



BABESCH Byvanck Lecture 2020

B A B E S C H

Fourteenth BABESCH Byvanck Lecture



Caroline Vout

Beyond Classical Art

A Lecture on the Diversity of Greek and Roman Sculpture



Tuesday December 1st 2020

in collaboration with the National Museum of Antiquities at Leiden

The BABESCH Foundation

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University of Cambridge, Leiden University



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Leiden

2020

Colophon

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The rise of BABESCH to an established forum for international scholarly exchange has been due in no small part to the tireless efforts of the late dr. Lily Byvanck-Quarles van Ufford (1907-2002). Her passionate involvement continues through the substantial endowment she made to Leiden University in the form of the Byvanck Fund, with the BABESCH Foundation explicitly labelled as one of the beneficiaries. This has enabled the Foundation to develop, aside its scholarly publishing duties, various other activities geared to a wider community, of which the Byvanck Lecture series is the best known. Another initiative perpetuating Lily's name is the Byvanck Award for the best contribution of a young, debutant scholar in the BABESCH journal. A fairly recent addition is the publication of the annual Byvanck Lecture in a booklet



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Beyond Classical Art

A Lecture on the Diversity of Greek and Roman Sculpture

When we think of 'classical art', we think of nudity, naturalism, shiny white marble. But neither 'classical art', nor the beauty, purity and virtue that we associate with it, are obvious. Rather, they have accrued over time. This lecture focuses on what 'classical art' omits, on unexceptional but important sculptures that challenge our vocabularies and ask for new frameworks. In privileging sculpture, we are again being selective. But it is sculpture that has dictated our artistic engagement with the Greeks and Romans, and sculpture that is, therefore, best placed to usher in a new chapter. This is not only about extending Greek and Roman sculpture's remit to include the 'ugly', 'aniconic', 'demotic', colour; it is about reassessing its interactions with 'foreign' traditions (the Egyptian, Eastern, Indian etc). Where does 'classical art' sit between the local and global, and in the midst of the archaeological? Does 'classical art' have a future?

To go *beyond* classical art demands knowing what classical art is. This is not as easy as it sounds: classical art is made, not born. At its most capacious, it is the art of the Greeks and Romans, although that already raises questions about who these Greeks and Romans are, about the limits of their influence, and about the line that they, and, differently, we, draw between art and artefact. What constitutes 'art' is subjective, but classical art always a category of choice pieces, a shifting category, imbued with excellence. It is also, therefore, discriminatory. Ask the Roman emperor, Augustus, what was rated in the first century BCE, and he might well have said the 'Spear-carrier' by fifth-century Greek sculptor, Polyclitus. Copied and admired in Italy, it gives substance to his imperial image (*figs. 1 and 2*).

By the Renaissance, the reading of Greek and Latin texts ensured that Polyclitus's 'Spear carrier' was still a big name, but it would take until 1863 for this name to be reunited with surviving statuary. In the interim, other ancient sculptures were setting the pace, sculptures excavated in Rome, like the Farnese Hercules, Apollo Belvedere (*fig. 3*), and Dying Gaul, and again based on Greek prototypes, albeit prototypes conceived of in the late fourth, and third, centuries BCE. They have more attitude and emotion, carry more of a story, than the Spear-carrier and his contemporaries, whose calling cards spell perfection and distance. The dialogue that they demand of their viewers shapes the 'classical canon'.

Without Rome, ancient and modern, classical sculpture would look very different. The bronze originals on which the Spear-carrier, Hercules, Apollo and Gaul are based have long been melted down; their loss makes Greek sculpture more desirable. No one was more effusive in this desire than the German art-historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann, whose *History of the Art of Antiquity*, first published in 1764, would follow Augustus and our Greek and Roman authors in putting fifth and fourth-century Greek style at the top of the tree. That he did most of his study in Rome, and had never been to Greece, did not matter; indeed, it enabled him to cast ancient Greece as a utopia and to urge us to get there. Get there we did in the nineteenth century. The arrival in England of the Parthenon sculpture and Bassae frieze (fig. 4), both genuine fifth-century monuments, and the opening up of Greece to easier excursions and to excavation after centuries of Ottoman rule issued a challenge to the canon



that shook stalwarts from their pedestals. When, in the 1950s, Reinhard Lullies and Max Hirmer collaborated on their influential text book of Greek Sculpture, Roman versions were excluded. Many, like Polyclitus's Spear-carrier, clung on regardless – because of the premium put on fifth-century culture, and the link, in Athens at least, to democracy (the idea being that the freedom of expression that comes of political freedom was what made sculptors break out of the block and the frontal plane to produce images prized for their naturalism). There is a sense that what counts as classical now is narrower than in previous centuries.

