Classical Antiquities at the Museum: Aesthetic and Political Considerations in Restoration and Display

by

Siena Kramer
Class of 2011

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors from the College of Letters

Middletown, Connecticut April, 2011
Many thanks to Professor Christopher Parslow, not only for all of his help, patience and support with this project, but also for inspiring and encouraging my interest in the Classics throughout my time at Wesleyan. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Celina Gray, whose passion and enthusiasm convinced me to pursue my interest in the field of museum studies.

I dedicate this thesis to my wonderful parents, who have blessed me with their unwavering love, support and encouragement. Every accomplishment, I owe to them. And of course, this project is also dedicated in part to my hero, Andrew Kramer.
CONTENTS

Introduction: Complex Biographies..........................................................3

Chapter 1: Reconstruction/Conservation Practices.................................21

Chapter 2: The Tangible Past..................................................................53

Conclusion: Presenting the Past to Our Present.......................................96

Figures........................................................................................................105
Plates.............................................................................................................123
Bibliography..............................................................................................129
Introduction

Complex Biographies: A Case Study of the Laocoon

Classical antiquities occupy a unique and uneasy space within the modern museum. Their presence within the walls of the institution marks them not only as models of artistic virtue, but also as physical representations of Western aesthetic and political history. The antiquity’s dual role as art object and artifact, coupled with a complex biography acquired through centuries of restoration and reinterpretation, make it difficult to determine the essence of its function within the museum’s display. An excellent example of the confounding nature of antiquities can be found in the examination of the Laocoon group, which serves not only as an aesthetic standard, but also as a symbol of political power and as a testament to both ancient and modern history.

Since its rediscovery in the sixteenth century, the Laocoon has been glorified as an artistic masterpiece, a national treasure and a moralizing exemplar of human tragedy. Despite its enduring and widespread renown, however, its history as an object, artifact and aesthetic standard has hardly been a consistent one. The many reincarnations of the group raise serious questions about the nature of reconstruction and the way in which it dictates how classical pieces are viewed and valued.
On January 14, 1506, the *Laocoon* was unearthed from the property of Felice de'Freddi on the Esquiline hill in Rome. Immediately sensationalized, the find site was visited by many of the leading artists of the day, including Michelangelo and the architect Giuliano da Sangallo who, upon seeing the group, exclaimed “quello è Laocoonte di cui fa menzione Plinio!” In the referenced passage of his *Natural History* 36.37-38, Pliny describes

the *Laocoon* in the palace of Emperor Titus [as a] work superior to any painting and any bronze. Laocoon, his children and the wonderful clasping coils of snakes were carved from a single block in accordance with an agreed plan, by those eminent craftsmen, Hagesander, Polydorus and Anthenodorus, all of Rhodes.

By virtue of this hasty connection of recently unearthed sculpture to Roman historical source, the *Laocoon* group was immediately granted the status of a masterpiece. The nearly instant fame of the *Laocoon* was illustrated by the fact that Pope Julius II organized a festival, a sort of triumphal procession in which the sculpture was paraded throughout the city, to mark the rediscovery and contemporary Roman reception of the work.

Clearly, the *Laocoon* group provided a physical link to support the Renaissance’s cultural appeal to classical antiquity. The papal decision to celebrate its discovery through the imitation of an ancient Roman military ritual

---

2 “This is the Laocoon that Pliny mentioned.”
is indicative of the way in which antiquity was valued and utilized; though it was not a true spoil of war, it was intentionally presented as one, indicating its function as a means of defining the state and culture that possessed it as heir to its glorified past.

A mere six months\textsuperscript{5} after its discovery, Pope Julius II purchased the sculpture and had it installed in the Belvedere courtyard. As one of the first sculptures displayed in the Vatican Museums,\textsuperscript{6} the \textit{Laocoon} reinvigorated the general interest in, and desire to posses, classical antiquities. In the 1530s, the Italian sculptor Montorsoli restored the group for the Vatican display. Well-educated Renaissance artists and patrons, seeking to restore Rome to her ancient glory, welcomed the find as a symbol of the resurgence of a classical aesthetic.

A mere seven years after its discovery, the \textit{Laocoon} had acquired enough international fame and prestige to be coveted as an actual spoil of war. In September 1515, the French defeated Italy at the Battle of Marignano for possession of Milan. In initial versions of a peace treaty, King Francis I demanded the \textit{Laocoon} from Italy, but was refused by Pope Leo X. While copies of the \textit{Laocoon} existed in bronze as early as 1510,\textsuperscript{7} the first full-sized marble copy of the group was commissioned by Pope Leo X at the suggestion of Cardinal

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{5} “...by 1 June [it] was being installed in a niche in the courtyard.” [Penny, 243.]
\textsuperscript{7} “In about 1510, Bramante arranged for four of the leading sculptors in Rome to copy the Laocoon in large wax models and invited Raphael, then newly arrived in the city, to judge them—the work of the youthful Jacopo Sansovino was considered to surpass those of the others by far and it was cast in bronze.” [Penny, 244.]
Bibiena, with the intention that it would be given to the French King should the sculpture be coerced from Italy. The fierce struggle over the statue indicates the extent to which the *Laocoon* had been incorporated as a cornerstone of Western culture and aesthetic and how rapidly it was attributed the title of “masterpiece”. Its assumption into the western cannon and ability to link its possessor to a glorified classical tradition recommended it as an appropriate spoil of war and effective means of nation building, capable of signifying the transfer of power and influence from one state to another.

The *Laocoon’s* political significance was solidified with the Treaty of Tolentio of 1797, which marked the end of the struggles between France and the Papal states. According to the treaty, the *Laocoon* was included in the Napoleonic requisitions, arriving in Paris in the triumphal procession of July 1798. Napoleon’s decision to debut his new Italian collection in what amounted to a modern triumph had powerful historical and political implications for the treatment and valuation for antiquities; through ceremony and ritual, the Napoleonic triumph placed the antique works within a decidedly classical context, iconographically linking the empire of Napoleon to the glory of ancient Rome.

Before its relocation to Paris in 1798, all reconstructed elements were removed from the *Laocoon*. Upon its arrival in France, these were replaced by “after-casts from a late seventeenth-century cast of a model whose arms were

---

8 Penny, 244.
supposed to be by Girardon.”10 However, competitions held to see which French sculptor would fashion the permanent replacements were unable produce a victor prior to the Laocoon’s return to Rome in January 1816.11 The French rejection of the Italian Renaissance reconstruction of the Laocoon would suggest some sensitivity to the powerful influence of reconstruction over the identity, function and interpretation of a work. Similarly, once back in Italy, the Laocoon was refitted with the original Italian restorations,12 as if to reclaim and re-assert the original Roman interpretation, and therefore control, of the group. In these moments of transition between Italy and France, museum object and war spoil, the Laocoon became an object capable not only of “contribut[ing] to the biography of a ceremony or a body of knowledge,”13 but also of acquiring an inherent meaning and biography of its own.

The development of the group’s unique identity is complicated by its long and convoluted history as both an artifact and an object of aesthetic interpretation. In order to make sense of the many stages of its complex biography, Brilliant has proposed a useful analysis in which he divides the history of the Laocoon into four distinct phases.

10 Penny, 246.
12 Penny, 246.
According to this schema, the *Laocoon* discovered in 1506 and designated *Laocoon I*,\(^ {14}\) is distinct from *Laocoon A* and *Laocoon B*; the former is described as the “original” ancient sculpture attributed by Pliny to the Rhodian artists Hagesander, Polydorus and Anthenodorus, while the later refers to purported, but ill documented, prototypes of *Laocoon A*, created earlier in the Hellenistic period. This distinction between *Laocoon I* and *Laocoons A* and B divorces the Vatican group from Sangallo’s elated attribution of the work to Pliny’s *Natural History*, allowing for the possibility that the Vatican *Laocoon* is a copy of the one Pliny observed, which even then may not have been the original.

While Pliny’s description of the ancient sculpture suggests that the group was “carved from a single block”,\(^ {15}\) the *Laocoon* discovered in 1506 was excavated in at least seven major parts (fig. 1) and “disparities in the type of marble and some joins were noted soon after its arrival in the Belvedere.”\(^ {16}\) Furthermore, the inconsistencies noted in the types of marble include the incorporation of Luna marble\(^ {17}\) into the back of the sculpture. This would have been impossible prior to the opening of the Luna quarries under Augustus and places the creation of the work later than the preferred 4th century BCE dating, asserting that it is a Roman copy rather than a Greek original. Thus, the

---


\(^ {15}\) Pliny, *Natural History*, 36.37-38.

\(^ {16}\) Penny, 246.

necessary distinction between *Laocoon A* and *Laocoon I* is problematic not only for the dating of the work, but also for its claim to originality.

Independent of its validity as “original”, *Laocoon I* (fig. 2) has developed an aesthetic tradition and significance of its own. The hasty connection of the work to Pliny, and the title of “masterpiece” assigned to it by this referential identity, resulted in its rapid appropriation into the work of many High Renaissance artists, most notably Michelangelo. Along with the *Suicidal Gaul* of the Pergamene group\(^\text{18}\), discovered in 1514, *Laocoon I* was highly influential in introducing the *figura serpentianta* “as a central trope of High Renaissance representational practice.”\(^\text{19}\)

A comparison of the *Laocoon, Suicidal Gaul* and Michelangelo’s *Samson and Two Philistines* (fig. 3 and fig. 4, respectively) illustrates the incorporation of the “Laocoonic” torso into the work of Michelangelo beginning in the 1520s. Indeed, Michelangelo studied the *Laocoon* group avidly and is thought to have helped with its restoration.\(^\text{20}\) Catterson even goes so far as to suggest “the 1506 *Laocoon* was in effect born at the moment of discovery” and is, in fact, a “spectacular antique forgery”\(^\text{21}\) by Michelangelo himself. While this argument is useful for its illustration of the stylistic similarities between Michelangelo’s work and the *Laocoon*, as well as for its documentation of Michelangelo’s study and


\(^{19}\) Stewart, Andrew, *Attalos, Athens and the Akropolis; the Pergamene ”Little Barbarians” and their Roman and Renaissance Legacy*, 2004. 94.


appreciation of the group, it remains far more likely that the discovery informed
the master than vice versa. Due to its nearly immediate designation as a
museum object and aesthetic standard, _Laocoon_ I had a profound influence on
Renaissance art that makes it significant in its own right, regardless of its
problematic claim to originality.

Furthermore, Winckelmann’s admiration of _Laocoon_ I in his _History of
Ancient Art_ made the group the central focus of a critical discourse on the nature
and limitations of art that eventually reshaped the interpretation of the work.
For Winckelmann, the _Laocoon_ represented the “noble simplicity and
grandeur”\(^\text{22}\) that he and many of his contemporaries prized so highly in classical
art. Indeed, he describes _Laocoon_ I as

representing a man in extreme suffering who is
striving to collect the conscious strength of his soul to
bear it. While the muscles are swelling and the nerves
are straining with torture, the determined spirit is
visible in the turgid forehead, the chest is distended by
the obstructed breath and the suppressed outburst of
feeling, in order that he may retain and keep within
himself the pain which tortures him.\(^\text{23}\)

This stylistic analysis is essentially a defense of the “Greekness” of the statue, as
Winckelmann would have preferred to date the _Laocoon_ to the time of Alexander
the Great,\(^\text{24}\) which he considered to mark the height of classical art.\(^\text{25}\) By

\(^{22}\) Brilliant, 51.

\(^{23}\) Brilliant, 17.

\(^{24}\) mid-fourth century BCE

\(^{25}\) Brilliant, 52.
insisting upon the presence of a moral stoicism in the sculpture, he attempts to explain away the intense realism and expressive decadence of the work, all of which would suggest a later Hellenistic or Roman date. His attempts are a clear example of a nineteenth century taste for the austere being retroactively projected onto antiquity.²⁶

Winckelmann’s description and dating of Laocoon I instigated a debate, lead by Lessing, over the issue of artistic representation. For Lessing, the scream of Laocoon described by Virgil²⁷ was suppressed in the features of the sculpture, not because of any moralizing element of the work, but because “the ancient artists either refrained from depicting such emotions or reduced them to a degree where it is possible to show them with a certain measure of beauty.”²⁸

Thus, Lessing criticized Winckelmann for his failure to identify the lack of commitment to the horrible scream depicted in The Aeneid as an aesthetic choice forced upon the sculptor by the limitations of the plastic arts. His critique also provides us with an interesting examination of the problems that arise from relating Virgil’s poem and the Laocoon group too closely. Though he clearly rejects the early date suggested by Winckelmann,²⁹ Lessing points out that dating the sculpture to imperial Rome on the grounds that it is modeled after the Virgilian account is similarly flawed.³⁰ For instance, both the sculptural and

---

²⁹ Lessing, 146.
³⁰ Lessing, 33.
literary examples could have had a common, older source, which would allow for a pre-imperial dating of the Laocoon.

While the fact that Virgil’s account of the death of Laocoon is unique would seem to suggest that it is, in fact, the inspiration for the sculptural group, other elements are characteristic of the statue alone, completely independent of the text. Therefore, there is not enough evidence to definitively make the claim that either work informed the other.

Rather than basing the dating of the Laocoon on Virgil, Lessing suggests a re-examination of Pliny. Here, he points out that the excerpt so readily referenced by Sangallo is part of a larger passage discussing the works of artists working during the imperial period, including Diogenes. For Lessing, this suggests that Agesander, Polydorus and Athenodorus were actually working under the first emperors and that the Laocoon should be dated to the early imperial period.

While Lessing’s interpretation and dating of Laocoon I revives the possibility that it is the same statue mentioned by Pliny, it firmly rejects the notion, so important to Winckelmann and similarly minded nineteenth century classicists, that it is Greek. Thus, the theoretical debate over the nature and limits of art gave rise to Laocoon II. Identical in physical form to its predecessor,

31 “Virgil is the first and only writer to have the serpents kill the father as well as the children.” [Lessing, 35.]
32 For instance, the sons and father are attacked at separate times in Virgil’s account, but their deaths are represented as a single event in the sculpture group.
33 Lessing, 146.
Laocoon II is an interpretive reincarnation of the work that exists solely in the literature of art criticism.

In 1960, the group was restored once again, this time by Magi, giving rise to Laocoon III (fig. 5); this most recent version of the work is considered to be closer to Laocoon A on account of its more historically “correct” restoration. Magi completely removed the erroneous, slightly forced right arms of the two sons and inserted a genuinely antique arm34 into Laocoon’s right shoulder so that it angles sharply back. The eldest son was also moved slightly to the rear, creating a more “faceted, pyramidal form.”35

The discovery of four mythological sculpture groups in the Sperlonga grotto (fig. 6) in 195636 spurred a revision of the interpretation and suggested dating of the Laocoon that was reflected in its most recent reconstruction. The Sperlonga groups’ placement in a natural grotto, lavishly transformed into a triclinium by Tiberius, suggests that they could not have been installed there prior to the Augustan period and perhaps even as late as the reign of Vespasian. This later dating of the group would place it within the time period of Pliny’s writing and his inclusion of the Laocoon in his Natural History.37

Furthermore, signatures found on the Scylla group attribute the work to the same Rhodian trio of sculptors: Athanadoros, Hagesandros and Polydoros. This, coupled with the stylistic similarities (fig. 7 and fig. 8) between the two

34 The arm was discovered by the archaeologist Ludwig Pollack in 1906 a short distance from where the Laocoon was supposedly discovered in 1506.
35 Brilliant, 64.
37 Stewart, 96-97.
groups, suggests that they were produced by the same workshop in Rhodes and that the *Laocoon* dates from roughly the same time period as the Sperlonga groups, which is estimated to be between 20 BC and 26 AD. At the very least, the discovery of the Sperlonga groups provides evidence that early Roman emperors were acting as patrons to the Rhodian school.

It is worth noting that both the Sperlonga groups and the *Laocoon* fit comfortably into the iconography of imperial Rome. Discovered in the Grotto di Tiberio, the Sperlonga group depicts the wanderings of Odysseus; this would seem a highly appropriate theme for Tiberius, who spent years in voluntary exile towards the end of his stepfather Augustus’ reign before returning to claim his place as heir to the Roman *principate*. For its part, the *Laocoon* illustrates a pivotal moment of the Trojan War in which Athena slays the priest for attempting to warn the Trojans against the Greek horse, facilitating the fall of the city and launching Aeneas westward to found the new state of Rome. The narrative’s implication of a divinely willed foundation of Rome, as well as the myth’s connection to Aeneas, would have appealed to the iconographic and literary propaganda of Augustan Rome. The thematic relevance of the two groups to imperial Rome lends weight to the suggestion that they were the commissions of early Roman emperors.

