

Head of a Faun

After Michelangelo (?)

This was one of the first of Michelangelo's sculptural works, carved around 1489 in Lorenzo the Magnificent's garden at San Marco. All trace of the head, made in imitation of an ancient one in the garden, has been lost. Many people believe that it is represented in several reliefs of the same subject in the Medicean collections. Recently another faun's head has been identified: formerly in the Bargello and destroyed during the last war, a cast of it has survived in Casa Buonarroti. In all likelihood the sculpture was dispersed along with the rest of Lorenzo the Magnificent's collection in 1494. The sources record that Lorenzo, on seeing the figure's open mouth, objected to the young sculptor that an old faun could not have kept all his teeth. Michelangelo then chiseled away the upper incisor and made a hole in the gum, as if the tooth had come out along with all its root.