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The Fitzwilliam Museum acquires one of the finest Italian Renaissance bronzes ever made

The Fitzwilliam Museum has acquired one of the finest Italian Renaissance bronzes ever made, *the Apollo Belvedere* c.1520-2 by Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, nicknamed Antico (c.1460-1528) through the Arts Council's Acceptance in Lieu (AiL) scheme. The acquisition is announced in the Arts Council's Annual Report published later this month.

The Acceptance in Lieu (AiL) allocation reunites *the Apollo Belvedere* with the renowned Boscawen Collection – gifted to the Fitzwilliam in 1979 and 1997 - so it becomes once again its crowning glory. The significance of the acquisition means the Fitzwilliam Museum is home to one of the finest collections of Renaissance and Baroque bronzes in Great Britain and will allow the public to see a fully autograph work by one of the most important sculptors and bronze-casters of the early Italian Renaissance, whose exceptionally high-quality work set a new standard in the field.



The Apollo Belvedere c.1520-2 by Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, nicknamed Antico (c.1460-1528) detail

The parcel-gilt bronze figure, inlaid with silver eyes, is the quintessential Italian Renaissance bronze masterpiece. It is difficult to exaggerate the significance and rarity of the statuette which was the jewel in the crown of the Boscawen sculpture collection of European Renaissance and Baroque bronzes.

Luke Syson Director and Marlay Curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum said: *"The acquisition of this bronze owes everything to the generosity of the children of Cecil and Hilda Lewis and the marvellous Acceptance in Lieu scheme (AiL). Without it, we would not have been able to acquire this new lynchpin of our sculpture collection, perhaps the most quintessentially Renaissance work we own. We are grateful for the opportunity to tell new stories about such an important historic work of art."*

"The beautiful male nude is now such an expected ingredient within museum collections that we almost take them for granted. The acquisition of Antico's miniaturised, part-gilded bronze version of the Apollo Belvedere reminds us that in Renaissance Italy they were still an extraordinary novelty. The marble original, still in Rome, had only recently been rediscovered and by the eighteenth century was celebrated as a masculine ideal. Antico chose his name to signal his indebtedness to the ancient world, but also his ability to rival its marvels. His goldsmith training gave his copy exquisite life. And we might remember that his bronze male nudes could be seen in the study area of the greatest of Renaissance women collectors, Isabella d'Este; naked males in a female space."

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Michael Clarke CBE, Chair, Acceptance in Lieu Panel, said: *"I am delighted that this exceptionally fine parcel-gilt bronze figure of the Apollo Belvedere by Antico has been allocated to the Fitzwilliam Museum through the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme. 'Antico', whose nickname testifies to his interest in classical antiquity, was based at the Gonzaga court in Mantua and was one of the leading sculptors of the Italian Renaissance. This superb bronze will greatly enhance the Fitzwilliam's outstanding sculpture collection. I hope that this example will encourage others to use the Scheme and continue to support our national collections."*

Arts and Heritage Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said: *"The Acceptance in Lieu scheme enables museums across the UK to acquire exceptional works of art such as this, and to provide the public with access to an astounding array of cultural treasures."*

"I am delighted that the scheme has allowed The Fitzwilliam Museum to acquire this superb Antico bronze. It will further enhance the Fitzwilliam's fine collection of Renaissance art, and its status as a major destination for visitors from around the world."

Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, who was nicknamed 'Antico', was based at the Gonzaga court in Mantua and was one of the leading sculptors of the Italian Renaissance. His nickname testifies to his interest in classical antiquity, which he studied and was passionate about reviving. Antico's sculptures are famed for their detailed modelling, and for their exquisite casting and finish. He pioneered the use of the lost-wax process to produce bronze sculptures made in multiples. This parcel-gilt bronze figure of the Apollo Belvedere is the finest of three versions by the artist still in existence. The Apollo Belvedere was, for many centuries the most famous sculpture in the world.

The Boscawen sculpture collection of European Renaissance and Baroque bronzes was formed by Lieutenant Colonel Mildmay Thomas Boscawen (1892–1958), an alumnus of Trinity College, Cambridge, he referred to his time at Cambridge as the happiest period of his life and bequeathed his collection to the Fitzwilliam. Boscawen became an avid collector of sculpture, whose exacting tastes earned him a reputation as a connoisseur, who formed one of the most important collections of European bronzes in the 20th century. He died in London in 1958, leaving most of the collection to his sister, the Hon. Mrs. Pamela Sherek of Geneva and, upon her death, they were then bequeathed in Boscawen's memory to the Fitzwilliam. There are now fifty-six of Boscawen's bronzes at the museum.

For more information please contact the Fitzwilliam Museum Press Office: Emma Shaw, PR and Media Relations Lead +44 (0)7788 727 601 | ehs33@cam.ac.uk
Images [Antico bronze AIL – Dropbox](#)

For more information about the Acceptance in Lieu scheme and the Arts Council, please contact: Mabel Jenkin-Smith, Communications Officer, Museums and Cultural Property, Arts Council England
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Notes to Editors

The Apollo Belvedere by Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, called Antico (c.1460-1528), c.1520-2, parcel-gilt bronze figure can be seen in gallery 7 in context of this great collection.

The Arts Council 2023 Annual Report will also feature The Sir Timothy Colman collection of Norwich silver AIL, (TSV: £72,450) and the Magdalene Odondo: *Red angled ribbed vessel* (which was given under the Cultural Gifts Scheme) tax settlement figure is £27,000, which will also come to the Fitzwilliam Museum.

The Fitzwilliam Museum

Founded in 1816, the Fitzwilliam Museum is the largest and oldest museum of the University of Cambridge. It houses over half a million objects: ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman artefacts, medieval illuminated manuscripts, paintings from the European Renaissance to the 21st century, prints and drawings, coins and medals, ceramics and other applied arts from East and West Asia and Western Europe. The Fitzwilliam Museum is an internationally recognised institute of research and conservation.

www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

Details of the work is as follows:

A parcel-gilt bronze figure of the Apollo Belvedere by Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, called Antico (c. 1460-1528) circa 1520-1522, inlaid with silver eyes; on a modern circular wood base 16¼ in. high.

This work was acquired from the Collection of Cecil and Hilda Lewis through the Acceptance in Lieu scheme and its acceptance settled £10,500,000 of tax. The offer in lieu was negotiated through Christie's Heritage and Taxation Advisory Service.

The **Acceptance in Lieu scheme** is administered by the Arts Council. The Acceptance in Lieu Panel, chaired by Michael Clarke CBE, advises on whether property offered in lieu is of suitable importance and offered at a value which is fair to both nation and taxpayer. AiL allows those who have a bill to Inheritance Tax to pay the tax by transferring important cultural, scientific or historic objects to the nation. Material accepted under the scheme is allocated to public collections and is available for all. In the last decade this important government initiative brought £479m worth of treasures into public ownership for the enjoyment of all - see more at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/supporting-collections-and-cultural-property/acceptance-lieu#section-1>

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £467 million of public money from Government and an estimated £250 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision.