



THE *Borghese* GLADIATOR

In the ultimate development of Grand Tour copies after the antique, a small number of original-sized bronzes after the most celebrated ancient statues in Rome and Florence were cast in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The aim of these bronzes was not only to reproduce their Greek and Roman models as faithfully as possible, but in fact to better them by correcting mistakes from later restorations and by closing the gaps between original and restored parts, which are always visible in the marbles. Moreover, it is likely that the bronze sculptors of the Baroque had a sense that the Roman marbles with their auxiliary tree trunks and other static props were copied after lost bronze originals and that by casting them in bronze they were translating them back into their original material and appearance. This technically superb cast of the *Borghese Gladiator* has an unbroken provenance that goes back to the Marquise de Marbeuf (1739–1794), whose mansion in Paris—where the sculpture was installed in the vestibule—was later sold to Napoleon’s brother Joseph Bonaparte (1768–1844), king of Naples, Sicily, and Spain. Celebrated since its discovery as a model of human anatomy that shows the body in action, the figure, as was pointed out by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), does not actually represent a gladiator but a soldier in close combat.

Attributed to Joseph Vinache, French, 1653–after 1717

The Borghese Gladiator, c. 1680–85, France

Anonymous loan