The convoluted history and myriad interpretations of the *Laocoon* group are implicitly addressed by the Vatican Museum in its display of *Laocoon III*. While Magi’s revision of the sculpture is favored as more accurate, a cast of

---

38 Stewart, 96.
_Laocoon_ I as it existed from 1506 through 1960 was retained and placed in an adjacent apse of the Belvedere courtyard, where it remains today.\(^{39}\) The choice to display both versions acknowledges the historical and aesthetic significance of _Laocoon_ I and emphasizes the complex, sometimes divergent, biography of the sculpture. It also serves to draw our attention to the ways in which our interpretations of the _Laocoon_ have informed its restoration and vice versa and how this relationship has complicated the task of accurately dating the work.

The traditional approach to antique sculpture at the time of the _Laocoon_’s discovery\(^ {40}\) would have demanded that the group, incomplete and fragmented as it was, be completed. Montorsoli’s reconstitution of _Laocoon_ I from the salvaged pieces demonstrates that aesthetic preference, rather than a desire to approximate the ancient original, governed his approach. In fact, the correct, bent position of the arm was “understood right from the beginning” \(^ {41}\) and, despite being hinted at in the slightly angled arm of Bandinelli’s reconstruction (fig. 9) some twenty years later, was ignored entirely by Montorsoli. Indeed, the insistence upon the _contrapposto_ in the arms of the figures\(^ {42}\) in Montorsoli’s construction seems oddly forced, but was nevertheless a stylistic choice supported by the set of aesthetic principles dictated by the time in which the restorer was working.

---

\(^{39}\) Penny, 246-7.
\(^{40}\) “in the sphere of collecting, we see a continuation of a tradition which had established itself in the sixteenth century, of restoring and completing Antique sculpture.” [Conti, 114]
\(^{41}\) Conti, 32-33.
The arrangement of the figures in relation to one another was another area to which the restorers of the High Renaissance applied their own interpretation of classical aesthetics, perhaps unintentionally assuming an erroneous dating of the work. Montorsoli’s reconstruction gives the group a shallow, relief-like composition, an indication of his contemporary interpretation of “classical” aesthetic. In doing so, he ignored the intent of the original sculptors by “consciously turn[ing] the ‘face-side’ of the elder son towards the same plane as that of the other two figures.”\textsuperscript{43} To some scholars, this arrangement may have falsely suggested a later dating of the group due to its neo-classical presentation. Despite being obvious additions by a Renaissance artist, these reconstructions where validated by subsequent replications and restorations, including those of Cornacchini in 1725.\textsuperscript{44}

Magi’s 1960 reconstruction of the Laocoon (fig.5) realized some of the suggestions put forth by Howard in his essay “On the Reconstruction of the Laocoon Group”, making it more faithful to its ancient original. Firstly, Montorsoli’s erroneous extension of the three right arms was corrected; those of the two sons were reduced to their original joins, while that of Laocoon was fitted with the Pollack arm so as to form the sharp backward angle suggested by the musculature of the torso and shoulder. Furthermore, the eldest son was pulled further back, disrupting the rigid planarity that had characterized the group for so long.

\textsuperscript{43} Howard, 366.  
\textsuperscript{44} Conti, 33.
However, not all of Howard’s suggestions were brought to fruition in Magi’s reconstruction. An examination of his rigorous proposal for reconstruction, especially when viewed in comparison with the reconstruction proposed by Conti in his *History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art*, illustrates two competing aims of restoration.

It is clear from Howard’s critique of the Renaissance reconstruction, and the rigor of his proposed restorations, that his goal is to replicate, as faithfully as possible, the *Laocoon* of antiquity. Rather than basing his requirement that the right arm of Laocoon be pulled up and back (fig. 10) solely on aesthetic grounds, he also cites the fact that the “compactness achieved by this change...increases...the practicality of making the group in marble.”45 The perceived crowding of the elder son’s two feet (fig. 11) coupled with the examination of “the remnants of the original coils”46 are used to indicate his original positioning, which Howard determined to be a ninety degree adjustment of the figure. He even goes so far as to note that the compact arrangement of his suggested reconstruction (fig. 12) would make Pliny’s observation that the original group was carved from a single block plausible. Thus, it is clear that Howard is attempting to recreate a *Laocoon* that fulfills the demands of the original.

Howard makes these recommendations knowing full well that they will render the current display of the *Laocoon* unsatisfactory, “since the elder son

---

45 Howard, 364.
46 Howard, 366.
would be almost totally obscured”\textsuperscript{47} by the extremely three dimensional and compact nature of the proposed group. To remedy this, he suggests that the display of the entire sculpture be rotated forty-five degrees, emphasizing that faithfulness to the original work supersedes modern aesthetic principle or convenience of display (fig. 13).

Thus, Howard presents us with a highly pragmatic approach to reconstruction and restoration, emphasizing faithfulness to the intentions of the original sculptors. Indeed, he explicitly stated that his goal is to revise the portions of the Vatican Laocoon group where it is indicated that the “antique original was markedly distorted by its first restorers in the direction of high Renaissance taste.”\textsuperscript{48}

However, Conti provides us with a defense of these Renaissance restorers in his History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art. Though he acknowledged that Montorsoli’s reconstruction of the three right arms in extended positions was purely aesthetic and somewhat arbitrary, Conti suggests that restoration and reconstruction aims beyond faithful replication and seeks to “show the original to its best advantage, emphasizing its merits...a case could be made for enhancing its grace.”\textsuperscript{49} He points to the repeated replication of the Montorsoli reconstruction as an indicator of its success in appealing to the aesthetic values of its audience, in conveying a state of artistic grace.

\textsuperscript{47} Howard, 367.
\textsuperscript{48} Howard, 369.
\textsuperscript{49} Conti, 32-33
The discrepancy illustrated by these two different interpretations of the purpose of restoration reflects a fundamental divergence in the way society views and values antiques. Whether a work is being viewed as an object or an artifact necessarily dictates the interpretation assigned to it; the former is valued for its aesthetic beauty and grace while the later is judged on its ability to inform a historical and social narrative. Similarly, while an object is restored to the highest possible form of beauty, an artifact is reconstructed with an eye towards historical accuracy.

Because antiquities such as the *Laocoon* can be categorized as both art and artifact, they present a unique challenge for restorers and scholars alike. As a classical work of art, the *Laocoon* has undergone numerous reconstructions and reinterpretations dictated by varying political functions, as well as changing aesthetic tastes. Often, these physical alterations have ramifications for the interpretation, display and dating of the work as an artifact. Frequently, antiquities such as the *Laocoon*, with their complex biographies and myriad interpretations, serve as testaments to western aesthetics and society since their discovery as much as they do as keys to their ancient past.

From the example of the *Laocoon* group, it is clear how an antiquity’s dual role as aesthetic object and historical, often politicized, artifact would make its succinct, publicly accessible interpretation and display particularly challenging. The first chapter of this thesis examines the development of restoration and conservation practices and the way in which these physical alterations both shaped and reflected shifting interpretations and valuations of classical
antiquities. Centuries of reconstruction, restoration, and conservation have fragmented the biographies of many antiquities, resulting in multiple versions of an object, each with its own historical significance, and thus creating yet another complication for the terms of its display.

The second chapter explores the political roles assigned to classical antiquities; it also concerns itself with the political nature of the national museum and the imperial tradition of coveting antiquities as tangible links to the authority of the past. If recent disputes over cultural heritage and calls for the repatriation of certain antiquities are any indication, all of these factors have both academic and legal implications for the display of these objects in the modern age of globalization.

The challenge that faces the modern museum is to address the complex biographies of an antiquity, to marry its didactic, historical power with its value as an art object. Whether it is a universal or local institution, the museum has a responsibility to present the object as an educational tool for understanding history from the time of its creation to the present. In the case of the national museum, it is imperative that the institution treats its antiquities in a manner that addresses their status as politicized objects and presents them as educational tools, so as to transcend their previous role within the institution as symbolic cultural capital. By drawing attention to the antiquity’s and the museum’s joint historical role, the modern museum can treat its imperial, nationalistic past as history and strive to create a more globally minded and conscientious future.
Chapter 1

Reconstruction/Conservation Practices: Aesthetics and Interpretation

The restoration and display of antiquities involves the synthesis of aesthetic, archaeological and art historical discourses and consequently, preferences and accepted practices in the field have varied widely since the sixteenth century. Because Classical antiquity enjoys, at least in Western European culture, a privileged position as the standard for the very notion of civilization and art, objects attributed to it have historically been subjected to continual alterations and interventions. While the completion of excavated works enjoyed favor in the Renaissance, a growing concern for historical accuracy during the eighteen hundreds led to a reactionary preference for the preservation of the antique fragment. Within the museum context, current restoration attempts must consider the preservation of the original genius and form of the work while taking into account the historical relevance of previous reconstructions, as well as modern aesthetic and academic values.

Early restorations aimed at maximizing ease of aesthetic appreciation by seeking to complete ancient fragments and render them legible “in terms of a representation linked to the fundamental requirements of ‘history’”. That is to say, the value of a completed sculpture lay in its representation of a recognizable subject capable of linking the work to a philological tradition. Because of this preference for the integrity of subject over the autonomy of individual artifacts,

---

pastiches, in which antique fragments were used as “filler” material to complete another work, were common. This predilection for completed statuary was founded in a tradition of reverence for classical antiquity that stretched back to the collection of medieval spoglie\textsuperscript{51} and into the high Renaissance. Classical marbles were viewed as “bulwarks of absolute values”\textsuperscript{52}, an estimation that leant them a moralizing weight and fueled an increased demand among collectors. However, one of classical sculpture’s most compelling attributes, that is, its ability to evoke an “empathetic bodily identification,” made missing or fragmentary body parts disconcerting and displeasing to aesthetically minded collectors. Consequently, the procedure for preparing these items for display and the art market was driven by an “anxious desire for their completeness and restoration.”\textsuperscript{53} Thus, within the sphere of collecting, only whole sculptures were acceptable for display, and the dignity and value of antiquities became dependent upon the advent of the professional restorer.\textsuperscript{54}

Charged with creating a complete, recognizable figure from the ancient fragments turned up by an increasing number of excavations, the restorer

\textsuperscript{51} “...literally the opportune spoils of pillaged treasure or “goods” of surviving ancient sculpture fragmented through malicious defacing, accident or neglect. With their dimmed yet uncanny, daemonic, and magical powers of pagan mimetic achievement and materialism ostensibly purged and overcome, classical sculptures were preserved as battered inchoate mementos or trophies...” [Howard, Seymour. "Restoration and the Antique Model: Reciprocities between Figure and Field." In \textit{History of Restoration of Ancient Stone Sculptures}, edited by Janet Burnett Grossman, Jerry Podany, and Marion True. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2001. 29.]


\textsuperscript{54} Watson, 136.
assumed a largely interpretive role. Even with the most brilliant restorations, such as the one suggested for the Vatican Tigris by Michelangelo Buonarroti, there remained the problem of which of the possible interpretations, each with varying degrees of faithfulness to the original, should be integrated into the final work.⁵⁵

As demonstrated in the case study of the Laocoon, even when the original configuration of the form was clearly understood, Renaissance reconstructions often extended far beyond faithful reconstruction and often sought to enhance the original in some way or another. In their quest for complete figures that reflected ancient tradition as well as modern aesthetic standards, restorers, along with the collectors and dealers for whom they worked, created a kind of hybrid antiquity with an increasingly complicated biography. While this “imposition of present time and contemporary taste”⁵⁶ was a hallmark of Renaissance restorations and indicative of a new celebration of the individual genius of the artist, the practice is by no means isolated to the past and represents an interpretive challenge that persists into the twenty-first century.

While the authenticity of an antiquity was still a secondary consideration compared to the object’s subject matter and aesthetic coherence with the setting, the eighteenth-century saw a gradual shift in the prevailing value system marked by a developing historical consciousness.⁵⁷ The Industrial and French

---

⁵⁵ Conti, 32.
⁵⁷ Vaughan, G. "Some Observations and Reflections on the Restoration of Antique
Revolutions ruptured what had formerly been considered to be a “long-present direct link to the past,” and gave rise to the emerging field of archaeology, as well as a more objective consideration of art history as a discipline. Reflecting this changing sensibility, restorations during this time period increasingly favored historical accuracy.

Johann Joachim Winckelmann is credited with directing a new systemization of the study of ancient art and did much to further the foundation of art history as an objective field of study. Together, Winckelmann and Bartolomeo Cavaceppi, one of the most famous restorers of the time, were proponents of a new method of restoration that worked closely from the model of the “canon of beauty in Antiquity” and sought to add “the missing part without removing any of the original.” Furthermore, Cavaceppi’s approach limited itself to “minimal archaeologically based repairs” until scholars could be consulted to confirm any iconographical attributes in order to avoid any errors in the identification of the subject. This scholarly, rather than creative, concern and involvement in the process of restoration set the standard for future restoration attempts.

However, it should be noted that, though Winckelmann and his fellow antiquarians represented a shift towards an increasingly historical approach to the restoration of antiquities, this observation is founded mainly on their

___________________________


58 Podany, 16.
59 Conti, 28.
60 Howard, 32-33.
rejection of complete restorations and pastiches in favor of the preservation of
authentic fragments and not on the accuracy of their concept of the so called
“classical aesthetic”. Though esteem for the austerity of pure white marble can
be traced to the Renaissance, when “artists had produced white marble
sculpture, in imitation, oddly enough, of the Greek and Roman examples known
to them, which in the course of time had lost their coloring”61 it is
Winckelmann’s rapturous praise of their simplicity and “quiet grandeur” that
has fixed them as such within the western tradition.

Thus, this taste for the simplicity and purity of the classical aesthetic is a
relatively recent one and has little to do with the values or aesthetic judgments
of antiquity. Though mistaken, the extent to which the “classical aesthetic”
promoted by Winckelmann has dominated our valuation of antiquities
demonstrates the degree to which the antiquities market has influenced the
reception of classical statuary. Despite advances in technology and the field of
archaeology that have made the polychrome nature of Greek sculpture an
accepted fact within the academic community, some scholars continue to debate
the treatment of the nude areas, as “many people hesitate to believe that the
Greeks would have obscured the whole surface of their beautiful marbles with
paint-as would have been the case, for instance, in nude statues.”62 Thus, we can
see the pervasiveness of the Western tradition’s love of the “classical aesthetic”
not only in “the enduring potential for paint on classical sculpture to surprise or

61 Richter, Gisela M.A., and Lindsley F. Hall. "Polychromy in Greek Sculpture." The
62 Richter, 4.
shock the public,“63 but also, in a more subtle form, within the academic community. While Winckelmann’s fundamental misinterpretation of the original aesthetic intention of classical sculpture has implications for the way in which it is displayed, interpreted and valued, he and his fellow antiquarians contributed greatly to contemporary restoration methods.

By the end of the eighteenth century the stylistic departure from seventeenth-century collections and galleries was more or less complete. While restorers were still synthesizing antique materials from various sources in their reconstructions, obvious pastiches and the addition of entirely new or modern elements, such as putti64, were generally avoided. With the dawn of the Enlightenment came an increased concern for scholarship, originality and authenticity; thus, the fragment became the preferred choice for exhibition, as it was seen as an excellent example of purity and “primary evidence.”65

Furthermore, the fact that the complete reconstructions of previous centuries essentially altered the interpretation of the work to which they were applied became more widely recognized. Indeed, many of these restorations were coming to be valued as “uniquely significant inventions of historic and aesthetic importance in their own right”66 and would come to vie with their ancient original forms for display space. As we have seen, a modern example can be seen in the choice of the Vatican Museums to display the new, more authentic,

64 Conti, 227.
65 Howard, 34.
66 Howard, 35.
restoration of the *Laocoon* next to a cast of its earlier restoration, with which it is obviously at odds. The tension between the two versions of the same work draws attention to the fact that, in many cases, reconstructions can and should be “respected as important documents of eighteenth- [or sixteenth- or seventeenth-] century taste.”\(^67\) Thus, though the fragment was now accepted and valued for display, and the act of creating complete reconstructions of antiquities was considered academically and historically irresponsible. Thus, curators from the eighteenth century onwards were faced with the challenge of how to interpret, privilege and display previously reconstructed pieces.

In light of these developments, restorers became conservators; perhaps the most conspicuous illustration of this new, more conservative approach to the care and display of antiquities can be seen in the British Museum’s decision not to restore the Elgin marbles upon their arrival to England. It is important to note that the decision was made based largely on the fact that, seeing as the marbles were intended for display in a public institution, “there was no need to comply with the decorum required for the sculptures in private homes”\(^68\) and it was agreed that they could satisfactorily contribute to the education of the public in their fragmentary state. Here, we not only see new conservative methods being put into practice, but also the acknowledgement of a discrepancy between the purpose of a gallery and that of a museum, and how differently objects function within each. While displays in a gallery setting are expected to adhere to a

---


\(^68\) Conti, 229.
specific “decorum”, the educational purpose of the museum frees the object from certain aesthetic requirements, so long as their didactic value remains intact.