There is common ground to all these versions of the classical – ground that is speedily covered by looking again at Dutch artist Hendrick Goltzius's engraving of the Apollo Belvedere. For Winckelmann, there was no statue better than this; it is still considered a masterpiece of the Vatican's collection. Goltzius's



Fig. 1 (left): Cast of a Roman version of Polyclitus's fifth-century BCE Doryphoros or Spear-carrier, National Archaeological Museum, Naples, h. 202 cm. Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge.

Fig. 2 (centre): Cast of the Prima Porta statue of Augustus in the Vatican Museums, h. 203 cm. Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge.

Fig. 3 (right): Engraving, published by Herman Adolfsz, 1617, of Hendrick Goltzius, Apollo Belvedere, 1592, plate: 40 x 29.2 cm. Princeton University Art Museum.

Apollo is more animate and arrogant than its referent, its milky torso bathed in light, the polish of its marble carefully rendered in the blend of contours, dots and shading. It is in a different league: all modern man can do is gawp at its nobility, its sublimity, jotting down its measurements to try to play catch-up: educated white man measuring himself against a matchless white body that is buff, beautiful, blemish-free, sexy. This is a European vision – of a European subject(ivity). By the twentieth century, the statue is the star of eugenics debates, and model of what US man might one day look like (fig. 5).

The dangers of this are obvious – for us, and for classical antiquity. For the purposes of this lecture, I wish to return to Greece and Rome to plot the co-ordinates of what this common ground fences off. First, colour, class, age and gender. It has been widely known since at least the nineteenth century that Greek and Roman marbles and bronzes were painted, yet still we struggle to separate this fact from their post-antique forms, stripped by time of their paint, scrubbed in the restorer's workshop, disseminated in pallid plaster (fig. 6). Whether or not these statues were originally as diverse in their skin colour as many scholars now hope (fig. 7), it is indisputable that restoring their pigment changes their



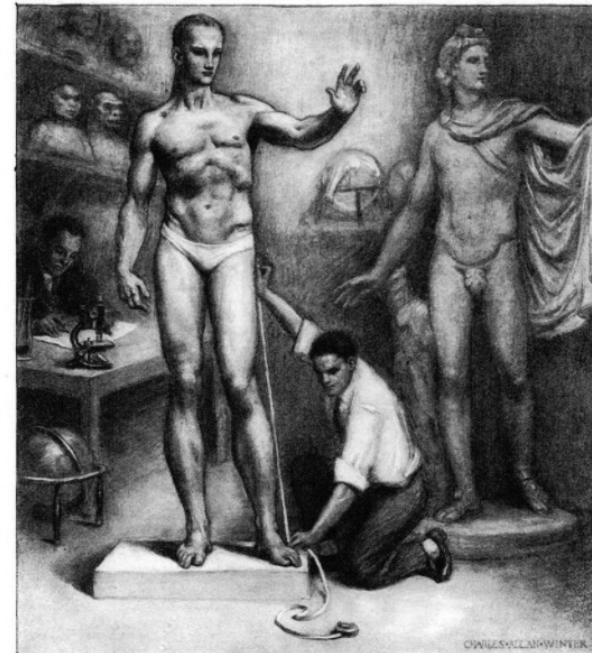
Someday We'll Look Like This

Future Man Will Be a Handsome Apollo with Long Legs and Short Arms, Dr. Ales Hrdlicka Predicts

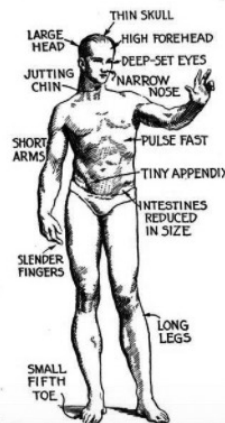
By
ARTHUR A. STUART

A MAN of commanding stature, short-armed but long-legged, will be the future inhabitant of the earth. His appendix and his fifth toe will have dwindled nearly to nothing; his forehead will be high and intelligent. He will be an Apollo for beauty.

