

Roman copies of Myron's *Discobolus*

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The iconography of the celebrated masterpiece, Myron's *Discobolus*, was unknown in the modern era until 1781, when a marble statue of a discus-thrower came to light on the Esquiline Hill (below, cat. no. 1). G. B. Visconti proposed the identification of the so-called Lancellotti discus-thrower with the Myronian composition in the same year, in a letter probably written in collaboration with his son, Ennio Quirino. Connecting references to the statue in Pliny (*NH* 34.57) and Quintilian (*Inst.* 2.13.10) with the newly discovered athlete, Visconti recognized a torso in the Capitoline collections, restored some decades earlier as a wounded warrior by Pierre Étienne Monnot (no. 3), as belonging to a replica of the same Greek masterpiece.¹ In volume 2 of his edition of J. J. Winckelmann's *Storia delle arti del disegno presso gli antichi*, C. Fea added to the ancient sources about Myron's *Discobolus* Lucian's detailed description of the statue (*Philopseudes* 18), and to the list of its replicas he added the Lansdowne torso (no. 6) and one in Florence (no. 8).²

During the 18th c., before Visconti's and Fea's identification of the sculptural type with Myron's youth, the torsos in the Capitoline and in the Lansdowne collections were restored respectively as a dying warrior by Monnot and as Diomedes carrying off the Palladium by Bartolomeo Cavaceppi. In 1779, Gavin Hamilton identified the Capitoline torso and the one in the Lansdowne collection as pertaining to the same subject but did not recognize the figure as that of Myron's athlete.³ In the 16th c., the torso in Florence had been interpreted and subsequently restored as Endymion; then in 1785 Francesco Carradori, who rejected Fea's reading of the figure as a *Discobolus*, reconstructed it as a Niobid. A fragmentary replica of the prototype, previously in the garden of Villa Doria Pamphilj but today lost, was re-integrated with the missing parts and reconstructed as a young man with his right hand raised, his legs crossed, and a garment covering the pubis (no. 11).

The complex outline and composition of the Myronian discus-thrower make comprehensible the embarrassment of restorers who tried to recompose a fragment of the statue into a complete figure.⁴ The differences between the copies, each of which visualizes the features of the sculptural type through a particular taste and plastic sensibility, emerge clearly from a full and detailed catalogue of the existing statues and fragments (both those at full size and at reduced scale) replicating Myron's original — a tool so far missing in the bibliography, since all existing catalogues of the copies are short listings that provide little and incomplete information;⁵ none of them includes all extant replicas, illustrations are lacking, and present location, dimensions and date are often missing.

In the following catalogue precise information as to the replicas and their history is given, along with bibliography and illustrations.⁶ The catalogue is followed by comments on other

1 See Giuliano 1990, 11; Gallo 1992-93, 217-18.

2 Fea 1783, 213. See Giuliano 1990, 14.

3 Smith 1901, 314-15.

4 Interpretative 18th-c. restorations on surviving fragments of copies from Myron's discus-thrower have been studied by S. Howard (1962; 1982, 226-28; 1990, 70-77).

5 Listings of the copies from Myron's discus-thrower are provided by: Arias 1940, 17-18; Paribeni 1953, 22-24; Bocci Pacini 1994, 66-67; and Rausa 1994, 174-76.

6 Gems have not been added to my catalogue since several still resist precise dating. Eleven reproductions of the *Discobolus* on gems exist:

1. London: British Museum, inv. 1865. Formerly in the Hertz collection (no. 1106). Nicolo, with inscription YAKINΘΟΣ. Smith 1888, 106 no. 742, pl. G; Walters 1926, 198 no. 1865; Jüthner 1929, 125 fig. 110.

2. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Formerly in the Pauvert collection. Cornelian intaglio from Rome, mounted in a gold ring. Babelon 1899, 51 no. 132; Horster 1970, 66 n.3.

3. Berlin: Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung, inv. FG 4560 (= M. Inv. 8137, 195). Formerly in the