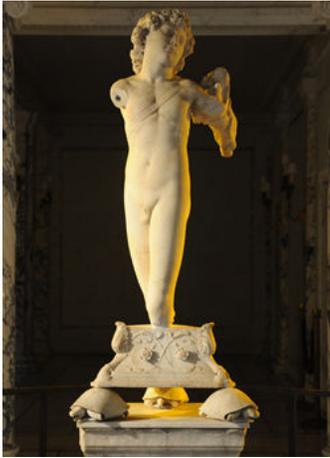


Michelangelo's Marble Boy Finds New Home at the Met

FRANCE LOANS RENAISSANCE STATUE TO MET MUSEUM FOR 10 YEARS



New York, September 30, 2009—The Marble Boy, a fragmentary marble statue of a nude young boy attributed to Michelangelo, will make its way across Fifth Avenue from the headquarters of the French Cultural Services in the United States to The Metropolitan Museum of Art. France has agreed to loan the intensely lyrical work, the only statue in the Western Hemisphere widely attributed to the Renaissance master, to the American museum for a 10-year period, as a symbol of the strong ties of friendship that continue to bind both countries, and to give the general public a better opportunity to view the marble.

The statue, identified variously as a young archer or a Cupid, has been the subject of some controversy but is increasingly viewed as having been carved by the famed Renaissance sculptor Michelangelo Buonarroti (Florence 1475 – Rome 1564) when he was a teenage prodigy. It has already been removed from its former location at 972 Fifth Avenue and will be displayed in the Metropolitan Museum's Vélaz Blanco Patio (1st floor) starting November 3, 2009 (with a press preview on November 2).

When the French government acquired the Payne Whitney Mansion (at 972 Fifth Avenue) in 1952 to serve as the headquarters of its Cultural Services, no one recalled the statue's illustrious pedigree, and it was included in the sale of the building. Indeed, the marble figure of a nude boy missing his arms and lower legs was an integral part of the building: it had been originally obtained by famed architect Stanford White to furnish the new home he was designing for Mr. and Mrs. Payne Whitney (a wedding gift from their uncle Oliver Payne). For decades, the Marble Boy stood anonymously in the building's entrance hall, above a fountain designed by Mr. White himself. In deference to Stanford White's vision, the Metropolitan Museum will provide the French government with a faithful reproduction of the statue, which will be displayed at 972 Fifth Avenue above the fountain as originally intended by Mr. White.

It was only in 1990 that the statue accidentally caught the attention of Metropolitan Museum Curator James Draper. Though he did not initially attribute the work to Michelangelo, Draper did quickly identify its Renaissance origin and believed it to be by a later Florentine sculptor familiar with the work of Bertoldo di Giovanni, Michelangelo's mentor. Seven years passed before New York University professor Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt ventured to suggest, in *The Burlington Magazine*, that the statue was by Michelangelo, thus creating quite a stir in scholarly circles. Brandt's attribution to the young Michelangelo was championed by Draper and endorsed by many scholars, but the academic community has not reached a complete consensus and is unlikely ever to do so.

This is not the first time the statue will be on exhibition. In 1999, it was the centerpiece of an exhibition on Michelangelo's formative years, "The Early Years of Michelangelo," at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, Italy. There its commonalities with works by Michelangelo's contemporaries and instructors, as well as with his own early marbles, were explored. It was then exhibited alone at the Louvre Museum in France, where a dissenting curator labeled it as a work of the later 16th century.

The installation at the Metropolitan Museum will include illustrated text panels outlining the marble's history and indicating various schools of thought; viewers can make up their minds accordingly. A variety of educational programs will accompany the exhibition. See www.metmuseum.org for details.

High-resolution photos:

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For more information:

www.frenchculture.org

www.metmuseum.org

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