Some scholars, Quatremère de Quincy chief among them, still favored completions precisely because they believed that they strengthened an object’s didactic capabilities. Never convinced by the argument that the viewer was capable of imaginatively interpreting an incomplete work, Quatremère insisted that the public required the guidance of a competent completion. In the case of the Elgin marbles, he suggested that they be re-integrated with the use of casts⁶⁹, providing an elegant compromise between the cult of the fragment and that of completion. The use of casts in conjunction with the original marbles can be seen as an important step towards current conservationist methods, particularly the “practice of reversibility in scientific restoration.”⁷⁰

Furthermore, Thorvaldsen, a Danish restorer of considerable fame, performed a complete intervention on the Aegina Marbles in 1816 (fig. 14 and fig. 15), demonstrating that the conservative approach of the British Museum in regards to the Parthenon Marbles was far from a universal one at this stage of the century. In contrast with earlier Renaissance completions such as Montorsoli’s Laocoon, Thorvaldsen’s completion is the earliest example of a restoration executed “in the style of”.⁷¹ Deeply influenced by Winckelmann, Thorvaldsen sought not to better the classical forms with which he was working,

⁶⁹ Conti, 234.
⁷⁰ Howard, 34.
but rather to replicate them using the Greek process, striving to imitate their original Severe Style.  

Rather than trying to articulate his own artistic genius through the figures, he sought to create a harmonious piece, adhering closely to Winckelmann’s vision of an antiquity in which “they purified their images from all personal feelings, by which the mind is diverted from the truly beautiful.”

Thus, Thorvaldsen presents us with an interesting eighteenth century interpretation of restoration that still embraces completion while seeking to emulate the style of the classical original as closely as possible.

In his restoration of the frieze “Triumph of Alexander” (fig. 16), Thorvaldsen looked closely to the literary account of Quintus Curtius to ensure as much accuracy as possible in his representation of the iconography of the event. Indeed, for most archaeologists, these completions, and the artifacts that they brought to light, derived their authority and merit from ancient writers. For instance, an Apollo at Munich was greatly admired because it was supposedly mentioned in the writings of Horace. However, this literary identification was later disproved and the Apollo lost much of its value and repute. Here we see the ancient text being employed in intervention efforts as an historical tool and part of an archaeological investigation rather than as

---


73 Winckelmann, vol.ii, Lodge’s Translation. p. 47

74 Quintus Curtius, a Roman Historian, is the author of the *Historiae Alexandri Magni*. [Plon, 208.]

justification for arbitrarily assigning a subject to unidentifiable fragments, as it had been in previous centuries.

Thorvaldsen was celebrated throughout Europe for his efforts, suggesting that complete restorations were still considered valuable and estimable. Indeed, upon his return to Copenhagen, the city organized a grand reception for Thorvaldsen at which the poet Oehlenschlaeger, in a formal address, remarked that “if our ancestors were once guilty of throwing down in Rome the old masterpieces of art, they are to-day, thanks to the genius of a son of the North, raised up again in all their pristine beauty.”76 Clearly, the completed figure had not entirely lost its persuasiveness in the imagination of Western culture.

Nevertheless, unaltered antiquities became increasingly valued and sought after by museums across Europe. Indeed, the General Inspector of Antiquities for the Vatican, Antonio Canova, actively promoted the purchase of “those monuments that are still conserved without restoration (non tocchi) in their ancient originality.”77 This proclamation marked the first time that restoration constituted falsification in an institutional, or museum, context. Soon after, in 1816, the Papal States issued a code concerning public artistic heritage,78 which forbade the application of restorations to antiquities without the approval of an appointed commission of experts. This code was added to a new law promulgated by Cardinal Pacca in 1820, formalizing the modern

76 Plon, 76.
78 Pinelli, 68.
theoretical model of conservation. Clearly, restorations were no longer seen as simply frivolous, but as potentially insidious or harmful falsifications and abuses of art history. This suspicion of completion was evident in the installation of the Venus di Milo and the Nike of Samothrace in the Louvre, both of which were acquired in the mid-eighteen hundreds and neither of which underwent completions.

Interestingly, by the end of the nineteenth century the antique fragment was no longer an acquisition valued exclusively by public institutions, but began to appear in private collections as well. This shift in private tastes seems to indicate that the aesthetic value of completed antiquities had been compromised by the suspicion of falsification. Clearly, by the end of the century “authenticity” had come to be defined in a much more restrictive sense at the behest of the public museums, and the “sacred aura”79 that it gained had become an essential condition of aesthetic value, even in the private sphere.

This transition towards a cult of the original exposes an interesting break from the way in which sculpture had been regarded in the past. The Romans famously saw little difference between the value of a copy and that of an original, as the one was essentially twin to the other in physical and aesthetic attributes. The approach to restoration from the Renaissance until the end of the 1800s seems to reflect a Platonic view of a statue as “no more than the imperfect embodiment of the shapes that existed in the mind of its creator,”80 with each

---

79 Pinelli, 62.
80 Janson, H.W. "Originality as a Ground for Judgement of Excellence." Paper presented at the New York University Institute of Philosophy,
successive generation of artist seeking to bring the object closer to its Form. Interestingly, the emerging notion of the intrinsic value of the original suggests a more Aristotelian view of the art object as valuable not only because of its formal attributes, but also because of its singularity.81

This shift in the value of objects in private collections was accompanied by a new approach to copies and casts within the museum context. By the end of the century, it was considered poor taste to use copies as decoration, but they were considered permissible, even useful, as didactic aids, just as Quatremère had suggested earlier. Indeed, copies had come to form the nucleus of many museum collections across Europe. Increasingly, museums were seen as opportunities to “realize a comparative outline of the material products of mankind,”82 and the use of copies and casts was useful, indeed, necessary, to create such a narrative. Thus, as issues of authenticity became central to the value of antiquities in private collections, the same issue became less relevant in the context of public institutions, as museums developed an increasingly didactic, narrative approach focused around the “scientific arrangement [of objects] according to their era and style.”83

While thinkers such as Quatremère sought to resolve the issue of completion through compromise between original material and reversible modern additions, Cesar Brandi, a leader in twentieth century conservation,

---

81 “Works of art have their merit in themselves so that it is enough if they are produced having a certain quality of their own.” [Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, II, IV, 3]
82 Pinelli, 62.
83 Pinelli, 62.
called instead for “restoration without 'historic or artistic falsification'.”

He suggested that this could be achieved by employing new advancements in our understanding of human perception to do away with the necessity of completions while still providing some kind of visual continuity to aid interpretation.

Indeed, some of his greatest contributions to the field of art conservation used concepts from Gestalt psychology to demonstrate how lacunae could be integrated relatively unobtrusively so long as they are not added in such a way that the original image recedes into the background. Instead, the lacunae should constitute the backdrop against which the original work, or fragment, is perceived. This approach is particularly useful in the conservation of museum objects or archaeological findings which “being free from the requirements of practical functions, allow for the strictest interpretation of basic principles” of conservation. In these cases, restoration aims to reduce, as much as possible, the interruption caused by the lacunae, but only in such a way that the intervention is clearly identifiable as such. This approach, however, necessarily entails the separation of all previous restorations from the original fragments, which to some may constitute a “continuing act of 'historical purification.'” It can even be suggested that the increasingly common “de-restoration” of antique

---

84 Podany, 18.
85 Missing parts of objects
87 Podany, 19.
sculptures is the product of aesthetic preferences influenced by the torso aesthetics in twentieth-century sculpture since Rodin as much as it is the result of the concern for archaeological accuracy.

A case study of the Lansdowne Herakles provides an excellent example of how fickle accepted practices for the restoration and display of antiquities can be, even within the relatively short timeframe of the past half-century. Discovered in 1790 at Hadrian’s Villa, the statue was initially purchased by Thomas Jenkins and offered to Lord Lansdowne shortly after. The sculpture underwent a restoration in Italy just before it was shipped to Lansdowne, most likely at the hand of Carlo Albacini, who had studied under Cavaceppi. These additions were fashioned in a style suitable to that of the original fragment, and “illustrat[ed] reciprocal harmonies possible with an analogous vision—in this case, mutually enhancing views of ancient modern Neoclassicisms.”

In the 1950s, the Lansdowne Herakles became one of the first acquisitions of the J. Paul Getty collection. However, rusting iron dowels used in the early restoration of the figure necessitated the disassembly of the sculpture in the early 1970s. Nearly all of the eighteenth-century additions were removed, with only those restorations required to support the structure of the sculpture

---

89 Podany, 19.
90 Howard, 36.
or to connect fragments being replaced with epoxy\textsuperscript{91} versions, resulting in a “fashionably ‘strict’ archaeological restoration”\textsuperscript{92} (fig. 17).

A second wave of restorations, necessitated by the rapid deterioration of the epoxy attachments from the 1970s, were supervised by the Getty’s curator Marion True and conservator Jerry Podany (fig. 18). Albacini’s supportive additions were restored to the figure, but were also demarcated from the original fragments, resulting in a display piece that is at once didactic and syncretic, capable of serving as “a monument actively celebrating both ancient and modern art, as well as a distinguished lineage in restoration.”\textsuperscript{93} Thus, the various modern reconstructions of the Lansdowne Herakles demonstrate that the debate between the completion and conservation of ancient sculptures remains a current one. Furthermore, it exemplifies the way in which restoration and conservation efforts are dictated by the individual purpose of the museum; that is to say, the way in which the museum intends its viewing public to interact with the display objects and vice versa.

While the Lansdowne Herakles succeeds in creating a compelling synthesis of aesthetic and didactic effectiveness, many other restoration efforts have fallen short in one, if not both, of these categories. Perhaps most conspicuously, the current display of the \textit{Apollo Belvedere} at the Vatican Museums is stripped of Montorsoli’s 1530 marble additions, which until their removal in 1924 had been integral parts of the \textit{Apollo’s} famously admired and

\textsuperscript{91} Podany, 20.
\textsuperscript{92} Howard, 37.
\textsuperscript{93} Howard, 37.
copied form. While perhaps more faithful to the ancient original, the contemporary display deprives visitors of “seeing an antiquity of remarkable interest and quality as interpreted by the High Renaissance.”\textsuperscript{94} In privileging the antique over all intervening centuries, the restoration acknowledges only a fragment of the statue’s history and aesthetic tradition, limiting its effectiveness as a didactic tool.

The more insidious effects of a misguided or failed restoration attempt can be observed in the subjection of the Elgin Marbles to the “cult of ideology of whiteness”\textsuperscript{95} rooted in the eighteenth-century adoration of the silent grandeur of antiquity discussed earlier in this chapter. Though they famously avoided completion efforts upon their arrival in London and installation in the British Museum in the eighteenth-century, the marbles were subjected to a “cleaning” at the behest of Lord Duveen. Between 1937 and 1938, Duveen bribed museum workers to scrape the “surfaces of many of the sculptures with metal chisels and harsh abrasives in an effort to make them appear more white.” After appraising the results, Lord Macmillan determined that the “damage [was] obvious and [could not] be exaggerated.”\textsuperscript{96} This particular, purely aesthetic, restoration compromised all further research on the surfaces of the Elgin Marbles, stunting any contribution they could have made to the academic community.

\textsuperscript{94} Vaughan, 198.


\textsuperscript{96} St Clair, 87.
Polychromy: Issues of Conservation and Display

The previous case study is a prime example of how the problem of negotiating our modern aesthetic preference for the austere and the polychromatic reality of antique sculpture within the museum context is one that must necessarily be resolved without the involvement of restoration efforts. As we have clearly seen with the Elgin Marbles, to remove traces of paint violates the “practice of reversibility in scientific restoration”\(^{97}\) and the application of pigment, even if proven to be historically accurate, would be an equally grave transgression of the same principle. Thus, if the museum is to address the polychrome nature of antique sculpture, it must do so through methods of display and exposition.

Though it is a widely acknowledged fact within the academic community that ancient Greek and Roman statuary was often vibrantly painted, especially architectural sculptures such as the Elgin Marbles, we can plainly see that popular aesthetic preferences still tend to align with the Winckelmann’s chromophobic tradition. This complicates the terms of display of polychrome sculptures in a museum setting, as the public’s preconceived perceptions and interpretations of the past, and the way in which they value that past through its material culture, is necessarily of great importance to the museum. Therefore, the institution must be careful to take the difference between public understanding and that of academic discourse into account when presenting its collection. The museum is bound, at least to some degree, to satisfy the

\(^{97}\) Howard, 34.
expectations of the public because both the museum and the practice of archaeology depend heavily on public support. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of original ancient sculptures have lost their pigmentation in some ways necessitates the privileging of this classical aesthetic, as the notion of painting the original constitutes more interference than preservation. Thus, the museum space is “one of the most difficult areas to confront modern archaeologists,”98 as it must at once take into account the way in which the past is perceived by the public and the ways in which those assumptions can be shifted to reflect recent advances in academic understanding, all while preserving the original fragment to the best of the institution’s ability.

Thus, polychrome statuary by its very nature challenges the delicate balance between the institution’s need to fulfill the aesthetic appetite of the public and its requirement to serve a didactic function. Several different models for the display of polychromy in ancient sculpture, ranging from installations in the permanent display to highly didactic temporary exhibitions, have been applied in museums across the western world. Each example reflects a different equilibrium between the aesthetic and the didactic, commonly held belief and archaeological truth.

A particularly bold example of a polychrome statue featured in a permanent display is that of the Peplos Kore (plate 1) at the Cambridge Museum of Classical Archaeology. The vibrant greens, reds, blues and whites applied to this cast copy help to define the meniskos, jewelry and headdress, making the

98 Pearce, 133.
Cambridge Kore an excellent example of how pigments can in fact enhance the legibility and form of a work. Since its installation in 1979, its prominent display in the first section of the museum has "never failed to provoke a reaction from visitors though its contrast to all the other white casts surrounding it". Thus, Cambridge Museum of Classical Archaeology has chosen to make a powerful didactic example of just one of its display items. By leaving the remaining part of the collection white, the display preserves the classical aesthetic so valued and craved by the public, while the Peplos Kore serves as an educational tool about the nature of sculpture in antiquity. This example also makes the most of the opportunities presented by the use of casts, rather than originals, in a permanent collection.

Rather than placing such a forceful example within the permanent display itself, the British Museum has effectively relocated the discussion of polychromy in Greek sculpture, and the Parthenon Marbles in particular, to the Internet. In a 2010 interview with the BBC News, Dyfri Williams, Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum, celebrated the addition of a didactic film clip addressing the polychromy of the Parthenon Marbles to the Museum’s website (plate 2), insisting that "the message about color on the sculpture is so important; it changes people’s perception so much that we should have it there." Indeed, perhaps so much so that the British Museum chose to relegate the discussion to the less controversial location of the Internet, rather than the

99 Bradley, 432.
museum space itself. Even then, the discussion of the reconstruction and polychrome nature of the metope is isolated to a 30 second clip within a six and a half minute video. While it certainly is an interesting and topical way of representing accurate reconstructions of ancient polychrome sculpture, the choice, in this particular case, to use the Internet as a means of displacing the archaeological discussion of the Parthenon marbles from the museum space itself is clearly a politically advantageous one.

In the ongoing debate over the Parthenon marbles and Greece’s continued request for their repatriation, the British Museum is quick to point out that about 50% of the sculptures are lost forever and the damaged remnants which are left are divided, not just between London and Athens but a handful of other European museums as well. Thus, the museum contests that "it is no longer possible to recreate them in any real sense," and that such an endeavor “must be done ‘virtually’."101 Thus, in this particular case, the British Museum’s choice to display polychrome sculpture online must be taken with a grain of salt, as it is one that provides an elegant solution to the political quagmire of the marbles by removing the discussion from the museum space entirely.

Nevertheless, the British Museum's model for addressing the polychrome nature of its Greek sculptures is an interesting one in that it has the potential to create a "multi-level, interactive educational resource accessible to all."102 Furthermore, by relocating the didactic, educational element of its display from

---

101 Timpson.
102 Timpson.
the gallery to the Internet, the austere aesthetic coherence of the museum space can be preserved.

However, the fact that the discussion is completely removed from the museum space means that the didactic success of the display is entirely dependent upon the visitor’s individual initiative. In other words, the coherence and educational effectiveness of the display is reliant upon the visitor’s commitment to explore the museum’s website. While intriguing, this method of exposition will remain somewhat disjointed and incomplete until the Internet and the physical experience of the display can be linked more directly. Ultimately, this method could very well become increasingly common, and hopefully effective, as technology continues to be integrated into the museum.

Less experimental in its display techniques than those of the British Museum and less direct in its presentation than that of the Peplos Kore, is the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s treatment of its “Marble Stele of a Youth”. The Attic grave marker (plate 3), dating from the Archaic period, shows obvious traces of paint. Indeed, some of the traces are “so considerable that they have enabled us to reconstruct the original scheme”\textsuperscript{103} of the decoration. In spite of this, there is only a fleeting acknowledgement of the paint’s presence incorporated into the current permanent display, and no attempt to present a possible reconstruction to the public is made. However, a series of watercolor reconstructions (plate 4 and plate 5) were included in a temporary exhibition of the work in 1944.

