

A History of the Discobolus: Fragments of Representation from Myron to the 1990s

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The discobolus appears in fragments of our everyday history in physical culture. Yet even in art history, there is no one concise historiography of the discobolus; of how it came to be where it is today. This research sorts out the historical lines that connect the discobolus of fifth century B.C. Greece to its place in American physical culture today, to its Place in clothing advertisements, Physical education philosophy courses, coaches' curio cabinets, sport-allied organizations logos, gymnasias

discobolus - artistic rendering of a man in the act of throwing a discus Myron's Discobolus - statue of a discus thrower originally produced in bronze by the fifth century B.C. Greek sculptor Myron, but existing in modernity in several versions of marble Roman copies of the original.

discophouros - artistic rendering of a man carrying/holding a discus

Examples:

There is a photograph, circa 1902, of the early founders of American physical education. At least twelve of the male leaders sit together at a table, at the centre of which is a reproduction of what is known in art history as Myron's Discobolus. The men stare magisterially at the statue.

In 1906, R. Tait McKenzie, sculptor, is commissioned to submit a design for a medal for the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America. His medal, for which only the plaster cast remains, depicts a discobolus, very similar to Myron's rendition.

On December 29, 1911, Dudley A. Sargent, who founded one of the first important physical education Programs in American colleges at Harvard circa 1879, makes one of his last public Presentations at the Annual Meeting of Physical Education Directors. The title of Sargent's paper: "Myron's Discobolus."

In the 1970s I spent four years training to become a gym teacher and coach. Everyday, we physical education majors file past a ten foot copy of the Discobolus on our way to 'activity courses.' In between classes, we sit on the base of the statue, greeting our fellow athletes.

The logo of the American College of Sports Medicine Association is a type of caduceus: a snake is wrapped around a discobolus.

Sports Illustrate features an advertisement in May 1991 for "Discus Athletic: Work Clothes for Athletes." The clothing company's logo is a black and white rendition of Myron's Discobolus.

The instructor for my university's "Bask Philosophical Principles of Physical Education" course takes the first-year students to visit our campus' World Heritage Museum every year. The students tour a plaster cast of Myron's discobolus and, gathered around it, hear a lecture on the heritage of our field