825



This solid bronze cast statuette is a fine example of Hellenistic realistic art; the craftsman chose to represent an image of daily life that differs a lot from the major mythological scenes or the representations of famous figures that are so widespread in Greek art. The figure represents a street dancer, entirely nude and so astonishingly thin that he looks as though he has a serious illness or disability of the upper chest. He only wears a pointed cap held in place by a metal band, which appears to be decorated with a diadem just above the forehead. An impressive necklace, fastened by a strap, adorns his neck.

Technically and stylistically, this statuette, in spite of its reduced size, is depicted with a remarkable precision and accuracy, both in the observation and in the rendering of the movements and anatomical details. The dramatic, unnatural position of the figure probably results from the energetic and flowing movements of the dance. He looks totally focused on the rhythm of the movements and indifferent to his surroundings. The legs are bent and crossed, and the tips of his feet only would have touched the ground. The torso is bent forward, the shoulders and the head are slightly turned to the right. In the frenzy of the dance, his enormous genitals are caught between his legs.

The age of the man cannot be easily determined, but the large, smooth forehead and the facial features suggest that he is rather elderly.

He is a hunchback with a large deformity of the chest, which has a huge circumference. Perhaps he suffered from rickets in his youth. In their remarks on such pathologies in ancient art, M.D. Grmek and D. Gourevitch have noted that their frequency in the Hellenistic minor arts is well above average compared to the number of people who were actually afflicted with these deformities. The two authors explain this phenomenon through the apotropaic significance and good luck associated with sufferers of such handicaps.

Typologically, this piece belongs to a group of very homogeneous bronze figurines whose artistic quality may vary. They are generally dated to the Hellenistic period and often attributed to the Alexandrian school.

## CONDITION

Arms and lower legs now lost. Reddish brown surface of the bronze partially covered with a green and black patina.

## PROVENANCE

Ex-Austrian private collection, acquired in 1992; acquired on the German art market in 2007.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

REEDER E.D. (ed.), *Hellenistic Art in the Walters Art Gallery*, Baltimore, 1988, pp. 141-143, nos. 56-57.

SNOWDEN Jr. F.M., *Iconographical Evidence on the Black Populations in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, in VERCOUTTER J., *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, Vol. 1: *From the Pharaohs to the Fall of the Roman Empire*, Cambridge (Massachusetts)-London, 1991, fig. 297-298.

On deformities of the chest and dorsal spine, see:

GRMEK M.D. and GOUREVITCH D., *Les maladies dans l'art antique*, Paris, 1998, pp. 199-219.