

THE BARTHOLONI APHRODITE



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fine arts



BARTHOLONI APHRODITE

A fine Roman over life-size torso of Aphrodite of Knidos, circa 2nd century A.D.

Made of Carrara marble, 120 cm. (47 ¼ in.) high

Assembled from large fragments with 18th and 19th century repairs.

This imposing, yet delicate and sensuous, torso of the nude Aphrodite, encapsulates all that the goddess embodies; beauty, sensuality and reserve. Standing contraposed, her weight is resting on her right leg, her left is bent forwards, with her thighs pressed tightly together; she has firm, pert breasts, a marked waist and a pronounced belly button. Her left hand, now missing, would have been holding gathered drapery, and lightly resting on a hydria or loutrophoros. Her right hand would have been held up to hide her pubic area, to preserve her modesty.

Thus, this statue demonstrates the perfect idealised feminine form; capturing the exquisiteness and harmony of the female body, as the goddess of love is caught in the act of preparing for a ritual bath to restore her purity.

The statue's form is based on the depiction of the divinity by the Greek sculptor Praxiteles, created around 360 B.C. It is thought that Praxiteles used the courtesan Phryné, rumoured to be his lover, as the model for the original sculpture. According to Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural Histories*, Praxiteles created two versions of the statue, one draped and one nude. When first revealed, the later statue was considered shocking as it was the first time the goddess, or indeed any female, had been represented entirely naked. It was swiftly rejected by the citizens of Kos, who had commissioned it for their sanctuary and instead, they purchased the draped statue. Subsequently, the naked piece by Praxiteles was acquired by the city of Knidos in Asia Minor and thus acquired its name, the Aphrodite of Knidos. The Praxiteles piece became the blueprint for generations of Greek and Roman artists depicting the female form, and the Bartholoni Aphrodite reflects the delicacy of Praxiteles's original.

VENTE AUX ENCHÈRES

de l'ameublement et objets d'art du

CHATEAU BARTHOLONI

Domaine « Sans-Souci »

Route de Suisse, VERSOIX près GENEVE

comprenant entre autres

- MOBILIER :** Belles commodes, bureaux-commodes, sièges estampillés, tables, nombreuses glaces époques Louis XIV, XV, XVI, Empire. Lanternes. Les XV. Stalles d'époque Renaissance, plusieurs très beaux lits anciens dont un vénitien.
- ARGENTERIE :** Flambeaux, candélabres, pièces de forme, oiseau chantant, etc., XVIIe, XVIIIe, XIXe siècles.
- SCULPTURES :** Grande statue romaine d'Aphrodite, IIe siècle, type « cœlidien ». Marbre et terre cuite de Houdon. Bronze de Clodion, Barye. Statues en bois polyèdre, médaillon marbre époque Renaissance.
- TABLEAUX :** Ecoles flamande, hollandaise, française, genevoise, XVIIe, XVIIIe et XIXe siècles. Grands panneaux décoratifs.
- ARMES :** Belle armure complète, vouges, pertuisanes, épée à deux mains XVIIe siècle.
- TAPIS :** Tapis anciens et semi-anciens.
- PORCELAINES :** Chine, Japon et divers. Paire grands vases Chine, anciens. Splendides candélabres, torchères, vases lumineux. Babelots. Nombreux poufs, meubles de jardin, bouteillers, billard et divers.

CATALOGUE SUR DEMANDE

EXPOSITION

Vendredi, samedi, dimanche et lundi, soit du 20 au 23 septembre 1957, de 10 h. 30 à 12 h., de 14 h. à 19 h., et le soir de 20 h. 30 à 22 h. 30

VENTE

Mercredi 25, jeudi 26 septembre dès 14 h. précises, vendredi 27 septembre, de 10 h. à 12 h. et dès 14 h., et jour suivant s'il y a lieu

Direction de la vente :

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par le ministère de

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Adresse télégraphique :
Amanjuno - Versoix

Téléphone pendant la vente :
(022) 8 56 65

As with the original Aphrodite of Knidos, this stunning piece is intended to be viewed and admired from all angles, to appreciate fully its grace and sensual beauty. In antiquity it would have been positioned to allow viewers to appreciate the line and form of the statue, whilst marvelling at the sculptor's skill and vision.

