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History of Western Art
Part Two – The Classical and Medieval Worlds

Assignment Two – Exercise 2

Annotations of two sculptures – sculpture two – Roman

Bronze statue of the emperor Trebonianus Gallus
Imperial A.D. 251–253
H 241.3cm

Sources

The Met Museum. 2017. *Met Museum Art Collection*. [ONLINE] Available at:
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/247117>. [Accessed 10 July 2017].

ipernity. 2007. *Detail of the Head of the Monumental Bronze Statue of the Emperor Trebonianus Gallus in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, July 2007*. [ONLINE] Available at:
<http://www.ipernity.com/doc/laurieannie/24444159>. [Accessed 10 July 2017].

Khan academy. 2016. *Introduction to Roman Art*. [ONLINE] Available at:
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/roman/beginners-guide-rome/a/introduction-to-ancient-roman-art>. [Accessed 11 July 2017].

Proportions are not successful. Head is small in comparison to body. Arms look rather thin and weak in comparison to torso and legs.

Torso is thick and heavy, bordering on carrying too much weight. Muscle structure is, however, defined, so perhaps simply a man of sturdy build. Thighs are also thick and strong.

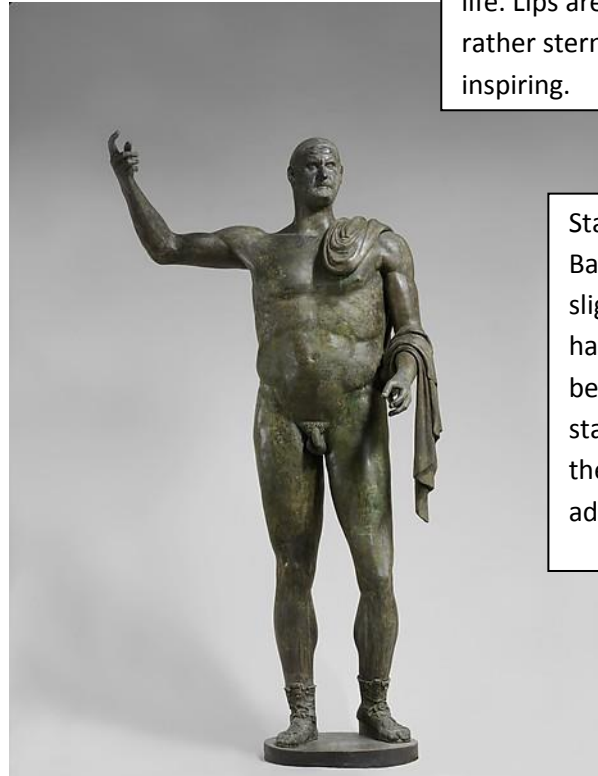
Pose is one of posturing, bold; a little pompous; celebrating a victory perhaps? Was there anything in the hands that has since been lost?

Feet are carefully depicted in open-toed boots.

Cast bronze, larger than lifesize.

Hair is roughly incised, short and tightly cropped. Beard also thickly incised, interesting use of directional incisions to indicate shape and movement.

Facial features are rather crudely drawn but without any attempt at idealisation or glamorising the subject. Furrowed, prominent brow overhangs close-set, 'wonky' eyes. Eyebrows are indicated with incised strokes that look representative as opposed to realistic. Nose is misaligned as though broken in real life. Lips are thin. Expression is rather stern but I don't find it inspiring.



Stance doesn't look entirely realistic. Balance of pose is with weight slightly on right foot but left foot has a rather clumsy-looking wedge below the heel, presumably to stabilise the structure. Slight tilt of the hips onto the right hip. Left leg advances ahead of right.

One of very few complete Roman bronzes. Head does belong to body despite apparent proportional issues. Left foot, however, may be a replacement and garment is a modern replacement. Recalls Lysippos' statue of Alexander the Great with the lance. Originally held short sword cradled in left arm, lance in right. (Met Museum). This would perhaps have given the piece more impact and power.

In contrast to Marathon youth, subject is very much real (although how lifelike we can't be sure). Features are certainly quite brutally presented. No attempt to make the subject beautiful or attractive. Marathon Youth in contrast is very 'perfect'. Smooth skin, ideal proportions, almost angelic features. The purpose of the Gallus sculpture is a piece of political and military propaganda not religious, votive or purely for artistic pleasure. More likely to have been commissioned by the emperor than as a gift from an admirer (cf. Marathon Youth).

Roman aesthetic in Imperial period was 'veristic', representing men as real, at least facially; rugged, wrinkled, old – essentially 'warts and all'. Real features indicated life experience, wisdom, power. (Khan Academy). Gallus' body has proportions and hallmarks of a wrestler or gladiator. Open boots would have been worn by boxers. (ipernity). Perhaps an attempt to appeal to the masses (he was put into power by soldiers following assassination of his predecessor so relied on popularist support from the military). (ipernity). Ruled during the Soldier Emperor period (Khan Academy).

Clear difference in purpose and function of this sculpture when compared to Marathon Youth. This piece is about propaganda, selling and promoting the image of a strong, powerful emperor. Marathon Youth is more a celebration of the perfect, young male form; not an individual but an ideal. A thing to be admired for its aesthetic beauty not as a 'marketing tool'.