\textsuperscript{103} Richter, 2.
The fact that the Metropolitan’s collection of marble steles had once featured prominently in an exhibition focusing on polychromy in Greek sculpture, only to return to the permanent display as almost purely aesthetic objects, their didactic function greatly reduced, demonstrates the temporary exhibit’s ability to focus on a theme of current interest while “permanent exhibitions—the core museum experiences—must remain relevant during the entire time they are open to the public, able to weather trendy viewpoints and fickle fashions.” As we have seen, permanent galleries struggle in their display of polychrome sculptures, as they must consistently satisfy the needs and expectations of the public. Thus, they tend to favor more traditional displays, and if a polychrome example is introduced, as in the case of the Peplos Kore, it is most often the exception. Temporary exhibitions, however, allow the museum to explore new techniques in display and interpretation of the subject matter without the risk of alienating the public.

We see an excellent example of this in the Getty Museum’s 2008 exhibition, “The Color of Life: Polychromy in Sculpture from Antiquity to the Present,” which included the head of Caligula and its painted marble reconstruction (plate 6 and plate 7), which is considered to be “one of the most successful recent attempts to reconstruct sculpture in color.” Here, we see the polychrome nature of Greek and Roman sculpture not only pointed out, but also

---


105 Bradley, 433.
insisted upon as both archaeological fact and as a valuable tool for understanding the historical development of sculpture and painting as a whole. Indeed, the exhibition “demonstrated above all the role of color in negotiating the complex interplay between sculptural art and life,” suggesting that these sculptures were valuable precisely because their vivifying paint jobs brought “ancestors, heroes and gods [...] into the world of the living.”106 Thus, by marking the exhibition space as separate from that of the permanent collection, the museum can provisionally escape from the aesthetic evaluation of its display objects and focus instead on their merit as artifacts. In the case of the Getty exhibition, objects that may have seemed “dirty” or otherwise besmirched by troublesome marks of paint amongst the pearly whiteness of the permanent collection became celebrated for these very characteristics within the context of the exhibit.

In this way, the temporary exhibition can focus on a single educational thesis and thus is unmistakably and unapologetically didactic in nature. The objects on display in an exhibition are valued for their ability to aid in the telling of a narrative, or otherwise support a specific interpretation of history, and not necessarily for their aesthetic value. Even though the exhibition provides an excellent solution to the difficulty of confronting the public with the polychrome nature of Greek and Roman sculpture, its didactic power is limited by the fact that it is temporary.

The most effective display of polychrome sculpture, then, would be one

106 Bradley, 446.
that could explicate archaeological truth without denying the visitor his modern “classical aesthetic” and would do so within the relatively conservative framework of the museum’s permanent collection. In the case study of the Vatican Museum’s treatment and presentation of the Prima Porta Augustus, we can observe the beginnings of the formulation of just such a display. The statue (plate 8) portrays Augustus in his cuirass, which depicts various deities, as well as a number of personifications of the territories that the princeps had conquered. The iconography of the statue was almost certainly enhanced by the pigmentation that adorned it. For instance, Augustus’ hair was most likely painted blonde, as it was “a distinctive color for heroes and divinities, particularly in Augustan literature,”\textsuperscript{107} and doing so would have made the connection between princeps and deity even more explicit, while also tying into the ideology of the Augustan Golden Age. Furthermore, traces of organic red pigment suggest that Augustus was depicted with the general’s paludamentum, the “scarlet cloak traditionally worn by the imperator on the battlefield,”\textsuperscript{108} a symbolic representation that would have marked Augustus’ military and imperial authority. Thus, it is more than likely that polychromy was not only a convention in ancient sculpture, but in certain instances, constituted a great deal of the work’s iconographical and symbolic force.

A cleaning of the Prima Porta in 1999 revealed several traces of paint that had not been previously noticed, prompting the Vatican Museums to systematically identify and document traces of these pigments across the

\textsuperscript{107} Bradley, 448.
\textsuperscript{108} Bradley, 449.
original sculpture\textsuperscript{109}. This process allowed for the creation of the most technically accurate reconstructions of the Prima Porta in plaster to date (plate 9). In 2004, the Vatican staged an exhibition called “ClassiColor,” which featured “numerous examples of reconstructed classical sculpture in polychrome versions.”\textsuperscript{110} At the close of the exhibit however, the Vatican Museums did not retire the polychrome reconstruction entirely, as was the case with the Metropolitan marble stele, nor did it banish the discussion of polychromy to the Internet, as the British Museum chose to do. Instead, a photograph of the polychrome cast and a small didactic panel are displayed next to the original sculpture (plate 10). In this way, the permanent display continues the educational initiative of the earlier “ClassiColor” exhibition.

Just as the most recent reconstruction of the Lansdowne Herakles succeeded in achieving a synthesis of aesthetic and didactic effectiveness, the Vatican Museums’ display of the Prima Porta effectively balances the educational pursuits of the institution with the more traditionally, aesthetically concerned, “gallery” aspects of the museum. The display identifies an exposition space in which it presents the archaeological context and facts relevant to the appreciation of the object as an artifact, while simultaneously preserving the Winkelmannian aesthetic of the sculpture as it is valued as a work of art. Ultimately, it is up to the viewer to synthesize these two versions of the work,

\textsuperscript{109} Bradley, 448.
and while the decision to privilege one of these aspects over the other remains entirely personal, at least the museum has considered both in its display. In this way, the museum can satisfy its duty as an edifying force in society without risking the compromise of traditional aesthetic values and thus, the alienation of the viewing public.

This last example of the Prima Porta demonstrates the way in which the method of display can be extremely helpful in cases where the conservation of an object must be conducted independently from the original artist’s intentions. In the case of polychromy in ancient statuary, the knowledge that these objects were vibrantly painted does not necessarily mean that the conservator’s interventions should be in line with these original artistic intentions. Indeed, in this case an attempt to unite the purpose of the restorer with that of the creator would violate modern principles of conservation by necessitating the application of paint to the original that would be difficult to remove without damaging its surfaces. Thus, if the museum is to satisfy both its role as steward of the object and instructor of the public, it must look to the inventiveness of its display to present the statue without endorsing an aesthetic sensitivity based on anachronistic or mistaken value judgments.

**Restoration/Conservation: Context and Interpretation**

The context of display can also dictate the interpretation, and therefore the restoration, of the object in question. When the Glyptotek in Copenhagen
acquired it, the statue of Demosthenes\textsuperscript{111} retained restorations that represented the statesman and orator holding a book-scroll in both hands (fig. 19). Plutarch, however, described a bronze statue of Demosthenes, placed in the Athenian Agora in 280 BC, as having his hands folded\textsuperscript{112}, and because it was established that the Roman marble copy was a reproduction of this statue, the Copenhagen acquisition was stripped of its hands in 1954.\textsuperscript{113} It was suggested that casts from a Roman marble copy of the statue be attached (fig. 20), though they were too large for the Glyptotek Demosthenes. Here, the restorers were faced with the choice between attaching what was essentially a pastiche and totally stripping the statue of its restorations. Not wanting to keep the poorly proportioned hands and fearing that the permanent removal of the restorations would leave the statue looking as if “it had experienced a very bad accident”\textsuperscript{114}, the museum finally decided to fashion a new pair of hands (fig. 21), which were to be folded so as to match the description provided by Plutarch.

The museum had the opportunity to display casts of all three possible Demosthenes statues, each with their different pairs of hands, during its 1980 exhibition entitled “Restoration—Then and Now”. Because the museum no longer had to select just one representation of the statue, the public was given a

\textsuperscript{111} Roman, First Century AD. Copenhagen, NY Carlsberg Glyptotek 2782.
\textsuperscript{112} Plutarch. \textit{Demosthenes}. 30.5-31.1
\textsuperscript{114} Moltensen, 209.
rare opportunity to see the complete biography of a single object, as well as the evolution of its interpretation (fig. 22).

A different exhibition, mounted in 1983 and focusing on the English country house collections as seen in the photographs from the Forschungsarchiv für römische Plastik in Cologne, demanded sculptures that had a “Grand Tour Pedigree”. Thus, the oldest restoration of the Demosthenes statue, that is, the one with the book-scroll, was selected as more relevant to the purpose of the display. Interestingly, the statue has since been displayed at the Glyptotek in this old condition, with the book-scroll. Because it is impossible to know the original position of the hands in this particular marble copy, the old restoration, representing “the history of the statue itself from the time when the duke of Dorset brought it from Knole,” has been selected as a better fit for the context of the museum itself.

In some cases, restorations can change not only the interpretation but also the very identification of a work. The Glyptotek Hera Borghese, for example, has traditionally and historically been identified as Hera because her right arm was raised, suggesting that she was holding a scepter, which has been restored in many of versions of the statue (fig. 23). In 1976 however, all former restorations were removed, including any repairs to the drapery. The parts deemed absolutely necessary for holding the original together were filled in with plaster, which, in keeping with Brandi’s recommendations for the treatment of lacunae, was lowered by a few millimeters and kept neutral. The figure that

---

emerged from this “stripped down” restoration had a much younger look\textsuperscript{117} (fig. 24); the angle of the neck had been corrected and the wet look of the drapery across her stomach stood out more clearly. In light of these new characteristics, and without the iconographic support of the scepter or phiale, it became clear that the figure represented not Hera, but Aphrodite.

These discoveries seem to be corroborated by the discovery of a small votive relief from Aegina depicting Aphrodite Euploia with similar attributes. Instead of a scepter, she holds an oar in her right hand and a cornucopia, rather than a phiale, in her left. This figure type is further supported by the presence of two images in the Archaeological Museum in Naples, both of which carry cornucopiae.\textsuperscript{118} The identification of the figure as Aphrodite also makes sense of the fact that the drapery is slipping rather seductively off the shoulder of the figure, an attribute that would have seemed uncharacteristic for Hera, queen of the Olympians, but is fitting for the youthful goddess of love. Given the new identification of the subject, it is likely that the statue is, in fact, a copy of the Aphrodite Euploia by Polykleitos, which was placed in the Sanctuary of Apollo at Amyklai and is represented on a decree-relief from Aegina.

It is clear that restoration, or even conservation, attempts can significantly change not only the interpretation and aesthetic appreciation, but also the actual identification of an object. It is precisely this plurality of

\textsuperscript{117} Moltensen, 215.
consequences that makes the alteration of antiquities, no matter the motive, such a challenging task. Throughout the history of the restoration/conservation of antiquities, the distinction between its subjects’ role as art objects and artifacts has become increasingly blurred.

To many, a Greek mosaic or Roman statue is valuable because it is capable of making us realize its own entity and vitality, to evoke what Berenson refers to as an “ideated sensation.”¹¹⁹ This strictly aesthetic assessment is almost Kantian in its insistence that the virtue of the object is born of its ability to suggest the Sublime, to evoke a sense of limitlessness and provoke an aspect of the mind beyond the senses by stimulating negative pleasure.¹²⁰ Thus, the object in question is valuable because its unique formal qualities are able to go beyond the faculty of imagination and engage instead our faculty of reason. In essence, their aesthetic character makes them “a presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason.”¹²¹ According to this evaluation, the object should be preserved in such a way that protects its unique formal essence.

Antiquities are also necessarily archaeological artifacts, documents of a culture and a past far removed from our own. Thus, they provide us with valuable information for constructing a more complete concept of human history and cannot be valued exclusively as aesthetic objects. There are challenging

¹¹⁹ “Ideated sensations, in our field, are the images of sensations that the same representations offer when they are works of art and not mere artifacts... Ideated sensations...are those that exist only in imagination...” Berenson. 67.
¹²⁰ This negative feeling comes from “a check to the vital forces followed at once by a discharge all the more powerful.” [Kant, Critique of Judgment, Second Book]
More plainly put by Berenson, the Sublime is “the horror of the outer universe that knows us not, the stating back as from an alluring abyss, and the joy of the ensuing relief.” [Berenson, 124]
¹²¹ Kant, Critique of Judgment. Second Book.
choices to be made even if it is taken for granted that the antiquity is considered to be an artifact. While archaeological purists would seek to represent the object in its most authentic, fragmentary state, others argue that it is not only impractical but also historically irresponsible to believe that an object can be returned to its original state by removing all later additions. Indeed, intervening centuries have rendered the original state of the object an almost “mythical, unhistorical idea”\(^{122}\) and in many cases, to seek such an abstract concept in a restoration would be to seek to present the object in a state that never existed. Thus, many modern conservators and institutions have chosen to respect period restorations. The Palazzo Altemps in Rome, for instance, displays much of its collection with period restorations intact.

Unfortunately, the inability to clearly divide the decorative and illustrative, aesthetic and archaeological, functions of antiquities will continually confuse and complicate the discussion of the aesthetic and cultural effects of these works, as well as subsequent attempts at their restoration and display. However, Cesare Brandi provides an elegant suggestion for what an intervention should strive to be, a “methodological moment in which the work of art is appreciated in its material from and in its historical and aesthetic duality, with a view to transmitting it to the future.”\(^{123}\)

Indeed, the very impulse towards conservation supposes both the irreplaceable nature of antiquities and their physical vulnerability; the

---


emergence of the “cult of authenticity” and its Aristotelian adoration of the
singular essence of an object has certainly insisted upon the former. In the face
of nationalism, the question of who dictates the terms of antiquity’s transmission
to the future has given rise to highly politicized battles over the ownership and
control of these objects, a struggle which have only become further confused by
the emergence of globalism and the concept of cultural heritage.
Chapter 2

The Tangible Past: Politics in Restoration and Display

The debate over how best to reconstruct and display antiquities is not confined to strictly aesthetic and archaeological discourses. The extent to which each of the previous arguments is taken into account is governed by the purpose and desired end of the context within which the object is framed. Particularly in the case of antiquities, this context is often influenced, if not governed, by inherently political motives.

The advent of nationalism in the nineteenth century, and the project of nation building that it necessitated, fueled a desire on the part of each state to legitimate its emerging national culture. Antiquities provide a corporeal form upon which a fledgling national imagination can be focused and lend authority to the prevailing culture and identity. The material nature of antiquities aids the legitimization of a culture by providing a physical link to the past that fosters the notion that the ascendency of the nation is based on natural principles and part of a teleological progression. It is precisely the materiality of archaeological objects that makes antiquities such effective tools of nation building, as their possession allows the state to objectify its own existence, both “spatially and temporally.”\(^\text{124}\) Issues of repatriation and ownership are typically rooted in one

of these two aspects; either the object is valued as a marker of the national ‘space’, or it is coveted as a symbol of the national past.

Appeals to antiquity are not exclusive to hegemonic powers, however; marginalized or local groups are just as likely to use antiquities in an attempt to claim recognition and legitimacy. In recent years, the notion of national “ownership” of antiquities has been challenged by the spread of globalization. All of these factors complicate the way in which these objects are valued, reconstructed and displayed, particularly within the context of the museum.

**Loot and Spoil: The Politics of Claiming and Framing National Time and Space**

Since antiquity, monuments and art objects have been coveted and demanded as plunder and as war spoils. The Roman triumph famously presented the conquest of an enemy as a ritual performance in which the war spoils acted as ritual objects, the exchange of which formalized - in the literal sense that it lent the victory a visible, tangible form - the subjugation of the “other.”

Originally, the Roman triumph was not only a means of acknowledging military victory, but served an important purifying, religious function as well; the last part of the procession focused exclusively on the offering of the *spolia* to Jupiter Opima. The act of consecrating *spolia* to the gods was, according to

---

125 “By the late Republic, however, the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus had become the primary focus of ritual activity,” a shift that was most likely the result of the Etruscan occupation
Plutarch, first carried out by Romulus, and was thus seen as foundational to the collective tradition of Roman identity. Indeed, Augustus seized upon the symbolism of the triumphal offering of spolia as “a way of signifying his absolute power in the city while at the same time appearing to revive hallowed ancient rituals,”126 simultaneously redefining the Roman identity and insisting that his new Rome was inherently linked to the virtues and legacy of the past. As Roman borders continued to expand, the choreography and display of this rite became reflective of an increased focus on “justifying military campaigns to the Senate and people of Rome.”127 Over the course of the Roman Empire, the religious emphasis of the triumph was gradually displaced from the gods to the glory of the imperator and Roman state, marking a crucial shift in the historical tradition of political commemorations.

Increasingly, triumphs came to serve a didactic role; instead of having their terminus within the city at the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, they were drawn outside of the city and throughout the whole of Italy. These lavish and exotic displays were aimed primarily at educating their audience about Rome’s newly acquired territories through “exhibits of captured exotica [...] and statues personifying conquered cities and regions.”128 Clearly, the function of the spolia had become increasingly complex, incorporating that of a religious offering with that of a display object within the context of an instructive and

---

128 Holliday, 23
129 Holliday, 30

55
highly politicized exhibition meant to illustrate the shifting geographic and cultural limits of the empire. The ritual of the triumph became less about re-asserting Roman identity through the offering of spolia to the gods and increasingly concerned with imposing that identity upon conquered territories through formal displays of subjugation. Thus, we can see that the narrative effectiveness of spoils in defining national space has been recognized and ritualized since antiquity.