These predictions are made by Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, curator of the division of physical anthropology at the National Museum, in Washington, D. C. Mankind, he told the American Philosophical Society recently, is racing ahead as fast as ever in the process of evolution that began with man's birth some 300,000 years ago. And he challenged statements of some biologists that evolution has stopped as far as man is concerned. A few thousand years, he says, should alter the appearance of human beings considerably.



Our artist portrays here the man of the future, as predicted by Dr. Hrdlicka, and, for comparison, stands him beside the statue of Apollo Belvidere, long considered the acme of physical perfection.



How future evolution may alter the structure and appearance of man's body.

Deep-set eyes, a prominent, narrow nose, and jutting chin will characterize the typical man of tomorrow, according to Dr. Hrdlicka. His skull will become thin—largely because his jaw muscles, put less strenuously to work to eat refined foods, will exert less force. His face will reflect increasing handsomeness and character from this cause, as well as from intelligent breeding and increased brain size. His hair probably will be thin, for baldness will increase. The fate of his beard hangs in doubt. His body, slender in youth, will show the greatest outward change in length of limbs. Shortened arms and lengthened legs will terminate in narrow hands and feet. Fingers and toes will be slender; the fifth or "baby" toe, in particular, will shrink. The future man will be taller, though not a giant.

Internally, important changes will occur. Highly digestible food, made possible by civilization, will reduce the size of the future man's intestines. His appendix will wane in size. His pulse rate will speed up as a result of more lively body activity.

Mentally he will be a superman, endowed with keen and sensitive intelligence. This will be only partly reflected in a bigger brain, for he will be smarter than that alone would indicate.

For all this, Dr. Hrdlicka believes, man must pay a price. He will live longer, but he will be ridden by disease. Bad digestion may trouble him; sleeplessness may make his nights hideous. Diabetes and skin troubles will probably increase, as well as insanity. Heart trouble and cancer will threaten him until they are mastered by medicine. Another danger appears in the low birth rate among people most advanced in intelligence, which may mean that society's lowest strata will have to provide the geniuses of the future.

PERHAPS by that time, however, we shall have learned to create geniuses and giants as they are required. Dr. Oscar Riddle, of the Carnegie Institution, Washington, D. C., has recently made the prediction that through gland extracts and laboratory methods of control, science may be able eventually to produce mental or physical supermen at will.

Fig. 4 (left): Cast of a detail of the cavalymen on the fifth-century BCE north frieze of the Parthenon in the British Museum, London. Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge.

Fig 5 (above): Popular Science Monthly 115(1) July 1929, 47.

relationship with life. And life in the sprawling Greek and Roman worlds was wonderfully diverse, home to peoples of different languages, ethnicities, multiple identities, and perspectives. They needed different things from their visual culture – just as women and those outside the elite, needed different things from their visual culture. Not all of them viewed like an Augustus, a Winckelmann, a Goltzius. Some were better served than others, some denigrated in ways that are today difficult to look at, others integrated in ways that might surprise us. Greek and Roman culture is not merely shaped by its contact with all sorts of cultures; it *is* a myriad of cultures, local as well as global, as absorbent as it is influential.

Recognising this means recognising the limits of naturalism, even in the fifth century, and the wonder that society found, then and into the Roman period, in other modes of representation, modes that were more abstract, less – or indeed more – invested in their relationship to the real than the Apollo or Spear-carrier, or only partially-figurative. Often these modes are seen as sub-categories, and dismissed as ‘primitive’, ‘provincial’, ‘crude’, ‘ugly’ – not art, but anathema, not classical, but deviant. But in their places of origin, they were not deficient, but designed to perform a different function, safe in the knowledge that there were parts that naturalism, with its cues to contemplation, approbation, heroism could not reach. This is not the same as calling them ‘alternative’ modes of representation; they too were mainstream, and queried naturalism and its associated qualities at the same time as they were thrown into relief by it. In the eighteenth century, collectors such as Charles Townley and Richard Payne Knight were interested in the whole shebang, the canonical and the curious, as well as in Hindu sculpture, as part of an investment in classical art and world religion. Today, at best, our text books on Greek and Roman art see this paragraph’s material as a bolt-on, encouraging a way of seeing not that distinct from Goltzius’s. Although publications on aniconism, visual humour, the painting of sculpture, colour prejudice, cultural contact, non-elite art, and so on, make headway, they enforce, as much as they attack, the stereotype. To quote the title of one early example, *Not the Classical Ideal*. What we need is not to negate this ideal, but to nuance it by inflating and querying traditional categories; we must not turn our back on Apollo and the Spear-carrier but seek a finer-grained picture of the Greek and Roman landscapes to which they belonged. This is not easy either for it involves rethinking our language and words like ‘beautiful’, ‘foreign’, ‘figurative’, ‘central’, ‘Roman’, ‘Greek’. It asks that we expand the Greek and Roman art that is our Renaissance inheritance to set them in a more authentic topography.



