

Monumental Torso of Hermes

Roman

1st - 2nd A.D.

Marble

H: 82cm

Perhaps a depiction of Hermes, this Roman marble statue typifies the high-point of Classical sculpture. Slightly leaning to the left. with the right hip bearing down on to the (now missing) leg, he stands in a carefully articulated contrapposto pose – an artistic move developed by the ancient Greeks for their monumental bronze statues and used throughout the Roman period to produce kinetic and enigmatic sculpture. Prior to the development of contrapposto, statues were designed be viewed frontally. A figure in contrapposto is dynamic enough that it can be shown to advantage from all angles and this is exemplified in this torso, where the curve of the spine and the bed of the hips are clearly delineated. One shoulder is draped with a chlamys, a short cloak worn over the shoulder and often the sole item of clothing for messengers and young boys. It is an attribute of Hermes, the messenger god, and helps to tentatively identify the torso, as is the case with the 'Hermes Richelieu' in the Louvre Museum, Paris and the Hermes/Mercury from the Andros Farnese collection, in the British Museum. The pose and styling can also be found in the canons of Roman sculpture, as catalogued by Salomon Reinach 'Répertoire de la Statuaire Grecque et Romaine' (Tome 1, p. 364, p. 366, p. 367).

Literature:

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