

Basic Detail Report



Vertumnus

Date

ca. 200-250

Primary Maker

Artist Unknown

Medium

marble

Description

Vertumnus, one of the numerous agricultural deities of the Roman world, stands proudly in his lion's skin, revealing the harvested bounty of the fields. The good harvest is the hoped for result of worshipers' prayers and sacrifices before this small, cult statue. The pruning knife in the figure's right hand is the particular attribute of this god and the tool used to cut the apple, the cluster of grapes, and other fruit that he bears. The tree trunk and companionable dog are appropriate attributes for a god of the fields, but the tree trunk as well as the struts between his calves and between his left hip and the lion's skin are unnecessary for the support of such a small figure. These extraneous supports may indicate that this is a reduced copy of a life-size or larger marble, whose stability would have required such additions. As with grander cult statues

placed in temples, the god faces the petitioner to receive prayers and hopes. Originally, the Vertumnus figure may have stood on the back of, or above, an altar in a private house or villa or possibly in a town shrine. Since a probable 90% or more of the annual tax revenues of the Roman state under the emperor came from farms and agricultural estates, the pagan gods controlling agriculture were considered very powerful, regardless of the size of their images.

Dimensions

Overall: 18 7/8 x 10 3/4 x 6 in. (47.9 x 27.3 x 15.2 cm)