Roman

Young Athlete

(after a Greek prototype)

Italy, circa 20 BCE – 20 CE

Marble Sculpture

81cm x 33cm x 20cm

A marble sculpture of a young man, naked from mid-thigh, though to the top of this head. The sculpture has been mounted on a plinth approximately 1.2m high, in a room with other artefacts, some of which are displayed in glass cabinets all along the wall behind the sculpture.

From the info panel on the plinth – “ like many sculptures of this period, this is a copy of a Hellentistic Greek nude, the Hellentistic period c 300 – 50 BCE, which began after the conquests of Alexander the Great, symbolised a Golden Age of perfection. It exemplified the trend for increased realism.”

The marble shows signs of wear and age. Here and there are pocked, porous strips like lines in the marble on his legs and torso. Noticeable, light, marble crumbling occurs on his left pectoral.

The young athlete’s stance is as though he rests most of his weight on one leg; left hip bent slightly inwards and right hip cocked. Between his legs small hairless testicles. He is lean, with the suggestion of toned muscle-under-skin at his hips, waist and in on the abdomen below the rib cage.

The sculpture’s arms stop mid-bicep, his chin angles slightly downward, his marble eyes are colourless, unseeing. He has full lips and short curly hair and a hollowed-out section at his forehead above a flattened nose.