

## CANON OF POLYKLEITOS (POLYCLITUS) ca. 440 BCE

Both in his sculpture and in a written work, the *Canon*, he sought to represent the nude male figure with perfect harmony among all parts and according to principles that could be reproduced by others:

1. The palm of the hand is 4 times the breadth of the finger.
2. The length of the foot is 4 times the breadth of the palm.
3. The breadth of the shoulders is 4 times the breadth of the head.
4. The height of the figure is 7 times the length of the head.

The *Doryphoros* is renowned as the standard embodiment of the Classical ideal of human beauty. In the fourth century new proportions, heavier bodies, smaller heads, associated with the name of Lysippos are seen.

### The Canon of Polykleitos in the SBMA Collection:

#### Doryphoros (Roman copy of Greek original, ca. 460 BCE)

"He also made a statue which artists call the "Canon" and from which they derive the basic forms of their art, as if from some kind of law; thus he alone of men is deemed to have rendered art itself in a work of art." - Pliny (Roman, 23-79 CE)

"Beauty arises .. in the commensurability [*symmetria*] of the parts, such as that of finger to finger, and of all the fingers to the palm and the wrist, and of these to the forearm, and of the forearm to the upper arm, and, in fact, of everything to everything else, just as it is written in the Canon of Polykleitos. For having taught us in that work all the proportions of the body, Polykleitos supported his treatise with a work of art; that is, he made a statue according to the tenets of his treatise, and called the statue, like the work, the "Canon." - Galen (Greek, ca.129-199 CE)

Two quotations from Polykleitos's Canon:

"Perfection arises little by little through many numbers." (In Philo Mechanicus) "The work is hardest when the clay is on the nail." (In Plutarch)

#### Lansdowne Hermes by Lysippos (?) (Roman copy of Greek original, ca. 350-320 BCE)

"Lysippos of Sikyon was not a disciple of any other artist, but... was at first a bronze worker and undertook a career in the fine arts upon hearing a response of the painter Eupompos. For when [Eupompos] was asked which of his predecessors he followed, he pointed to a crowd of men and said that one ought to imitate nature itself, and not another artist. .. [Lysippos] is said to have contributed much to the art of casting statues by representing the hair in detail, by making the head smaller than earlier sculptors had, and by making the bodies slenderer and more tightly knit, as a result of which the height of his statues seems greater. There is no Latin term for *symmetria*, which he observed with the utmost precision by a new and previously unattempted system which involved altering the "square" figures of the older sculptors; and he used commonly to say that by [earlier sculptors] men were represented as they really were, but by him they were represented as they appeared " - Pliny