From the perspective of the present, the difference, however subtle, between art object and antiquity further complicates the treatment of the latter. While the Roman triumph and other such exchanges and displays of war spoils were intended to articulate the subjugation of an "other," the acquisition, repatriation and display of antiquities is concerned with the appropriation of a distant, yet authoritative, past. This disparity parallels the difference between the legitimization of a nation and an insistence upon the supremacy of an empire, in that it can range from considerable to barely discernable.

We can see how an object’s status as an “antiquity” complicates its interpretation as “spoil” in the modern era by examining the two triumphs in which the Laocoon acted as a central ritual object. As mentioned in the introduction, Pope Julius II organized a triumphal procession\(^{129}\) shortly after its discovery. While certainly a powerful and striking gesture, the intended message behind its deployment is confused by the fact that this example lacks a

traditional “triumphal” subject, without which it becomes difficult to determine how the audience was supposed to read the iconography of the celebration.

The Roman “triumph” of the Laocoon was exceptional because it lacked a military context, and yet the iconography of the ritual marked the occasion as a political victory. Within the conventional framework of the triumph, Rome, or more specifically, the Papacy, was marked as the “victor.” Who, or what, then was the conquered subject? Certainly, no war was waged, no contemporary state subjugated. If this was a triumph, as the iconography of its context suggested, it was a triumph over time itself.

The discovery of the Laocoon in Roman soil linked Renaissance Italy, and the Papacy of Julius II, to an authoritative ancient past; its display in the Vatican museums helped to legitimize the power of the Papacy, and to foster a sense of the restoration of Rome to its former glory, by portraying the modern city as a natural, and direct, extension of its ancient self, at the exclusion of the potentially problematic interceding centuries. Indeed, it formed the core of the Pontifical Collections, which would later become the Vatican Museums.130 Rather than indicating the acquisition of new territory and peoples, this “spoil” signaled the appropriation of the ancient Roman past in an attempt to legitimize and strengthen the influence and prestige of the modern city.

This political interpretation and presentation of the Laocoon as an archaeological find adds further complexity to its second triumphal procession,

---

as part of the Napoleonic requisitions in July of 1798. On this occasion, the statue group performed a double role: as a war spoil within the framework of a traditional military triumph and as an antiquity celebrated in a temporally-framed triumph. Within the first context, the Laocoön, along with the other objects acquired from Italy in the Treaty of Tolentino in 1797, acted as physical signifiers of Italy’s political subjugation under the Napoleonic Empire.

However, its status as an antique also allowed France to claim the same sort of teleological, legitimizing interpretation of history through its appropriation. Indeed, by stripping the group of its Italian reconstructions and holding a competition to identify the French sculptor who would fashion the French Laocoön, Napoleonic France made an attempt to link itself to the glory of antiquity even more directly; perhaps this effort to physically mark the group as French was an attempt to possess the Laocoön more convincingly, with the hope that the appropriation of its authority, and its ability to insist upon the natural right of the French Empire, would be more effective as a result. Thus, as a part of the Napoleonic requisitions, the Laocoön acted both as a symbol of the subjugation of contemporary Italy and as a tool of the appropriation of the authority of classical Rome.

This dual nature of antiquities, namely their ability to locate their possessor within frameworks of both time and place, is precisely what makes them such powerful and attractive tools in the shaping of “national space.” As Hamilakis suggests, this “national space” is largely imaginary, and “antiquities,

131 Conti, 32-33.
132 Penny, 246.
partly through an externally motivated mechanism of valuation, [become] the symbolic capital\textsuperscript{133} within this imagined realm in which the concept of the "nation" is located. Thus, "antiquities can be seen as the indispensable landmarks in the imagined territory\textsuperscript{134} of the classical past."

Surely, not every aspect of "national space" is imagined; in many cases, antiquities are interpreted as markers of place, a means of legitimizing a common national history by linking a modern state to past civilizations through continuity of location. According to this interpretation, antiquities can be defined as the "cultural property" of the modern nation whose borders circumscribe them. This type of contextual argument is foundational to Turkey's demand for the repatriation of objects whose origins were within its modern day borders, particularly those artifacts and monuments that were "illicitly taken abroad for sale and have found their way into Euro-American museums."\textsuperscript{135} One of the most conspicuous and well publicized of these demands was for the repatriation of the Altar of Zeus from Pergamum, currently housed in the Pergamum Museum in Berlin, launched in the early 1990s by Sefa Taskin, the mayor of Bergama.

The importance of context and continuity of place figured prominently in the repatriation rhetoric. Rather than focusing the campaign upon the Germans’ supposedly illegal acquisition of the monument, Taskin insisted that the


\textsuperscript{134} Hamilakis, 2003, 64-65.

\textsuperscript{135} Tanaka, 61.
existence of the Altar outside of Bergama\textsuperscript{136} represented the greatest ethical transgression in the case. Indeed, he referred to the altar’s exhibition in Berlin as “Sürgündeki Zeus (Zeus in exile).”\textsuperscript{137}

For Taskin, and others who supported the campaign, the altar represented a crucial and inalienable link between Bergama’s ancient past and its current (Turkish) residents. Indeed, in a press conference in Berlin, Taskin asserted that “while the Altar of Zeus has been in Berlin for one hundred years, it was in Bergama over a period of two thousand years. It is part of the city of Bergama.”\textsuperscript{138} Thus, its “exile” in Germany not only deprived the monument of its correct context, but also robbed the town and the Turkish nation of some of its own historical framework, compromising its ability to fully articulate its connection to the past and, therefore, its identity as a nation.

The campaign’s slogan, “a stone is heavy in its place,”\textsuperscript{139} forcefully insists upon the legitimacy of spatial context and suggests that to remove such a historic monument from its original location is unnatural. In this way, the official Turkish demand for the repatriation of the Altar of Zeus is based upon a “fusion of selfhood and locality”\textsuperscript{140} that bares a striking similarity to the observation modern sculptor Richard Serra famously made about his own \textit{Titled Arc}, that “to remove the work is to destroy it.” Only in the case of the Altar of Zeus, the monument itself is not the only thing destroyed by this violent

\textsuperscript{136} modern day Pergamum
\textsuperscript{137} Tanaka, 70.
\textsuperscript{138} Tanaka, 70.
\textsuperscript{139} Tanaka, 70.
\textsuperscript{140} Tanaka, 71.
separation of work from context: the place is also robbed of a piece of its identity and historical legitimacy.

In most cases, however, the definition of “cultural property” and conception of antiquities as "authoritative resource[s] in modern...society"\textsuperscript{141} is not as fiercely dependent upon locality and conceptions of physical space as the Turkish repatriation campaign tended to be. In fact, one of the most common definitions of “cultural property” acknowledges the ability of antiquities to “communicate, either directly or by association, an aspect of the reality which transcends time or space.”\textsuperscript{142} It is precisely this ability to transcend the classification of physical boundaries that makes antiquities such effective and controversial tools in the process of nation building.

This ability to directly link a modern nation to an ancient past, often at the deliberate exclusion of more recent, and perhaps unpleasant, national histories, makes antiquities particularly powerful focal points for the collective national imagination. Indeed, national identities are frequently rooted in a people’s conception of its history, so much so that “some have gone so far as to argue that a close relationship between archaeology and nationalism is inevitable and perhaps unavoidable, and that archaeology owes its very existence to the processes whereby modern European states were formed.”\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{142} Tanaka, 63.
The relatively recent emergence of Greece as an independent nation is an excellent example of how nation building both informs and is informed by archaeology and its interpretation of antiquities. Like Turkey, Greece clearly considered locality and space to some degree when defining the role of antiquities within its national heritage and attempts to claim them as “state property,” as evidenced by the enactment of the nation’s first systematic archaeological law in 1834. However, in the case of the emerging Greek state, the appeal to the classical past was also an attempt to relocate Greece in a temporal sense; that is, to align itself almost exclusively with its classical form.

Hamilakis argues that this attempt to align the modern state with classical ideals was intended to “serve as a link between Greek and other European middle-class ideologies,” legitimizing Greece not only in a political and cultural sense, but in an economic one as well. Indeed, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu suggests that one motivation for visiting art galleries and museums, particularly in the case of the middle class, is to gain “cultural capital.” It is true that, through the institution of “monumental time over social time,” Greece has managed to found a large part of its economic and cultural reputation upon its control and presentation of its classical past, a feat that underscores the legitimizing power of the materiality of antiquities.

The “cleansing” of the Acropolis is a striking example of just such a “monumentalization” of the emerging Greek state. Prior to 1836, the Acropolis

144 Hamilakis, 1996, 119.
145 Hamilakis, 2003, 60.
146 Hamilakis, 1996, 122.
was adorned by “a plethora of buildings, houses, a Muslim mosque, and a
medieval tower,” which co-existed with buildings from the Classical period
(fig. 25). However, in a deliberate attempt to privilege fifth century Athens over
all intermediary histories, these post-Classical structures were eradicated
between 1836 and 1875. This purification project was completed with the
demolition of the medieval tower, the removal of which was overseen by the
Archaeological Society in Athens and funded by none other than Schliemann.

This highly effective focusing of the Greek national imagination upon a
very selective version of its fifth century counterpart has permitted the nation to
successfully wield its archaeological wealth as capital. However, it also ensures
that Greece is constantly interpreted through the lens of antiquity; in an attempt
to secure international authority and economic stability, the Greek nation has
effectively trapped itself in its own monument, setting itself apart from other
contemporary nations. This is not to say that Greece is not a modern state, but
rather that the success of its modernization is due largely to the nation’s
dependence upon its symbolic capital, namely its antiquities, and a claim to a
classical past.

This perpetuation of a perceived “ancient Greek spirit” in the modern era
was not employed solely for economic gain or international recognition of a
common Greek identity; the legitimacy and supremacy of the “ancient Greek
spirit” was also insisted upon within the context of internal political strife in an

\[147\] Hamilakis, 2003, 68.
\[148\] Hamilakis, 2003, 68.
attempt to unite a deeply fragmented populace under a single cultural and political identity.

Frequently, the Greek state tried to maintain this “spirit” was necessarily opposed to radical political ideologies, such as communism. Nowhere was this insistence upon the primacy of Classical Greece, and its supposed anti-radical “spirit,” more ferociously exercised then on the island of Makronisos. A prison, a “rehabilitation” center, a concentration camp, the island housed political dissidents from the Greek Civil War until the restoration of democracy in 1974. Prisoners were forced to build replicas of classical monuments in another effort to impose monumental time over social time (fig. 26), but in this instance, the intent was to help the inmates “re-approach this (that is, the “ancient Greek”, anti-radical) spirit.”

Indeed, an article in Makronisos’s primary magazine marveled at a large-scale replica of the Parthenon, saying

the small Parthenon in the camp of the First Company, appears like a white vision. It expresses the spirit of optimism, of joy, of beauty, of adoration for the fatherland which the reborn Makronisiotis feels, a feeling which shakes his soul.

It is clear that even the form of the monument was somehow seen to have a restorative, if not salvational, effect on these radicals, as if it had the power to “reorder” these wayward souls and restore them to their natural state. The deeply religious quality of the description only furthers the notion of

---

149 Hamilakis, 1996, 125.
150 Hamilakis, 1996, 57.
antiquity as ritual object within the space of nation building, with the power to connect it citizens to a distant past, and the spirit that animated it. Thus, antiquities have the power to nullify social time in favor of monumental time, imposing a sense of natural order based on the authority of the Classical period, at the omission of intermediary states and histories.

Similarly, Mussolini enthusiastically excavated the monuments of Augustan Rome, including the forum of Augustus and the temple of Mars Ultor, making them the “focal points of [his] Renaissance,”¹⁵¹ along with the reconstructed area surrounding the Mausoleum of Augustus. These efforts constituted a very conscious attempt to link himself to the great figures of ancient Rome through the materiality of these monuments. In doing so, “Mussolini underscored the ‘truth’ of fascist theory,”¹⁵² framing himself as a part of a logical progression of Roman leaders, perhaps even fashioning himself as the founder of the new Rome.

Mussolini’s efforts are characteristic of the use of archaeology and antiquities under a dictatorship, where national identity and ideology is frequently regulated through propaganda, including the establishment of museums and reconstruction of ancient monuments. By doing so, “a dictator often seeks to link his regime to a glorious past [...] from which he gains


¹⁵² Gilkes, 33.
legitimacy.”\textsuperscript{153} Such attempts at the manipulation of the archaeological record are most effective when the government has complete control of the academic, as well as popular, discourse, which is why some of our most potent examples come from dictatorships.

Under Mussolini, the “ideology of colonial Romanità,”\textsuperscript{154} first established in France under Napoleon, was intensified “to the point that the regime tried to make the Italians the Romans of modernity.”\textsuperscript{155} The myth of ancient Rome, as interpreted by fascist Italy, benefited from geographic congruency as well, and became an integral part of an increasing nationalist colonial sentiment in asserting a claim to Italy’s “historical” right to African territories. In fact, Mussolini’s conquest of Libya was frequently portrayed as a parallel to Rome’s subjugation of Africa, as a revivification of the glory and valor of antiquity.

This parallel between fascist Italy and ancient Rome was made visually explicit in an engraving carved by Fortunato Matania (fig. 27), which depicts a sailor coming ashore on “the beach of Tripoli, collecting the sword (gladius) of a legionary, half buried in the dune.”\textsuperscript{156} The image was later printed with the caption “Italy Brandishes the sword of ancient Rome.”\textsuperscript{157} A similar attempt to justify fascist colonization through an appeal to the “myth of Roman right” is evidenced in an Italian stamp issued in the series \textit{Decannale della Marcia su

\textsuperscript{153} Galaty, 3.
\textsuperscript{155} Munzi, 79.
\textsuperscript{156} Munzi, 76.
\textsuperscript{157} Munzi, 76.
Roma, from October 1932 (fig. 28). Here, images of the fascist colonization of Libya, including that of a Roman milestone with the inscription SPQR, are accompanied by the motto “coming back to where we already were.”\[^{158}\] Thus, through symbolic appeals to antiquity, Mussolini’s colonial program is portrayed as a sort of homecoming, the fulfillment of an Italian natural right.

Similar manipulations of the historical and archaeological record took the form of the construction of actual monuments that drew from the iconography of ancient Rome, thus achieving a symbolic amalgamation of the new fascist state and its distant predecessor. For instance, the *Arc dei Fileni* was constructed in 1937 by Florestano Di Fausto to commemorate Mussolini’s tour of Libya and the inauguration of the Balbian coastal road. Balbo, who was the governor of Libya at the time, summarized the deeply political sculptural program and epigraphic detail of the arch when he marveled that the monument

> ends the millenarian silences of the region which saw before the signs of Rome and combines the past with the present. Latin civilization, strengthened and renewed forever by the genius of Mussolini, with the new imperial road, indicates again to the world the re-born majesty of Rome.\[^{159}\]

Interestingly, a model of the arch was installed in a section of the *Mostra Augurea della Romanità* labeled “Immortality of the Idea of Rome.”\[^{160}\] Thus, it became at once a monument of the present regime and an artifact of the

\[^{158}\] Munzi, 90.
\[^{159}\] Munzi, 88.
\[^{160}\] Munzi, 88.
venerated past, the foundation of the Roman identity and the immortal reflection of it.

This paradox can also be observed in the language of Mussolini’s government, which was frequently appropriated from that of ancient Rome. Mussolini often portrayed himself as “the new Augustus, [and] the governors did not renounce their roles as proconsuls.”¹⁶¹ Indeed, the governor of Tripolitania was given the “late-antique title of praeses prov(inciale) Tripolitanae.”¹⁶² Balbo, however, chose to modernize his title, dubbing himself Libyae proconsul, “an unknown pastiche in which history and an anachronistic re-interpretation were joined.”¹⁶³ By creating an interpretation of antiquity that reflected fascist principles and the notion of Italian historical right, Mussolini’s Italy sought to legitimize its colonial impulse by linking it to the ideology of colonial Romanità.

Antiquities also played a central role in the ideology of the Metaxas dictatorship in Greece, which spanned from 1936 to 1949. The enterprise of Greek nation building hinged on the negotiation of its double historical tradition, which was divided between that of ancient Greece and that of Byzantium. Each was employed differently within the fledgling Greek identity, and while the classical legacy dominated cultural and educational spheres, Greece’s more recent Byzantine past typically dictated matters of foreign policy. Due to the global, or at least Western, importance ascribed to the Greek classical past, Greek

¹⁶¹ Munzi, 86.
¹⁶² Munzi, 86.
¹⁶³ Munzi, 86.
archaeology “can be termed nationalist as an indigenous enterprise, whereas its international perspective carries an aura of imperialism.”

