c.350-340 BCE- Apollo Sauroctonus

Figure 1: Apollo Sauroctonos, Lourve Museum (Image from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Apollo_Saurocton_Louvre.jpg)

The statue Apollo Sauroctonus was first created by Praxiteles- an Athenian sculptor (Neudecker a, 2006). This sculptor, in fact, is arguably best known for another of his works- Aphrodite of Cnidos. Praxiteles was active in Athens approximately from 370 to 320 BCE and worked with both bronze and marble (Corso, 2004, p.114; Stewart, 2012; Plin. Nat. 36.4). Though, according to Pliny, he "excelled more particularly in marble" (Plin. Nat. 34.19). Despite his apparent prowess in the latter however, his works in bronze were still great enough to garner Roman copies as evidenced by Apollo Sauroctonus (Neudecker a, 2006).

It is hard to date much of Greek sculpture due to there being very few definitive dates attributed, therefore most scholars estimate the time period based on style (Neils, 2017, p.17). As time changed, so did the style and due to sculpture in the classical world being a major form of representation, it therefore could be found in all aspects of life (Neudecker b, 2006). This means that a change in style would certainly be noticeable due to the sheer majority of works created. Bronze, terracotta and marble were the main media in which sculptures were formed, with Praxiteles being recorded working successfully with two of the three (Neudecker b, 2006; Stewart, 2012).

This Apollo Sauroctonus attributed to Praxiteles due to the writing of Pliny within the Elder's Natural History (Neils, 2017, p. 21; Plin. Nat. 34.19). He names Praxiteles specifically as the creator, stating "he also made the youthful Apollo, known as the "Sauroctonos,"" (Plin. Nat. 34.19). The statue itself was unique in the fact that it represented Apollo in a manner that differed from the usual classical divine presentation (Neils, 2017, p.15; Astier, 2006). It was rare that the gods were presented as adolescents and therefore makes it easily identifiable (Neils, 2017, p.15). It is certainly in Pliny's words, a "youthful Apollo" and therefore has some scholars questioning whether the work was in fact not created in a different period than currently approximated (Plin. Nat. 34.19; Neils, 2017, p.21). However, this need not be true as it was typical of Praxiteles to prefer younger, and more youthful looking deities which presented a more graceful image (Neudecker a, 2006).

In present day, the original is lost (Astier, 2006). However, due to Roman copies being made in large numbers some reproductions still survive and it is therefore still possible to see how the original would have appeared (Neudecker a, 2006). An example of which, would be the one presented in the Lourve as it is considered to be one of the finest (Astier, 2006).

After Praxiteles (-395-330). Apollo Sauroctonus (lizard-killer). (Statue). Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Apollo_Saurocton_Louvre.jpg (Accessed 30 January 2020)

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