

## 6.8 PUTTO WITH A DOLPHIN



*Cast before conservation*



*Cast after conservation*

### 6.8.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECT

**TITLE:** Putto with a Dolphin, after Putto with a Fish, by Andrea del Verrocchio, second part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, bronze.

**NUMBER(S):** 023, 011 (056)

**TYPE OF OBJECT:** Plaster cast with a metal structure inside.

**MAKER:** Unknown

**SIGNATURE/INSCRIPTION:** None

**DATE:** None

**OWNER/LOCATION:** Edinburgh College of Art, Lauriston Place, Edinburgh, EH3 9DF.

**DIMENSIONS/WEIGHT (APPROX):** H: 800mm W: 500mm D: 400mm

Weight (approx):

### 6.8.2 BRIEF CONDITION REPORT BEFORE CONSERVATION

**STRUCTURAL STABILITY:** Structurally unstable. Cracks with movement: through torso of the putto; under the dolphin; through the ankle on supporting leg with an area of loss; through the neck; two significant breaks with associated area of loss to tail of the dolphin; hairline crack to head of the dolphin.

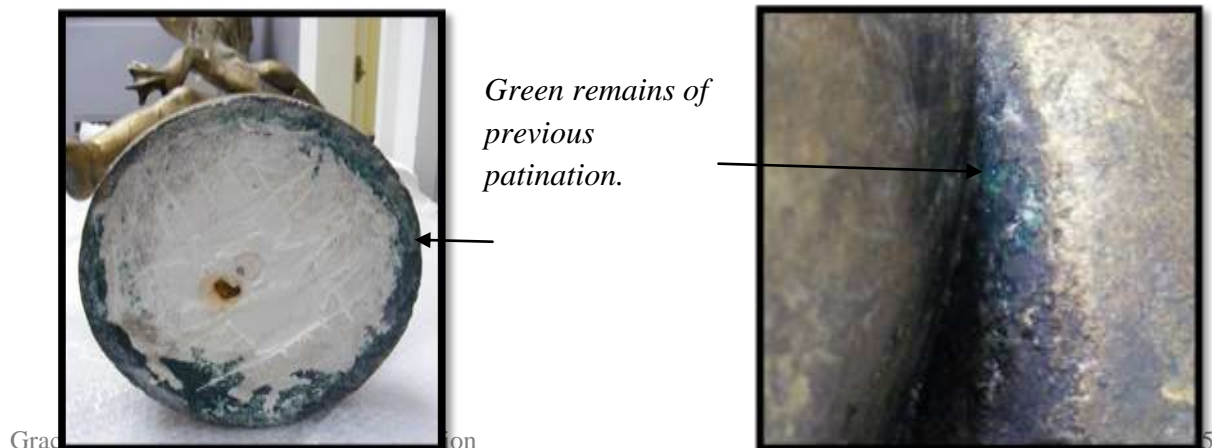
**SURFACE DUST AND DIRT:** Light covering of dust.

**VISIBLE PAINT LAYERS/UNSIGHTLY MARKINGS:** Gold over-paint, imitation of bronze.

**CHIPS AND LOSS:** Area of loss to the dolphin tail and to base of the cast.

**ABRASIONS:** 5% overall, especially to the base of the cast.

**PREVIOUS REPAIRS:** From college archives we know that casts were treated many times; unfortunately the documentation is not very detailed, so we don't know what treatment exactly they received. It is possible that there has been a re-painting of bronze patina.





### Cracks

Chips, abrasions and missing surfaces

Areas of previous repairs

#### **6.8.3 ORIGINAL MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES**

The object is a plaster cast with a metal reinforcing structure inside. The surface of the sculpture is golden/brown, an imitation of bronze.

#### **6.8.4 TREATMENT REPORT**

- Prior to any conservation treatment, the cast was photographed. This photographic documentation was continued throughout all conservation processes.
- Initially, the cast was dry cleaned with soft brushes and Wishab Sponges with a rubber-nozzled vacuum to pick up the loose dust and dirt.

- Following a variety of wet cleaning spot tests, the surface of the panel was cleaned with de-ionised water, using cotton wool swabs.
- All areas of raw plaster were given an application of 10% Paraloid B72 in acetone to provide an isolating layer between the original plaster and the repairs.
- In order to repair and structurally stabilise the cast, stainless steel dowels were installed in bespoke channels and set in place with polyester resin.



*Details of repairs*

- Old metal dowels inside the plaster, exposed through previous damage, were treated with 5% tannic acid, and protective layer of 20% Paraloid B72 in acetone.



*Detail of repairs*

- Areas of loss, and chips were filled with white micro-balloons mixed with 12% Paraloid B72 in acetone.



*Details of fill repairs*

- All the fills were toned out with acrylics, mixed with matting agent, to match the surrounding patina.
- The entire cast was then given an application of micro-crystalline wax so as to protect the surface.
- Finally, in order to secure the underside of the base, felt fabric was attached with polyvinyl glue.



*Detail of the base*

## **6.8.5 MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME**

### **CLEANING**

The cleaning programme would involve the trained operatives, wearing the appropriate PPE, (nitrile gloves must be worn to protect the plaster as well as the operative) removing the loose dust using soft brushes and a vacuum cleaner with a rubber nozzle that would have muslin attached to its end. The muslin prevents any potential damage to the plaster from being lost in the vacuum cleaner. Any fragments that are dislodged, and their locations on the cast, should

be documented and wrapped carefully in acid free tissue prior to being stored in a safe location. A trained conservator should be contacted immediately in order to repair the damage.

**NB** At no time should cleaning products or any liquid (including water) be used.

## **HANDLING AND CARE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Certain measures should be taken prior to and during the moving of these pieces:

1. It is recommended that all technicians and at least one member of the Curatorial/Archives Dept. should complete a course in sculpture handling. Any moving of sculpture should involve the attendance of at least one person who has attended such a course.  
The National Galleries of Scotland can supply the name of a recommended course.
2. A manual on the handling of sculpture should be made available to staff and students. ('The Care and Handling of Art Object' by Shelley is recommended.)
3. Before handling an object it should be examined closely and any old repairs and structural weaknesses noted. Do not test or probe areas that appear weak. Never grasp projecting elements (arms, etc.) of the object as they will not support the weight.
4. Gloves should always be worn when handling or touching objects as acids and salts from perspiration can damage many materials especially plaster.
5. Report any damage to the object immediately and collect all fragments before leaving the area.
6. The object should be well protected with padding in the form of foam, Plastazote and bubble-wrap especially any fragile or projecting areas that are likely to catch on doorways etc.
7. Avoid haste and confusion while handling as this can result in injury to the handlers or damage to the object. The route to be taken, door sizes and the space for the object at the receiving end should be assessed before a move begins. Two people, at least, should be present throughout the move, one of them to open doors, steady the object where necessary and watch parts of it that the carrier cannot see.