To the Europeans, however, Greece remained a contradictory entity characterized at once by its ancient grandeur and its modern day “backwardness”, its identity stranded between Western and Eastern traditions. Thus, if Greece was to claim a form of “social capital” in the West, it would do so by establishing modern Greece as the only authentic heir of the classical ancestors to whom Europe owes an enormous cultural debt. Indeed, it was precisely this restoration of old glory to his “now humble” country that Metaxas hoped to accomplish during his dictatorship.

In what was most likely a deliberate imitation of the German Third Reich, Metaxas dubbed his regime the “third Hellenic civilization,” which, according to his ideology, was a final realization of what he perceived as the three periods of glory in Greek history. Not coincidentally, each of these three periods, the first being that of the Athenian “Golden Age” and the second being that of the Christian era of Byzantium, were directed by authoritarian regimes. This self-referential conception of history was convenient, as it not only linked the current regime to a glorified past, but it also denounced the immediate past as a period of disgrace from which Metaxas had rescued the Greek nation. Thus, Metaxas provided an historical interpretation that directly linked ancient Greece to its

---

165 Kokkinidou, 163.
166 Kokkinidou, 163.
present, creating an ideology upon which the modern state could found its claims to social and political influence in the West.

Under Metaxas, the Greek claim to its ancient past was used to particular effect after the start of the Greek-Italian war, which spanned from 1940 to 1941. In its coverage of the struggle, the Greek media portrayed its monuments and citizens as “direct descendants of the Marathon heroes,”167 battling the invading Axis powers. Interestingly, these portrayals often insisted upon the superiority of classical Greece over the Romans, and the “Greek and Italian press fought a war of words around the past”168 that paralleled their modern military entanglement. Thus, the Greek-Italian war was not simply a modern political struggle, but also constituted an attempt on the part of each nation to establish the superiority of their mythical ancient past.

This effort to protect the value and supremacy of classical Greece was not restricted to the media, however. After an Italian attack in October of 1940, urgent measures were taken on the part of the Greek state to preserve Greece’s major museums and antiquities collections. Indeed, “special committees of archaeologists, academic and government officials and civilians in charge were set up all over Greece to supervise the proper packaging and hiding of exhibits.”169 Metaxas was keenly aware that the physical possession of these antiquities was vital to the legitimization of the Greek national identity and

---

167 Kokkinidou, 168.
168 Kokkinidou, 168.
169 Kokkinidou, 168.
therefore the war effort, and sought to protect them as he would his own heads of state.

Interestingly, prior to the Greek involvement in World War II, the Metaxas dictatorship “became the first to send antiquities to the International Exhibition of New York”\textsuperscript{170} in 1939 to 1940, despite the fact that the notion of exporting Greek antiquities had historically been met with strong negative reactions. Though the exhibits were marooned in the United States for the duration of World War II, only to be returned, partially damaged, in 1948, the Metaxas regime, as well as the junta that succeeded it, saw touring exhibitions of Greek antiquities as a method of restoring the international belief in Greek dignity and admiration of its “cultural capital.”

In the modern era, antiquities have played an integral role in the definition of emergent nationalist ideologies. By lending form to historical interpretation, the materiality of antiquities provides a tangible link to the authority of the past. However, this politicization of the antique requires some kind of didactic display, a framework within which the object assumes its narrative voice; it is this necessity that gave rise to the phenomenon of the national museum.

\textbf{Emergence of the National Museum}

With the advent of Nationalism came a shift in the way antiquities were displayed and valued within the new nation states. National or state museums

\textsuperscript{170} Kokkinidou, 180.
became critical performance spaces for the articulation and assertion of national identity, a medium through which the state itself could manipulate the presentation of artifacts, through display, exposition and restoration, to shape its own narrative around the authority of a classical past. Within this newly conceptualized institution, it is often difficult to determine where subjugation ends and attempts at appropriation begin.

We can see this subtle shift from subjugation to appropriation even in antiquity, as illustrated by the “growing choosiness about what was taken and what was kept personally by the commanding general”\textsuperscript{171} when conquering Roman forces were selecting their loot, with later generals tending to favor “thematic selection of certain kinds of images [...] that represented particular gods or Alexander the Great.”\textsuperscript{172} Eventually, the thematic content of the piece became more important than whether it could be linked to noted artist.

By selecting loot or war spoils based on the themes that they contained, generals helped to contribute to the didactic nature of the Roman triumph, as well as displays within the private sphere. The increasingly instructive nature of these exhibits suggests an attempt to appropriate some of the knowledge, culture and authority symbolized by these objects. Indeed, in later triumphs, “large didactic paintings of battles and placards explained the origins of especially notable booty.”\textsuperscript{173} While still a demonstration of military subjugation,

\textsuperscript{172} Miles, 70.
\textsuperscript{173} Miles, 56.
the triumph began to mark a different kind of performance space, one of education and appropriation.

This shift was fully realized by Napoleon in his staging of a triumphal procession of war spoils taken from Italy in 1798, “complete with placards proclaiming the names of various captured Italian cities.”\textsuperscript{174} I have already discussed this example in regards to the political implications of its treatment of the \textit{Laocoon} as a war spoil; here, however, I suggest that Napoleon’s use of the triumph translated the temporary performance of the Roman triumph into a permanent performance space: the museum.

Often, \textit{Triumphatores}, recognizing their “didactic and promotional function” would commission paintings of their triumphs on public buildings “to remind the Roman audience of their achievements and persuade them to follow their policies.”\textsuperscript{175} In this way, they attempted to make the narrative power of the triumph permanent. Napoleon’s interpretation provided an intelligent solution to the temporary nature of the triumph, as it ended at the \textit{Musee Napoleon}, where all of the spoils were then permanently housed in public view. In this way, he captured the didactic and narrative force of the triumph in a permanent performance space, capable of perpetuating the new French identity that his triumph had announced. As another means of linking his triumph to those of the ancients, Napoleon commissioned a vase commemorating the event (fig. 29 and fig. 30), which he also placed in the museum, essentially completing the performance of the triumph, but within his permanent exhibition. The

\textsuperscript{174} Miles, 59.
\textsuperscript{175} Holliday, 62.
iconographic significance of this commemorative effort is even more striking when we compare it to the sculptural program of the Arch of Titus (fig. 31) commemorating the sack of Jerusalem. Thus, Napoleon’s triumph marks the juncture of triumphal and museum space and the birth of the national museum.

Here, a re-examination of the case of the Pergamum Alter reveals it as an excellent example not only of the value of antiquities in the Turkish project of nation building, but also of the national museum’s role in the appropriation and display of these antiquities. Just as the Laocoon group was ushered into France in a triumphal procession, so too were the Pergamum Altar and its procurers welcomed in Berlin in 1880. Indeed, Humann “was received like a general who has returned from the battlefield, crowned with victory.” Even though its acquisition was heralded as a significant contribution to German archaeological scholarship, one that was likened to an Olympic victory by the professoriate, the bureaucracy considered the “full possession of the artifacts [to be] obviously the better part of archaeological valor.” Thus, its acquisition, though allowed to masquerade as a victory for archaeological scholarship, was first and foremost a political power play.

In fact, the construction of the new Pergamum museum in Berlin was intended to “reinvigorate domestic ‘spiritual values’ as well as...restore international prestige for the Wilhelmine capital,” an imperative that closely parallels the interpretation of antiquities within the context of modern Greece.

177 Marchand, 96.
178 Marchand, 287.
However, in this instance the artifacts are not directly attributable to the German state through locality or continuity of space. Thus, it was up to the museum, designed specifically for the reception and display of the altar, to articulate a connection between artifact and nation, not only to impose monumental time over social time, but to do so across localities as well.

However, not every German was comfortable with the use of the museum space for the appropriation of classical cultures and histories; in fact some even went so far as to suggest that “if the Pergamum Altar ...[was] to remain in Berlin only to reinforce the false conviction that all culture originated in the Mediterranean, the monuments should be shipped back to the East.”179 In the voices of these dissenters, we see the recognition of the uncomfortable compromises necessitated by an institution that is responsible for academic education and the construction of a national identity simultaneously, especially when the later is accomplished through the appropriation of classical antiquities. The triumph of the museum, however, secured its status as a symbol of “the enduring institutional power of positive philhellenism”180 in the west.

In some cases, the actual format of the museum display shows a clear attempt at drawing a connection between modern nation and classical antiquity through appeals to locality, attempts at imposing monumental time over social time, or both. An examination of the evolution of the Museo della Civiltà Romana provides us with just one such example. Its gradual development spans from 1911 to 1955 and includes three major shifts in its floor plan and display, each of

---

179 Marchand, 292.
180 Marchand, 293.
which corresponds to a different political regime: Liberal, Fascist and Republican. During each phase of the museum, the dominant political ideology attempted to redefine the way in which classical Rome was integrated into Italian national culture and history, which was clearly reflected in the display of the actual artifacts.

The museum’s first incarnation, as la Mostra Archaeologica in 1911 was constructed for the Cinquantanerio and was aimed at impressing upon its visitors a sense of the “restoration of national dignity.” Interestingly enough, all of the objects in the museum are casts or copies of the originals. Once again, there is evidence to suggest that the form of the object, coupled with a convincing and persuasive display, is enough to convey the authority of an antiquity, particularly in the museum context.

The architect, Rodolfo Lanciani, conceived of a spatially focused exhibit, in that it represented artifacts from each of the Empire’s thirty-six provinces, effectively illustrating, through objects, the physical, spatial borders of Rome at its height. This performance of restoring, at least in form, these ancient artifacts to the city was an attempt at illustrating a continuity of both space and monumental time, underscoring the civilizing force of the Roman Empire and the debt that all of European culture owed to Italy.

Under Fascist rule, the exhibit was reconfigured and renamed La Mostra Augustea della Romanità between 1937 and 1938. Abandoning the geographic

---

layout of the earlier exhibit, the museum strove to “bathe [its visitors] in romanità.”¹⁸² This meant dividing the lay out into three sections, greatly increasing the size of the collection and placing an increased emphasis on Augustan Rome.¹⁸³ Each of the three sections was organized so that it clearly situated Mussolini and his vision of a new Italy within the teleological framework of the monumental history that it traced. In keeping with this concern with situating Fascist Italy as a logical part of an historical progression, the main floor featured a retelling of the history of Rome, from its foundations to 1937, through the chronological display of artifacts. The other two sections focused, once again, on the civilizing influence of the Roman Empire, as well as on aspects of everyday life in ancient Rome, each of which created a strictly hierarchical representation of antiquity that was in keeping with the totalitarian, militaristic values of Mussolini’s regime.

It is also worthy of note that, unlike La Mostra Archaeologica, La Mostra Augustea did not adhere to the “rigid norms of museums, but integrated texts, photo-montages, maps and diagrams”¹⁸⁴ as a means of vivifying the exposition and making it more accessible to the common visitor. As Munzi observes, the exhibit “developed the idea of syncretism---of Augustus and Mussolini, ancient Rome and fascist Italy---drawing an uninterrupted line from the first kings to the

¹⁸² Arthurs, 35.
¹⁸³ However, in keeping with its predecessor, La Mostra Augustea was entirely composed of reproductions and casts.
¹⁸⁴ Arthurs, 37.
rebirth of the empire of Rome under Mussolini.”¹⁸⁵ In other words, the exhibit was an extremely elaborate piece of propaganda.

The final incarnation of the exhibit was realized in 1952, under the new name of the Museo della Civiltà Romana. While the actual catalogue contents remained almost identical to the Mostra Augustea, the format of the museum indicates a political and historical rejection of Mussolini and his Fascist regime. The first room, still organized chronologically, stops at the rise of Christianity,¹⁸⁶ avoiding “modern” Roman history all together. This final stage in the development of the museum constituted a purging of the propaganda, in the form of politically charged exposition, in favor of a return to more logical, historically rigorous criteria.

Across the various phases of the Museo della Civiltà Romana, it is evident that the way in which artifacts are presented within the museum context can fundamentally change the significance that the viewer attaches to them. Where the geographic layout of 1911 was essential to its celebration of progress and universalism, the historical thematic approach in 1937 was essential to the juxtaposition of Augustan Rome and Mussolinian Italy and, conversely, the absence of a fundamental reorganization in 1955 has meant that the present-day Museum serves as much as a monument to Italy’s inability to come to terms with the Fascist past as it does as a lesson in roman history.¹⁸⁷

---

¹⁸⁵ Munzi, 84.
¹⁸⁶ Arthurs, 38.
¹⁸⁷ Arthurs, 40
Thus, it seems that the institution of the museum allows the nation to “not only influence, but constitute the historical disciplines”\(^{188}\) in an attempt to construct its own identity.

In the case of Greece, the development of the national museum was also a process that reflects the changes in national identity and government. Mouliou provides us with a useful division of the major phases in post-war Greek history, which we can use to help us understand the changes that she observes in the nation’s museums. The three decades after World War II, which Mouliou has dubbed the \textit{regeneration period},\(^{189}\) were characterized by the extensive reorganization and gradual development of Greek archaeological museums.

Typically, the museums of this period favored unity and a depiction of the classical past as a linear evolution of art that paralleled the progress of the nation resurrected after years of war. Indeed, Marinos Kalligas linked the reopening of the National Archaeological Musuem, for which he was acting director from 1942-1964, with the need for national resurrection and for a strengthening of the nation’s unity. Thus, the museums that were born in response to these needs tended to display their antiquities as “the priceless jewels of Greece” and “brimful of sacredness.”\(^{190}\) This quasi-religious fervor with which the relics of the Greek Classical past, such as the Athenian Agora, were venerated was intensified by Greece’s role as disputed ideological and cultural territory during the Cold War era, with its material culture

---

\(^{188}\) Arthurs, 40.


\(^{190}\) Mouliou, 87.
helping to fortify not only its own recovering national identity, but that of the entire capitalist world.

Indeed, the decision on the part of the American School of Classical Studies to reconstruct the Stoa of Attalos II in 1949 triggered a heated debate. For those who opposed the reconstruction, the “stoa represented a reinforcement of the dominant state ideology and rhetoric of western (American) imperialism and capitalism which was exemplified by the personification of American dollar donors as modern analogues of Hellenistic rulers.”¹⁹¹ Clearly, the politically precarious position of Greece during this particular period deeply influenced the way in which antiquities were valued and interpreted.

Thus, Karouzos’ model for the National Archaeological Museum presented the classical past as a linear evolution of art in an attempt to impress upon the viewer the evolving ideological, philosophical and political ideas of ancient Greece. In this example, the artifacts were part of a narrative of the “spirit and soul of the ancestors,”¹⁹² though there was little didactic intervention on the part of Karouzos; the chronological arrangement of the artifacts simply implied the archaeological narrative without making it explicit, for Karouzos also believed in the redemptive power of ancient art, as well as in the unavoidable subjectivity of its display. Thus, his layout allowed the aesthetics and organization of the objects to speak for themselves, only ever implying the possible political or historical concepts behind the exhibit.

¹⁹¹ Mouliou, 90.
¹⁹² Mouliou, 88.
However, George Hourmouziadis, who was affiliated with the Museum of Volos, saw these types of exhibits as responsible for the “ideological, hegemonic, ‘hoarding-up treasures’ attitude of the Greek museum”\textsuperscript{193} and rejected their implied rhetoric of historic continuity between modern Greece and classical antiquity. These institutions, he believed, had transformed the Greek archaeological museum into a “sanctified temple-like institution” pandering to a politicized “religious mysticism” of ancestor worship.

In creating the museological archetype for the Museum of Volos, Hourmouziadis employed a surprisingly post-modern approach. He perceived the museum as a “cultural process embedded in a given social context where a web of interrelated forces exist.”\textsuperscript{194} This new, almost democratic, view of the museum was centered on his acknowledgement of the subjectivity of archaeology and his belief in creating avenues of communication between the authors of an official display and the diverse museum-going public. Hourmouziadis’ work in the Museum of Volos was characteristic of the period between 1977 and 1996 in its realization of a more educational museum that was responsible for narrating the past.

This increasingly democratic view of the museum extended into the Greek interpretation and mounting of international exhibits. Because of Greece’s dynamic position in global politics, its artifacts played an influential role in defining national identity, as well as in international discourse, outside of Greece. As traveling exhibitions, these artifacts acted as “cultural

\textsuperscript{193} Mouliou, 99.
\textsuperscript{194} Mouliou, 92.
ambassadors”195 for the state. For instance, the pioneering exhibition of the Treasures of Ancient Macedonia, originally a temporary installation at the National Museum of Macedonian Archaeology in 1978, enjoyed enormous international popularity and acclaim as a travelling exhibition in the USA, Canada, Australia and Europe. Clear statements regarding its intents and objectives accompanied the exhibit, along with supplemental material so as to make it more accessible to the public, all of which helped to make it not only a revolutionary exhibit, but also an effective vehicle of cultural diplomacy.

