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**ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES LONG-TERM LOAN OF
STATUE OF YOUNG DIONYSOS**

**Rare Bronze Sculpture from Antiquity Now Installed
in the Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Art**

The Art Institute of Chicago is very pleased to announce the long-term loan of one of the very few existing large-scale bronze sculptures from antiquity in North America. The *Statue of Young Dionysos*, dating from 100 B.C. to A.D. 100, stands four and one-half feet tall and is a superb and rare example of bronze sculpture from the classical era. Only a small number of bronzes survive from this time, in part because bronze was often subsequently melted down for armor, tableware, coins, or new sculpture better suited to then-contemporary tastes. The condition, realism, technical prowess, and delicacy of this sculpture make it the most significant addition to the Art Institute's classical galleries ever, according to Karen Manchester, the chair and curator of ancient art in the Department of Ancient and Byzantine Art, who coordinated the loan, research, and installation of the sculpture.



"Large-scale bronze sculptures are considered the highest artistic and technical achievement in antiquity," said Douglas Druick, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the museum.

"However, few have survived the vicissitudes of time. That the Art Institute of Chicago is able to display this magnificent, full-length, and remarkably complete bronze *Statue of Young Dionysos*

is due to the extraordinary generosity of a friend of the museum, to whom we are deeply grateful. The statue now anchors the museum's new Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Art, welcoming visitors to our presentation of art from the ancient Mediterranean and underscoring the museum's commitment to showcasing the finest examples of creative expressions from around the world."

The son of Zeus, Dionysos was the Greek god of wine and theater. He and his cult were celebrated widely with festivals and performances throughout the Mediterranean, and representations of Dionysos appeared in both public and private places, including temples and homes. This sculpture depicts the deity as an idealized nude youth in a relaxed pose, the weight of his body supported by his left leg. His right arm is raised to support perhaps a bunch of grapes or a wine cup; his left may have held a staff topped with a pinecone. Very realistically rendered, the sculpture was originally the color of deep golden bronze before acquiring its green patina. Analysis suggests that the whites of the eyes were formed with silver-toned metal, and his lips were inlaid with copper, which was also used to form his nipples.

The sculpture has been known since the 1960s, but only in the last two decades has it been the subject of extensive study. It was most likely made between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D., originating in western Asia. Research has revealed that the *Statue of Young Dionysos* is the result of remarkably sophisticated techniques in metalwork. The bronze was cast very thinly, and x-rays show that a bronze patch on the figure's right shoulder blade was in fact crafted from a fragment of an ancient Persian bronze bowl with an antelope incised on the inside surface.

Scholars agree that "classical bronze statues of this size and condition are exceedingly rare, and in America only a few are of this quality; it is a real coup for the Art Institute to be able to exhibit this one," as J. Michael Padgett, curator of Ancient art at Princeton University, related. The statue is also a significant contribution to our knowledge of bronze sculpture from the era. Carol C. Mattusch, the Mathy Professor of Art History at George Mason University and author of *The Fire of Hephaistos: Large Classical Bronzes from North American Collections*, said:

No other ancient bronze reveals such a wealth of information about its past. A close look reveals how it was cast in separate pieces and then joined, and its corroded surface retains the imprint of the fabric in which the statue was wrapped as well as sandy inclusions, and, more recently, a repair made from part of an antique Luristan

bronze. It has preserved, inside and out, more information about its original life and later history than any other bronze in any North American collection.

John Twilley, an art conservation scientist who is involved in ongoing study and analysis of the statue, agreed that it has been “a wonderful and rare opportunity to study a Greek bronze of this scale. Each example is different and contributes to our understanding of the complex fabrication methods of ancient sculptors in the Greek world.” And Jasper Gaunt, curator of Greek and Roman art at Emory University's Michael C. Carlos Museum, declared that the:

Statue of Young Dionysos is among the most important additions to any American museum in the field of ancient art in a generation. Classical bronzes at this scale are just so few and far between. Like money, theatre, and democracy, ideal sculpture is one of the profoundly enduring contributions to all of our cultures from the classical world. How fortunate that this impressive statue, which has been improved by its recent conservation and research, has found a home in a universal museum where it can be exhibited in its proper context. To a collection that is already handsome, Dionysos makes a transformative contribution.

Statue of Young Dionysos is now on view in Gallery 150, the entrance to the Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Art at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Image credit: Hellenistic or Roman, Eastern Mediterranean. *Statue of Young Dionysos*, 100 B.C.-A.D. 100. Bronze, copper and silver (modern). 135.8 x 62 x 52 cm (54 x 24 1/2 x 20 in.). Anonymous loan, 1.2013. Photography by Richard Valencia.

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