



**BUTCHOFF**  
LONDON

XVIII-XIX CENTURY  
FURNITURE & DECORATIVE ARTS



**A REMARKABLE GRAND TOUR MARBLE  
SCULPTURE OF THE EROS DI CENTOCELLE**

**Dimensions: H (torso): 35 in / 89 cm | H (overall): 68 in / 172 cm**

**9709**

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### A Remarkable Grand Tour Marble Sculpture of the Eros di Centocelle

The god of love carved from a block of statuary marble, raised on a bleu turquin plinth and scagliola painted pedestal.  
Italian, circa 1800

Our magnificent torso, the "Eros di Centocelle"- is an accurate model of the marble excavated in Centocelle, on the Via Labicana, not far from Rome, by the Scottish neoclassical painter and archaeologist Gavin Hamilton in 1772. Born in 1723, Hamilton travelled to Italy on his Grand Tour in 1744 and then back to Britain, finally returning to Rome in 1756, where he remained until his death in 1798.

As a painter of neoclassical subjects in Rome, he was highly regarded by Winckelmann, Goethe and by the young Antonio Canova. He worked closely with Piranesi.



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As an archaeologist, he excavated at Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli in 1771 and in the following years the outskirts of Rome at Tor Colombaro, Albano, Centocelle, Ostia and so on.

As an art dealer, Gavin Hamilton sold antiquities as well as marble models of ancient subjects to British clients such as Charles Townley, William Petty and most notably sold the Warwick Vase, excavated at Tivoli, to Sir William Hamilton.

In 1785 Gavin Hamilton bought and sent to London to be sold - Leonardo's "Virgin of the Rocks", now at the National Gallery.

The Eros di Centocelle was found as represented in our model, without forearms, legs and genitals (later reattached together with the nose). There were probably wings, lost in the excavation - as holes in the back of the original suggest. Briefly at the Louvre between 1797 and 1800, as part of a group of works of art given by Pope Pious VI to Napoleon, the marble was finally returned to Rome to the Musei Vaticani where it is today, in the Pius-Clementin Museum, Galleria delle Statue, 250.

It is by repute one of several Roman versions of a bronze sculpture of the Eros of Thespieae, complete with wings, legs and arms, bow and arrow, by the foremost Greek sculptor Praxiteles of Athens, 4th century BC, that was present in Rome as described by Pliny in the first century CE -and since lost; other Roman and Hellenistic examples are known, including one at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli known as the "Eros Farnese" and one at the Hermitage, formerly at Pavlovsk, both retaining more of the complete human figure.

Our "Eros" was most probably expertly carved shortly after the return of the original "Centocelle" to Rome from Paris in 1800: of the same approximate size and posture - it is accurate and intriguing, in it's intense expression and calm elegance.

Brought back to Britain in the 19th century most probably as a prize of the Grand Tour, it has since been in private collections.