The final phase of the national museum in Greece, from 1997 to the present, is defined by Mouliou as a “period of great opportunities (legal, financial, scientific, technological) and of pressing challenges (institutional, ideological, social and epistemological).”196 Perhaps the best example of both the opportunities and the challenges facing Greek archaeology and museums today was Greece’s approach to the Athens Olympics of 2004. Ironically, in its attempts to lift the nation to its greatest glory in time for the international spectacle, the Greek government was willing to sacrifice some of its most valuable archaeological sites.

For instance, the archaeological site at Marathon, so central to the myth of ancient Greece, was threatened by several 2004 Olympic projects.197 It was decided that, in preparation for the international spectacle, an Olympic rowing and Canoeing Center was to be built in the western Schinias marsh. While

195 Mouliou, 96.
196 Mouliou, 84.
197 Kokkinidou, 182.
proponents of the project insisted that the marsh site had been submerged since 490 B.C. and had no historic significance, the proposal outraged many conservation groups, some of which compared it to “building a rowing center in Gettysburg”198.

In 2002, construction on the site partially damaged the remains of ancient buildings dating to 2500 B.C. The project was temporarily halted for excavations and the Greek government declared Schinias a national Park shortly thereafter, relocating the rowing center to the site of the old Athens airport. While the outcome can be seen as a victory for conservation and archaeological groups, little has been done to further develop the site, which today features only a small Archaeological Museum.

Perhaps the most unnerving example of this type of archaeological sacrifice is the destruction of the site at the foot of the Acropolis, which contains findings from “the late Neolithic to Byzantine times”199 that are invaluable to our understanding of Athenian historical development, to enable the construction of the New Acropolis Museum. In the hopes that the creation of a state of the art museum would force the British Museum to finally give in to its demands for the return of the Parthenon sculptures, the Greek government chose to commit an act of “cultural vandalism” that underscores the way in which modern Western civilization privileges the classical over all other pasts.

---

199 Kokkinidou, 182.
Interestingly, few specialists or professional bodies of archeologists and academics spoke out against the government’s decision; in fact, it was Dimitrios Padermalis, a Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, who oversaw the Organization for the Construction of the New Acropolis Museum. The defense of the site was left to local groups most directly affected by the project, along with some of the more conservative institutions, such as the Athens Archaeology Society and cultural and environmental organizations. Thus, in an attempt to resolve the long contested issue of the repatriation of the Parthenon marbles, the Greek government found itself faced with choices between the assertion of nation identity and the preservation local history and culture.

**Acquisition, Repatriation and Cultural Property: Nations and Localities**

We have discussed how antiquities can be used in defining national conceptions of space and time, and the ways in which the museum has developed into a performance space for those national identities. But what happens when multiple nations, or even specific localities within a nation, make claims to the same object? One of the primary difficulties in these cases is that, as Merryman observes, “the topic lacks definition and structure.”

---

nationalism, and colonization, as well as archaeology. Clearly, these are not
cases that can be reasonably determined by a universal rule, making it difficult
for policy makers to agree upon “criteria for deciding whether a particular object
presently in the collection of a certain museum should be returned or kept.”
What, then, are the principles that we should look to in judging the case of the
potential return of an object? The complex interaction between nationalist,
legal, religious and moral ideologies shifts on a case-by-case basis.

As was discussed previously in this paper, a precedent for the
appropriation of art as cultural property was set in antiquity. For instance, after
the fall of Syracuse in 211 BC, M. Claudius Marcellus became the first Roman
general to capture and sack a major Greek city. The spolia that he brought back
to Rome was displayed in the Temple of Honos and Virtus and fueled the
Hellenization of Roman taste and culture. However, the positive social reaction
to the Greek art that Marcellus had introduced was later countered by critics,
such as Livy, who disapproved of his taking so much art because it “stimulated
an appetite for art that led eventually to the spoliation of sacred and profane
buildings up to the present.” Many view Marcellus’ introduction of the booty
from Syracuse into Rome as a historical turning point marking a change in
attitudes toward art, one that fueled an appetite for collecting and included the
appropriation of foreign art into high culture.

Conversely, the example of M. Fulvius Nobilior illustrates an ancient
precedent for the repatriation of appropriated loot. After the Roman defeat of

---

201 Merryman, 3.
202 Miles, 64.
the Aetolians in 187 BC, Fulvius plundered the city of Ambracia. Soon after, however, with encouragement from Fulvius’ political enemies in Rome, the Ambracians lodged complaints against him with the Senate, accusing him of “despoiling their temples and taking cult images.”203 Not surprisingly, Fulvius invoked the example of Marcellus in his defense. However, the Senate was to decide the case not on the precedent set by Marcellus and the booty from Syracuse, but based on an evaluation of the sacred or profane nature of the objects in question, thus acknowledging the religious aspect of the loot.204

This consideration of the sacredness of looted items was brought up once again in the case against Q. Fulvius Flaccus in 173 BC, which involved “an especially egregious incident of looting and wonton destruction [in which] the Temple of Hera Lacinia at Croton was stripped of at least half of its white marble roof.”205 The Senate voted to return the tiles and to “have sacrifices of atonement (piacularia) made to the goddess.”206 Here we have an early precedent for the decision of a government body to return cultural loot to its place of origin.

It is important to consider here that these previous examples and precedents were all set within the framework of war and war spoils. Not so in the case of Verres’ plundering of art while serving as a legate in Asia Minor. According to Cicero, who served as the prosecutor in Verres’ trial in 70 BC, his actions were worse “than plundering in wartime, because he plundered

203 Miles, 70
204 Miles, 70.
205 Miles, 77.
206 Miles, 78.
indiscriminately and from allies, not enemies.”\textsuperscript{207} Though not formally charged with the theft of art, the methods that Verres used to acquire art were, at least by Cicero’s estimation, illegal and coercive. Cicero’s fourth speech dealt with the evidence for Verres’ seizure of art, both from religious settings and from private individuals, and was meant to impress upon his audience the extent to which Verres had violated “normative ethics surrounding religious, patron-client customs, guest-friendship and foreign relations.”\textsuperscript{208} In essence, Verres took the collecting impulse, first introduced by the booty from Syracuse, to the extreme, with his need to acquire Greek art driving him to break “several different kinds of property laws in getting it, doing so with outrageously unethical behavior.”\textsuperscript{209}

As we saw in the case of Fulvius Flaccus, the looted property in this case was divided into categories. In this instance, the objects were described as sacred (\textit{res sacrae}), public (\textit{res publicae}) or private (\textit{res privatae}), with the corresponding theft of said property being described as sacrilege, embezzlement and theft, respectively.\textsuperscript{210} This system of categorization emphasizes the division, not of the sacred from the profane, but of the public and religious from the private. These divisions, and their juridical use, emphasize the legal perspective on Verres’ violations in that they underscore the fact that he “not only transgressed normative ethics and behaved in a way offensive to religious propriety […], but also he was actually and specifically guilty of three kinds of

\textsuperscript{207} Miles, 89.
\textsuperscript{208} Miles, 152.
\textsuperscript{209} Miles, 157.
\textsuperscript{210} Miles, 159.
property violations.”²¹¹ By looting items that were deemed sacra and placing them in the private setting of his own home, Verres was not only guilty of sacrilege, he also violated “both Greek and Roman public rights to it.”²¹²

In his prosecution of Verres, Cicero tried to illustrate the defendant’s violation of these public rights by seeking to convey the value that the objects held for the Sicilians and engender empathy in his Roman audience. By emphasizing the cultural, religious, but above all, local, significance of these looted objects, Cicero’s case against Verres may be one of the earliest forerunners of the repatriation debates currently raging between national institutions and localities.

The first early modern example that we have of the voluntary repatriation of plunder by a dominant nation is that of the Duke of Wellington who, after Waterloo, returned the Napoleonic plunder to Italy. This was an act that “moved the issue of the fate of art in war beyond even Ciceronian idealism,”²¹³ as Cicero never explicitly demanded the repatriation of Verres’ loot, stopping at monetary compensation. In response to the public outrage in France that followed his decision, the Duke wrote that

The feeling of the people of France upon this subject must be one of national vanity only. It must be a desire to retain these specimens of the arts, not because Paris is the fittest depository for them, as, upon that subject, artists, connoisseurs, and all who have written upon it, agree that the whole ought to be removed to their ancient seat, but because

²¹¹ Miles, 160.
²¹² Miles, 160.
²¹³ Miles, 329.
they were obtained by military concessions, of which they are the trophies.  

Here, Duke Wellington rejects nationalist ideology as a valid argument for the retention of looted antiquities in favor of the supremacy of spatial context and locality, a notion that seems to parallel the official Turkish demand made centuries later for the repatriation of the Altar of Zeus.

Some modern critics of these pro-locality arguments, Lynne V. Cheney among them, contest that while “museums used to be places that invited visitors to learn about great works of art, to understand their society and to know more about the course of history [but] today, like so many other cultural institutions, they appear instead to be in the business of debunking greatness, Western society, and even history itself.” While there are several troubling assumptions made in this line of argument (for instance, it assumes that “greatness” and “Western society” are synonymous and exclusive of other cultures and, for that matter, that the correct understanding of history is one that is dictated by the West), it is at heart concerned with the isolation of artifacts within highly localized exhibits. While such an arrangement would supply the object with its original context, it could simultaneously deprive it of its historical legibility on a more global scale. In essence, it denies the ability of an object to adopt multiple biographies within its long and varied history of creation, acquisition and display.

---

In recent years, however, a few well known museums have agreed to repatriate items in their collections for which they did not have accurate or appropriate documentation, while others have revised their acquisition policies to take recent debate and legislation over cultural property into account. For instance, between 1966 and 1970, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York had acquired a cache of objects that had been looted from tumuli in the Ushak region of Turkey dating from the time of King Croesus of Lydia. The Republic of Turkey later requested the return of the so-called Lydian Hoard and opened an investigation into the Metropolitan’s acquisition of the cache. Documents provided by the Metropolitan in response to these requests revealed that Metropolitan officials knew about the illegal origins of the objects at the time of acquisition and the “the Museum quickly settled out of court and returned the objects to Turkey.”

In the case of the Getty Museum, its purchase of the now infamous Getty Kouros in 1983 has ignited much debate over its acquisition policies and the effectiveness of the legislation of acquisition practices on the international level. The example begs the question of how such an institution could “respectably purchase so important an antiquity which had certainly not been documented as known to scholarship through publication prior to 1970,” despite the institution of legislation and international agreements, such as the UNESCO

---

217 Renfrew, 43.
218 Renfrew, 39.
219 Renfrew, 41.
treaty of 1970. In such cases, how is “due diligence” defined? Similar questions could be raised about the Metropolitan Museum’s purchase of the Euphronious Vase and its blithe acceptance of the explanation that it “had spent the Second World War in a shoebox under the bed of a Lebanese Antiquities dealer.”

In response to instances such as the ones cited above, many museums and international institutions have attempted to re-evaluate their policies of acquisition in order to better protect, or at the very least, consider, the concerns of local cultures and identities. For instance, in 1995 the International Council of Museums formulated a code of professional ethics which stipulates that “museums should respect the boundaries of the recognized collecting areas of other museums and should avoid acquiring material with special local connections or of special local interest from the collecting area of another museum without due notification of intent.”

Indeed, the British Museum revised its acquisition policy in 1998, coming to the conclusion that

  the Trustees of the British Museum [refuse] to acquire objects that have been illegally excavated and/or illegally exported from their countries of origin. The museum will make every reasonable effort to

---

220 The 1970 UNESCO convention is an international treaty formulating the basic principles for the protection of cultural property and outlines minimum standards for legislative, administrative, and international treaty measures, which the participating states must implement to prevent the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

221 Renfrew, 41.

ascertain that any object that it acquires, whether by gift, bequest or purchase, has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin in violation of that country’s laws.\textsuperscript{223}

Interestingly enough, the document also seeks to define the role of the national museum within the modern discourse of acquisition and repatriation. Here, the Trustees of the British Museum perceive the role of national museums as, among other things, “repositories of last resort for antiquities originating within their areas of responsibility” and that they “will have on occasion approve the acquisition of antiquities without documented provenance where it can be reliably inferred that they originated within [the nation] and where such payment as may be made is not likely to encourage illicit excavation.”\textsuperscript{224} Thus, they argue that the due diligence of the museum must sometimes be accepted at face value, as national museums often have the resources to “rescue” antiquities that localities may lack, thereby fulfilling their primary roles as stewards of the past.

\textbf{The “Universal Museum”: Can the Modern Museum be Divorced from the Nation or Locality?}

Recently, and primarily at the suggestion of James Cuno, the concept of a “Universal Museum” has risen from the ongoing struggle between national institutions and localities. In his defense of a universal institution, Cuno insists

\textsuperscript{223} “Acquisition of Antiquities’: Statement by the Trustees of the British Museum on the Acquisition of Antiquities (1998). [Renfrew, 124.]
\textsuperscript{224} Renfrew, 125.
that the “responsibility of the museum is a moral one”\textsuperscript{225} charged with the preservation of objects of human cultural and artistic manufacture. He grounds his understanding of the national museum as it stands today on the following interpretation of the foundation of the British Museum:

On his death in 1753, the physician and collector Sir Hans Sloane offered to the British nation his collection of natural and artificial objects. Like his French contemporaries, the *encyclopedistes* Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, Sloane believed that access to the full diversity of human industry and natural creation would promote the polymathic ideal of discovering and understanding the whole of human knowledge, and thus improve and advance the condition of our species and the world we inhabit. Drawing on the English common-law device of the trust, Sloane’s collection and the responsibility for its preservation and advancement were given by Parliament to trustees. These held the collection in trust, “not only for the Inspection and Entertainment of the learned and the curious, but for the general use and benefit of the Public,” on the principle that “free Access to the said general Repository, and to the Collections therein contained, shall be given to all studious and curious persons.”\textsuperscript{226}

In the foundation of the British Museum, Cuno sees the hope for a truly universal display of the accomplishments of mankind, for the education of mankind. He views the museum as an institution “obliged to preserve and advance [its] collections for the benefit of the public...[and] disseminate learning and improve taste by encouraging refined and discriminating judgments between what is true


\textsuperscript{226} Cuno, 143.
and what is false.”227 However, Cuno does not address whom he means by “public”, as the museum is public only to those who have the means to attend it. Thus, he fails to address what is essentially at the heart of the national museum versus locality debate: that a museum cannot be truly universal because its participants are self-selecting.

The biggest threat that Cuno perceives to the realization of his “universal museum” is legislation regulating the acquisition of antiquities and the emergent notion of “cultural property.” Tellingly, he condemns these “retentionist policies” as “counter to the principles on which museums in Britain and the United States were founded and are still held accountable.”228 Ironically, in his defense of the “universal museum,” Cuno specifically defines it by the principles upon which Western, specifically British and American, institutions were founded, privileging occidental and imperial culture and thereby negating any notion of universality. As Boyd points out, Cuno’s use of the term retentionist “as applied to source countries sounds like a pejorative and is inappropriate, especially because museums are also retentionist.”229

Indeed, an examination of Cuno’s original example, the British museum, betrays a retentionist policy and undermines the claims to superior stewardship that Cuno often makes in characterizing the Western institution as the “preserver” or “rescuer” of antiquity. The British Museum has long founded its

---

227 Cuno, 143.
228 Cuno, 144.
case for the retention of the Parthenon Marbles on the claim that it, being a well-funded, highly respected Western institution, is a superior steward of the artifacts. However, between 1937 and 1938, at the request of Lord Duveen, “laborers of the British Museum scraped the surfaces of many of the sculptures with metal chisels and harsh abrasives in an effort to make them appear more white.” The resulting damage was beyond repair and compromised all subsequent research on the surfaces of the marbles. Despite the scholarly implications, the authorities of the British Museum covered up this misguided attempt at “restoration” out of “desperation to maintain public confidence in the rescue and stewardship narrative of the institution.” This example demonstrates the double standard that Cuno’s argument creates in condoning the acquisition of antiquities by “universal institutions” (that, upon closer examination, are simply inflated versions of already existing Western, national museums) while denouncing attempts on the part of localities to reclaim or retain artifacts that are linked to their culture. Ultimately, the proposal of the “universal museum” reads more as a defense of the national institution and rejection of local claims to cultural property than as a solution to the conflict.

---


231 St Clair, William, 88.
Conclusion

Presenting the Past to Our Present

The legal implications of the acquisition and display of antiquities by museums will continue to be negotiated as our society becomes progressively more globalized. While the imperial aspect of the national museum is becoming increasingly uncomfortable and contested in the post-colonial era, wholesale repatriation of antiquities to their original localities is a logistical implausibility. Just as the complete rejection of previous reconstructions denies an object its full biography, the complete return of all antiquities to their original find sites would deny the long and complicated histories they have acquired since their discoveries. Furthermore, most of these objects bear physical evidence of the intervening centuries that might make their placement within their original setting an equally uneasy one.

