

# MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

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**CONTACTS:**

Lashonda Curry

727-896-2667, ext. 236

813-447-1752 (mobile)

[LCurry@MFAStPete.org](mailto:LCurry@MFAStPete.org)

## **MFA, St. Petersburg Displays Rare Original, Greek Bronze Sculpture as Latest Initiative to Present the Best of Ancient Art in the Southeast**

The youthful head depicts Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and the theater

**ST. PETERSBURG, FL (July 18, 2019)** — Copper lips. A pensive gaze. Serpentine tresses adorned with an ivy wreath. Meet Dionysus.

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg recently installed an extremely rare and exquisite 2,200-year-old Greek bronze head of the god of wine and theater in their gallery dedicated to ancient art. The hollow-cast, bronze sculpture is a long-term loan to the museum from a private collector. There are fewer than 30 surviving large-scale, Greek original bronze statues in the world, according to Michael Bennett, Ph.D., Senior Curator of Early Western Art. Of that number, only six are in the United States and the MFA now has one of them on view.

As an expert in the field for more than 25 years, Bennett described the *Head of Dionysus* as one of the most important and finest examples of ancient Greek sculpture in existence today.

Displaying this work of art continues the MFA's ongoing initiative to enhance the museum's presentation of ancient art with outstanding long-term loans from private and institutional lenders, important acquisitions to the collection, and world-class exhibitions and programming focused on the art and culture of antiquity.

"We are the only encyclopedic art museum in the state of Florida, and some of our earliest and most important acquisitions were in the area of ancient art," said Bennett. "The MFA has a significant commitment to presenting the very best in ancient art, but also undertaking real scholarship in the area. This is the first of many great things to come."

In addition to displaying the *Head of Dionysus*, the MFA has other upcoming offerings designed to bring ancient art to the forefront at the museum:

- *Back to the Future with Dr. Michael Bennett*, a year-long series of lectures, gallery spotlights, and intimate garden conversations centered on the MFA's distinguished collection of antiquities. The first Gallery Spotlight was [“What’s Up, Persephone?”](#) on July 17, which attracted a standing-room-only crowd of museumgoers. The next in the series is [Meeting Dionysus](#), Wednesday, Aug. 28. The lecture series, Antiquities History 101, will launch July 31 with [Collecting Antiquities at the MFA](#).
- Five mosaics from ancient Antioch that are part of the MFA's founding collection will be on display together for the first time in late summer 2019. In 2018, the MFA conserved the mosaics in a project that captured the imagination of the city and drew visitors to the museum's outdoor conservation lab.
- The exhibition *Ancient Theater and the Cinema* will be presented in the upstairs gallery from November 9, 2019 to April 5, 2020, with the *Head of Dionysus* serving as the centerpiece of the show. The exhibition will present images from ancient theater in Greek vase painting in dialogue with film stills from classic cinema.

Executive Director Kristen A. Shepherd said the Museum of Fine Arts' presentation of ancient art ties back to the museum's educational mission by bringing attention to an integral part of our history. And, being able to present world masterpieces like the *Head of Dionysus* to the public is just a prelude to making the MFA a destination to view the best in ancient art in the Southeastern United States.

“This is one of the most important works of art from the Hellenistic period, and we're extremely proud and grateful this lender has entrusted the MFA with the presentation of such a remarkable object of craftsmanship, beauty, and history,” she said. “It's a tremendous opportunity for our community and beyond, and just the beginning of what's to come in ancient art for the MFA.”



*Head of Dionysus*, Hellenistic Greek, 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., Bronze, copper-tin alloy, silver-plated eyes, Anonymous Loan

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**ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA**

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive NE has a world-class collection, with works by Monet, Morisot, Rodin, O’Keeffe, Willem de Kooning, and many other great artists. Also displayed are ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, and Native American art. Selections from the photography collection, one of the largest and finest in the Southeast, are on view in a gallery dedicated solely to the medium. Kristen A. Shepherd is the Executive Director.

Hours are 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday; 10 a.m.–8 p.m. on Thursday; and noon–5 p.m. Sunday. Regular admission is \$20 for adults; \$15 for those 65 and older, Florida educators, college students, and active duty military; and \$10 for students 7 and older. Children under 7 and Museum members are admitted free. Groups of 10 or more adults pay only \$14 per person and children \$4 each with prior reservations. Also, admission is just \$10 after 5 p.m. on Thursday. The MFA Café is open from 11 a.m.–3 p.m. Tuesday–Sunday. For more information, please call 727-896-2667 or visit [mfastpete.org](http://mfastpete.org).

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