

	Object:	Putto mit Tambourin
	Museum:	Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst Am Kupfergraben 10117 Berlin 030 / 266 42 54 01 sbm@smb.spk-berlin.de
	Collection:	Skulpturensammlung
	Inventory number:	2653

## Description

Donatello

Dancing putto with a Tambourine  
1428-29

Bronze with traces of gilding  
Height: 36 cm

Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Skulpturensammlung, Inv. SKS 2653.  
Bode-Museum, on view.

Provenance: Siena, Cathedral, Font of the Baptistry (1429-before 1687); London, Durlacher Brothers (Murray Marks; 1902); Berlin, Skulpturensammlung/Neues Museum (1902-1904); Berlin, Skulpturensammlung/Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (1904-1939); Berlin, storage (1939-1945); Merkers, storage (1945); Wiesbaden, Central Collecting Point (1945-1956); West Berlin, Skulpturensammlung/Museum Dahlem (1956-1990); Berlin, Skulpturensammlung/Museum Dahlem (1990-1997); Berlin, storage (1997-2006); Berlin, Skulpturensammlung/Bode-Museum (since 2006).

### Acquisition

Gift of Wilhelm Bode, 1902. Acquisition file n°1087/02 in the Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.

### Exhibitions:

Italian Renaissance Sculpture in the Time of Donatello, Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts, 23 October 1985-5 January 1986 and Fort Worth, Kimbell Museum of Art, 22 February-5 April 1986, cat. 22.

Donatello e i suoi, Florence, Forte del Belvedere, 15 June-7 September 1986, cat. 27.

Kaiser Friedrich III. und sein Museum, West Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, 15 June-24 July 1988.

Von allen Seiten schön, Berlin, Altes Museum, 31 October 1995-28 January 1996, cat. 1

Giovinezza di Michelangelo, Florence, Palazzo Vecchio and Casa Buonarroti, 6 October 1999-9 January 2000, cat. 23.

Ansichtsache. Das Bodemuseum Berlin im Liebighaus Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Liebighaus, 2002.

In the Light of Apollo. Italian Renaissance and Greece, Athens, National Gallery and Alexandros Souzos Museum, 22 December 2003-31 March 2004, cat. II.1.

Da Jacopo della Quercia a Donatello. Le arti a Siena nel primo Rinascimento, Siena, Santa Maria della Scala, Opera della Metropolitana, Pinacoteca Nazionale, 26 March-11 July 2010, cat. C.3.

Bronze, London, Royal Academy of Arts, 15 September-9 December 2012, cat. 82.

### Comment

A putto or spiritello is a winged baby originally present in the iconography of pagan Antiquity; at the beginning of the 15th century, Tuscan artists began to reuse intensively the motif, which is often integrated into Christian representations. This was formerly the case for this putto, once crowning the Baptismal Font of Siena Cathedral together with five other statuettes. The work has been celebrated as one of the first small bronzes (bronzetti) of the Italian Renaissance (Pope-Hennessy, 1993, p. 86), which is not, strictly speaking, accurate, as it was not designed as an independent sculpture but as part of a global decoration (see Draper 1992). The Dancing putto with a Tambourine is, however, one of the most important bronzes of the Early Renaissance – and of Donatello's career.

Standing on a shell, the putto holds a tambourine in his left hand, which he is about to hit with the other hand. The suspension of this movement is enhanced by the instability of the pose: not only is the equilibrium of the feet of the putto very unstable on the concave shell, but the whole body is twisting around a central axis. It is as if the boy intended to play his instrument for someone behind him: indeed, he was part of a group of three bronzes. The Berlin putto was in the left position, to the right was a trumpeter, also playing in direction of the center, where a dancing putto stood (see Lányi 1939). The pose of the child, with his legs turned toward the right while his arms are toward the left, has consistently been compared to the "figura serpentinata" admired during the mannerist period in the 16th century (Janson 1957; Krahn 1995a). If some antique models have been proposed as an inspiration for this statuette (see Balcarres 1903; Janson 1957), no direct example is entirely convincing – Donatello is known to have taken inspiration from Antiquity, but never to have copied it passively.

Like the two other bronzes mentioned above, the putto can be attributed to Donat

Historischer Standort: Siena, Taufbrunnen des Baptisteriums

## Basic data

Material/Technique:

Bronze mit Resten von Vergoldung

Measurements:

Höhe: 36,2 cm; Breite: 14,7 cm; Tiefe: 16,2 cm diagonal 18 cm; Gewicht: 8 kg; Höhe x Breite x Tiefe: 36,2 x 14,7 x 16,2 cm

## Events

Created

When

1429

Who

Donatello (1386-1466)

Where