Certainly, museums are responsible for adhering to international agreements, such as the UNESCO treaty of 1970, which have already been reached. Currently, however, there is no legal requirement for the return of a disputed antiquity so long as it was acquired previous to 1970. Thus, while the debate between local and universal museum principles is relevant to the treatment of all future acquisitions, it is less helpful, at least until new, more comprehensive legislation is reached, in its instruction of how to treat antiquities that already exist within a museum’s collection.
In regards to these pre-1970 collections, the modern museum should consider not only the principles of display and restoration discussed in previous chapters, but also the nature and history of the institution itself. Ultimately, the museum provides the framework within which the objects will be viewed and interpreted, and a successful display will therefore be a self-conscious one that takes not only the biography of the work, but also the relationship between the work and the institution, into account.

While the interest of collectors shifted from the seventeenth through the eighteenth century, the principles of the museum became increasingly distinct from those of private galleries or collections. Indeed, the public institution of the museum isolated and divorced works of art from the everyday, private contexts that had made them familiar presences, granting them instead historical gravitas and a pivotal role in the national, and then global, narrative. In the transition between private collection and public institution, the worth of these antiquities shifts from a market value to the less tangible concepts of aesthetic, political and historical influence. It is this crucial difference between object as decoration and object as illustration of which the museum must be particularly reverent, as it is essentially the distinction between the success and failure of the institution as an educational force.

Indeed, the museum is more than a storehouse, or even a gallery, of objects; the successful museum transcends the simple display of objects and
instead *exhibits* its catalogue and is thus “a place of ideas about objects”.\(^{232}\) In his “Museum Manifesto,”\(^{233}\) Joseph Veach Noble identified five essential responsibilities of every museum: to collect, to conserve, to study, to interpret, and to exhibit. Later, Dutch museologist Peter van Mensch condensed these into the trinity of *preservation* (which includes both the principles of collecting and conservation), *communication* (both to interpret and to exhibit) and *study*,\(^{234}\) paralleling Merryman’s\(^{235}\) principles of preservation, access and truth. For Noble, these core responsibilities “form an entity. They are like the five fingers of a hand, each independent but united for a common purpose. If a museum omits or slights any of these five responsibilities, it is handicapped itself immeasurably.”\(^{236}\) Thus, the museum is a space designed to teach through the acquisition, preservation and interpretation of its collection and should be willing to stimulate discussion, no matter how uncomfortable, about the way in which the objects and the museum have historically interacted with one another in regards to each of these central aims.

As evidenced in the chapters on the challenges of their reconstruction and the political nature of their display, antiquities present a particular difficulty to these core responsibilities of the museum because they occupy the combined

\(^{232}\) Boyd, 47.


categories of aesthetic object and historical artifact. Philippot identifies this fundamental problem of balancing historicism and aesthetic preservation in the museum setting and insists that

an authentic relationship with the past must not only recognize the unbridgeable gap that has formed, after historicism, between us and the past; it must also integrate this distance into the actualization of the work produced by the intervention. By treating a monument as a simple historical document, the integration of the object into our era takes place at the cost of a reduction of our relationship to the object to the level of mere knowledge. For a work of art, such a reduction signifies nothing less than the refusal to recognize its very specificity.237

Thus, he holds the museum accountable for presenting antiquities, or indeed any object that also serves as an artifact, in a manner that adheres to the requirements of historical criticism while also respecting those of the work of art as an aesthetic authority.

The observations of Philippot and Noble join those of Foucault and many others in their speculation that an object loses its meaning without the viewer’s knowledge of the underlying aesthetic and cultural values it embodies. Without such knowledge or any explanation of its relevance to society, an object’s legibility is greatly reduced and its ability to communicate with the museum-going public is compromised. This breakdown in communication between the institution and the public is manifested in the “discomfort of novice visitors to

---

art museums” when confronted with an object that they cannot ground in the understanding of cultural aesthetics or history that it is intended to challenge or affirm.238 Thus, the museum must strive to provide as much context and exposition as is allowed within the gallery space so as to make the object in question not only legible, but stimulating, to as many visitors as possible.

More than ever, museum spaces today have the capability to address the pluralities of significance embodied by these antiquities, to marry their didactic, historical power with their value as art objects. Though it must naturally privilege select aspects of a work, it is the duty of the museum to reserve a didactic space, whether it is within the framework of the display itself, through written materials, or online, in which it can explicate the object’s role as an historical artifact, political tool and aesthetic exemplar. In the a post-colonial era of globalization, it is the museum’s responsibility, whether it be a universal or local institution, to educate, to present the object as more than simply “beautiful” or as a symbol of cultural conquest and pride, but rather as a didactic tool, a signifier not only of taste, but also of a unique biography from the time of its creation to the present. Thus, a museum should seek to create a display in which the objects may be appreciated as art while antiquity as a whole is portrayed as a lens through which we can observe and understand our own modern history, rather than as a venerated, mythical time far removed from our present.

Today’s technology presents museums with exciting new methods of display that promise to increase the institution’s didactic capabilities by allowing it to address multiple aspects of a work, to reach a wider public and to address some of the unique challenges in the display of antiquities. Just as the British Museum insists that it is impossible to truly complete the Elgin marbles in any physical manner, it is impracticable to perfectly recreate the original state of any antiquity. The Internet provides a potentially effective way of modeling possible interpretations of the original without dismantling or refiguring the current state of the object itself. The challenge, of course, lies in the institution’s ability to tie the flexible interpretive and didactic space that it creates on the Internet into the museum setting. The degree to which the museum is successful in linking the two will determine the educational effectiveness of the digital display. If they are too disjointed, the object will remain isolated from any exposition or context and the website will lack the gravitas and immediacy lent by the object.

Of course, there are many ways in which a museum can create an effective display within its own physical space without relying on the digital realm. In fact, it is precisely their ability to tie forceful but succinct platforms of exposition into the physical display space of the institution that made the Getty’s presentation of the Lansdowne Herakles and the Vatican’s display of the Prima Porta such excellent examples of the treatment of antiquities within the museum context. The former presented a restored version of Herakles that respected the aesthetic integrity of the work while simultaneously indicating the various
stages of reconstruction and interpretation it had undergone, thereby acknowledging its complex biography and participation in Western history since its discovery. In the case of the Prima Porta, the original sculpture was left untouched, but the display reserved space, in the form of an informational plaque, in which it could continue the exposition of its original polychrome nature that the ClassiColor exhibition had begun. Both examples indicate the kinds of advances in museum practices that promise to synthesize an antiquity’s dual role as art and artifact in a way that is educational and capable of stimulating not only public interest in the classical past, but also an awareness of the role it plays in modern society.

While their prominence as symbols of national pride has made art museums the most common popular perception of a “museum”, it is precisely their role as nation building institutions that complicates the terms of display of the antiquities that they house in a post-colonial era. An antiquity’s presence within the walls of an art museum suggests an intrinsic value that is strictly aesthetic. Indeed, the phrase “museum quality” assumes “aesthetic quality rather than appropriateness of historical or scientific context”.239 In the face of new legislation and concern about cultural heritage and repatriation rights, however, it is important that a museum present the objects in question with sensitivity to just such a historical and scientific context. Thus, retentionist arguments based on stewardship should be founded not only upon the

---

museum’s ability to preserve and study the artifact, but also its capacity to present the object in the most inclusive, educational way possible.

Thus, if a museum believes that it has the right to maintain a disputed antiquity within its collection, it assumes the responsibility of presenting it as such. That is to say, the object should be displayed in a manner that addresses any issue of provenance, authenticity or origin outright. In this way, the artifact can, at the very least, serve to stimulate a discussion of the political, historical and ethical issues that it raises and the museum can rightfully claim to be fulfilling its duty as public educator.

A considerable part of any antiquity’s historical significance is inherently political; this is particularly true in museums that identify, or identified, as national museums. In these cases, the museum must commit itself to treating its antiquities in a manner that is appropriately post-colonial. This means that, if an antiquity remains in its permanent collection, it must acknowledge its history as a politicized object and seek to present it as an educational tool on some level, so that it may transcend its previous role as symbolic cultural capital. By drawing attention the historical relationship between the museum and the antiquities it exhibits, the institution can in effect relegate its nationalistic past to an educational element of the display space, allowing the museum to progress towards a more conscientious, globally minded future. Thus, the modern museum itself can, and should, be on display as a changing historical entity and an educational institution that is capable of examining its own shifting functions and practices through its treatment of the objects it displays.
It is the singular challenge of the modern museum to treat and display its antiquities in a way that acknowledges their significance as testaments to western political history and the aesthetics of the period of their discovery as much as it does their ancient past. Through the restoration and display of its antiquities, a museum should strive to act as more than merely a space for the transmission of essential facts; it should endeavor to provide the context necessary to create a space of intellectual stimulation, to consider the contradictions and complexities presented by the object in a manner that engages the public and thus demonstrates why antiquity remains relevant to our present.
FIGURES

Figure 1: The *Laocoon* as it was discovered in 1506, in seven major parts.

Figure 2: Laocoon I, Montorsoli’s mid-sixteenth century reconstruction.
Figure 3: Suicidal Gaul

Figure 4: Michelangelo's *Samson and Two Philistines*
Figure 5: *Laocoön III*, Magi’s 1960 restoration (Laocoön III)

Figure 6: Sperlonga Group
Figure 7: Close up of *Laocoon* face

Figure 8: Head of Odysseus, Sperlonga Group
Figure 9: Bandinelli’s Laocoon Reconstruction

Figure 10: Laocoon’s right arm pulled up and back in Howard’s proposed reconstruction.
Figure 11: Crowding of the elder son’s two feet (Laocoon)

Figure 12: Howard’s suggested reconstruction of the Laocoon.
Figure 13: Howard’s suggested display of the *Laocoön*.

Figs 14 and 15: Thorvaldsen’s 1816 Completions of the Aegina Marbles
Figure 16: Thorvaldsen Restoration of the *Triumph of Alexander* frieze, Quirinal Palace, Rome

Figure 17: Lansdowne Herakles after 1970s stripped down restoration
figure 18: Lansdowne Herakles True and Podany restoration

Figure 19: Glyptotek Demosthenes holding the book scroll
Figure 20 (left): Glyptotek Demosthenes with the Roman hands attached
Figure 21 (right): Glyptotek Demosthenes with the contemporary hands attached

Figure 22: Demosthenes displayed with the three possible hands
Fig. 23 (left): Hera Borghese pre-deconstruction
Fig. 24 (right): Hera Borghese (Aphrodite Euploia) post-deconstruction

Figure. 25: A well-known late 18th-century representation of the Acropolis (east from the Parthenon), illustrating the variety of buildings of different nature and date in the cella of the Parthenon. (The Muslim mosque is visible).
Fig. 26: Propaganda from Makronisos depicting inmates constructing a miniature replica of the Parthenon.

Figure 27: Fortunato Matania engraving of a sailor coming ashore on the beach of Tripoli, collecting the sword of a legionary buried in the dune.
Figure 28: Italian stamp in the series *Decennale della Marcia su Roma* from October 1932

Figure 29: Antoine Beranger Vase “The Entrance into Paris of the Works Destined for the Musee Napoleon.”
Figure 30: Close up of Antoine Beranger “The Entrance into Paris of the Works Destined for the Musee Napoleon”.

Figure 31: Triumphal Quadriaga with Titus, Arch of Titus, Rome A.D. 81-90
**Figure Citations**

**Fig.1:** *Laocoon discovered in 1506 in seven major parts.*

**Fig. 2: Laocoon 1 as reconstructed by Montorsoli in the mid-sixteenth century**
Bieber, Margarete. *Laocoon; The Influence of the Group Since Its Rediscovery.* 1942. Fig. 1.

**Fig. 3: The Suicidal Gaul**

**Fig. 4: Michelangelo’s Samson and Two Philistines**

**Fig. 5: Magi’s 1950s restoration (Laocoon III)**

**Fig. 6: Sperlonga Group**
Brilliant, Richard, *My Laocoon: Alternative Claims in the Interpretation of Artworks,* 2000. 11. Fig. 6.

**Fig. 7: Close up of Laocoon face**

**Fig. 8: Close up of Sperlonga group face**
Stewart, Andrew. *Greek Sculpture; an Exploration.* Vol. II: Plates. 1990. Plate 738. Fig. 732.

**Fig. 9: Bandinelli’s Laocoon Reconstruction**
Fig. 10: *Laocoon* right arm pulled up and back
Howard, Seymour. *Antiquity Restored; Essays on the Afterlife of the Antique.* Vienna: IRSA, 1990. 43. Fig.40.

Fig. 11: Crowding of the elder son's two feet (*Laocoon*)
Howard, Seymour. *Antiquity Restored; Essays on the Afterlife of the Antique.* Vienna: IRSA, 1990. 44. Fig.43.

Fig. 12: Howard's suggested reconstruction of the *Laocoon*

Fig. 13: Howard's suggested display of the *Laocoon*
Howard, Seymour. *Antiquity Restored; Essays on the Afterlife of the Antique.* Vienna: IRSA, 1990. 47. Fig.50.

Fig. 14: Thorvaldsen 1816 Aegina Marbles Completion

Fig. 15: Thorvaldsen 1816 Aegina Marbles Completion

Fig. 16: Thorvaldsen Restoration of the *Triumph of Alexander* frieze
Quirinal Palace, Rome
http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1&trucID=31102&imageID=495486

Fig. 17: Lansdowne *Herakles* after 1970s stripped down restoration
Fig. 18: *Lansdowne Herakles* True and Podany restoration

Fig 19: *Glyptotek Demosthenes I [holding book scroll]*

Fig. 20: *Glyptotek Demosthenes II (with Roman Hands)*

Fig. 21: *Glyptotek Demosthenes III (with modern hands)*

Fig. 22: *Glyptotek Demosthenes displayed with 3 hands*

Fig. 23: *Hera Borghese (pre-deconstruction)*

Fig. 24: *Hera Borghese (Aphrodite Euploia)*

Fig. 25: The Acropolis pre-purification (late 18th c. representation)
Fig. 26: Propaganda from Makronisos

Fig. 27: Fortunato Matania engraving of sailor coming ashore on the beach of Tripoli, collecting the sword of a legionary buried in the dune.
Munzi, Massimiliano, Italian Archaeology in Libya; from Colonial Romanità to Decolonization of the Past. 76

Fig. 28: Italian stamp in the series Decannale della Marcia su Roma from October 1932
Munzi, Massimiliano, Italian Archaeology in Libya; from Colonial Romanità to Decolonization of the Past. 90.

Fig. 29: Antoine Beranger, The Entrance into Paris of the Works Destined for the Musee Napoleon

Fig. 30: Antoine Beranger, The Entrance into Paris of the Works Destined for the Musee Napoleon

Fig. 31: Arch of Titus (82 CE)
PLATES


Plate 2: Proposed Polychrome rendering of one of the metopes from the Parthenon Marbles The British Museum, London
Plate 3: Marble stele (grave marker) of a youth and a little girl
Greek, Attic
Archaic (ca. 530 BC)
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Plate 4: Watercolor Reconstruction of the Attic Stele by Lindsley F. Hall
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1944.

Plate 6 (left): The head of Caligula, c. 37-41 CE. Copenhagen. This bust shows clear traces of color on and around the left eye.

Plate 8 (left): Prima Porta c. 15 CE, Vatican Museums

Plate 9 (right): Polychrome reconstruction of the Prima Porta, Vatican Museums
Plate 10: Display of the Prima Porta in the Vatican Museums as of February 2009.
Plate Citations

Plate 1: *Peplos Kore* c.530 BCE (1975, repainted 1996)
Cambridge: The Museum of Classical Archaeology.

Plate 2: Proposed Polychrome rendering of one of the metopes from the Parthenon Marbles. The British Museum, London.
http://www.britishmuseum.org/files/British%20Museum-Objects_in_focus_Parthenon_Sculptures.mp4

Plate 3: marble stele (grave marker) of a youth and a little girl
Greek, Attic, Archaic (ca. 530 BC)
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Plate 4: Watercolor Reconstruction of the Attic Stele by Lindsley F. Hall
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1944.

Plate 5: Watercolor Reconstruction of the Attic Stele by Lindsley F. Hall
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1944.

Plate 6: (left): The head of Caligula, c. 37-41 CE. Copenhagen.
This bust shows clear traces of color on and around the left eye. "The Color of Life (Getty Villa Exhibitions)." Getty Museum,

"The Color of Life (Getty Villa Exhibitions)." Getty Museum,

Plate 8: (left): *Prima Porta* c. 15 CE
Vatican Museums

Plate 9: (right): Polychrome reconstruction of the *Prima Porta*
Vatican Museums

Plate 10: Display of the *Prima Porta* in the Vatican Museums as of February 2009.
Author photo credit
Bibliography


Kant. "Critique of Judgement."