Of the known copies of the Aphrodite of Knidos the closest to the Bartholoni statue is located in the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris. Originally it was owned by the French neoclassical artist Ingres, who donated it 1841 prior to taking up his directorship of the Villa Medici in Rome. As with the Bartholoni Aphrodite, the Beaux-Arts version displays the distinctive Praxitelean S-shaped curve to the spine.

Carrara marble

Carrara marble's hue ranges from white to blueish-grey, it is famed for its high quality and was quarried near the city of Carrara, located at the northern most tip of modern-day Tuscany. The site has produced more marble than any other on earth, highly prized since antiquity, the quarries continue to be worked to this day.

The Bartholoni Aphrodite has delicate light greyish veins running through the marble. The left thigh has a rectangular tenon, originally part of a support, which was probably a simple column, or perhaps in the form of a jar or dolphin.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS BARTHOLONI AND HENRI EMMANUEL SMEETS

Jean-Francois Bartholoni (1796-1881) was born in Geneva, in 1796. His family originally left Florence to escape religious persecution. As a young man he moved to Paris in 1814, taking up a position with the *Banque Lapanouse*. He quickly made his mark in the financial world, becoming a French citizen, and a distinguished banker and economist. In the 1820s he was sufficiently wealthy to establish his own bank in partnership with his brother. Through his friendship with Louis-Antoine Beaunier, a pioneer of the French railways, he became closely involved with the development of the rail network and the creation of the *Compagnie des chemins de fer Paris-Orleans*. Indeed, he became the first president of the company's board, overseeing the construction of the Geneva-Lyon line and the unification of the Swiss rail network. Jean-François' largesse saw him financing the establishment of the *Conservatoire de Musique de Genève* in 1835, the oldest Swiss musical institution, which still stands on the Place Neuve. Its façade is adorned with niches to house copies of ancient sculptures, reflecting its patron's tastes. Bartholoni's own extensive art collection was housed in the magnificent family Château of Sans-Souci, at Versoix, where the Bartholoni Aphrodite greeted visitors at the foot of the magnificent stairs. The statue is clearly visible in contemporary images of the entrance hall, appearing complete because at that time it still retained its nineteenth century restorations.

Henri E. Smeets (1905-1980) was originally a collector of 20th century sculpture and paintings. He himself said that his first experience with collecting art was lithographs; indeed until 1950, his collection featured only sculpture and modern paintings. It was only after the unintentional acquisition of an Etruscan bronze and a Cycladic idol that he discovered the world of ancient art; subsequently he became fascinated by the peoples and cultures of antiquity. His aim became to acquire 'something', preferably figurative, small, regardless of whether stone, terracotta or bronze, of each culture, period and people on earth from the Neolithic to today, relishing and reflecting the craftsmanship and artistry of the last eight millennia. Thus, Smeets acquired the exquisite Bartholoni Aphrodite to join his burgeoning collection.



Jean-François Bartholoni



Bibliothèque de Genève

Provenance

Collection of Jean-François Bartholoni (1796-1881), Château Sans-Souci, Versoix, Switzerland; where it appears, with extensive 18th century additions, in a photograph positioned at the foot of the entrance staircase. The restorations were subsequently removed.

An old inventory number '170' is carved into the statue's support, next to the proper left thigh, indicating that the piece could well have a much older provenance back to the 17th century or even earlier. Bartholoni's family originated from Florence, so it is possible the statue had been in his family's ownership for several generations prior to its arrival at Sans-Souci.

In 1926, the Château Sans-Souci and its contents briefly passed into the hands of Jacques-Arnold Amstutz. However, it swiftly then passed into the ownership of SI Sans-Souci, who sold off the estate and rented out the Château, including to the wealthy Liechtenstein family of Baron Karl Horst von Waldthausen. The baron's passion for automobile racing lead to the construction of a test track in the grounds.

In September 1957, the contents of the Château were disbursed at auction

Collection of Henri E Smeets, Weert (1905-1980), The Netherlands, prior to 1975

Publications

Announcement of the sale of the art collection of the Château Bartholoni (Domaine Sans-Souci), Journal de Genève, 16 August 1957

Auction advertisement by the Genevan auctioneers Ch. Amann and J.-P. Junot, Journal de Genève, 16 September 1957

E. Goden et al. A Private Collection: A Catalogue of the Henri Smeets Collection, Weert, 1975, no. 217

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