Fig. 6: Casts of the sixth-century Greek statue known as the Peplos Kore in the New Acropolis Museum in Athens, one of them painted by M. B. Laymann in 1975 to give a sense of its ancient polychromy, h. 118 cm. Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge.

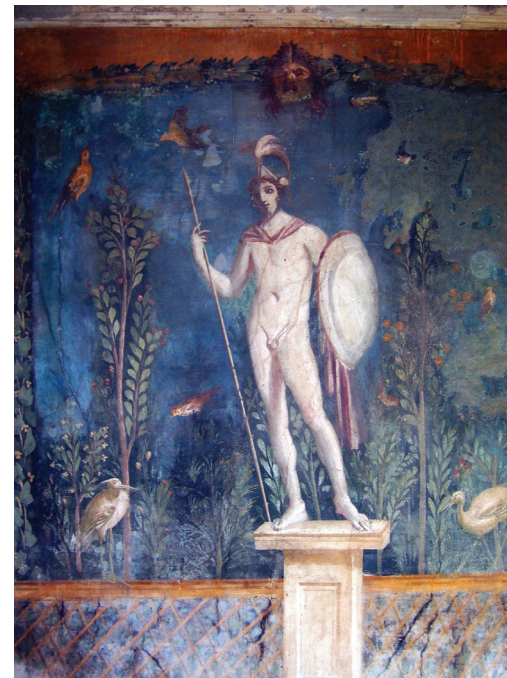


Fig. 7: Painting in the peristyle of the House of Venus in the Shell, Pompeii, showing a statue of Mars on a pedestal.



Fig. 8 (left): Hellenistic example of a faceless funerary statue from Cyrene, perhaps of Persephone, Jamahiriya Museum, Tripoli, Libya, Africa.

Fig. 9 (below): The interior of an Athenian drinking cup of 520-500 BCE, showing a sculptor carving a herm, d. (without handles) 19 cm. National Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark.



PLOUGHING NEW GROUND

When Peloponnesian sculptor Polyclitus makes the mould for his bronze Spear-carrier back in the fifth-century BCE he cements classical art's emergence as a uniquely Greek product that escapes the eastern and Egyptian inspiration that had previously been important, to boast of a supreme self-consciousness in reproducing nature – or at least that is the usual story. Cut to Cyrene, a Greek city in North Africa at the height of its prosperity, and Polyclitus's peers are producing marble busts, the carving of their hairstyles, drapery, and gesturing rivalling the Apollo and the Parthenon pediment in their virtuosity and loquaciousness. Some of them are faceless, not abandoned mid-process, but deliberately designed to be unfinished or ongoing, as they deny the viewer the recognition that would have resided in the expression that their bodies anticipate (*fig. 8*). Not even the addition of paint could make these appear human; they are part figure, part pole, part ornament, part absence. And yet, they are as human as Mr Perfect. They wear their naturalism as a costume to turn contemplation to disquiet.

Their facelessness is as much a local quirk as the fact that most of them are half or three-quarter-length busts. But it is also an invitation to rethink the relationship between the figurative and the abstract, the naturalistic and naïve. All of these female busts (there are no male equivalents) are from cemetery contexts, where they most probably represented a deity akin to Persephone, wife of Hades. Whether it is death or divinity they negotiate for the viewer, or both of these things, it is their failure to give that viewer what they want that underlines the inscrutability of god and the afterlife. It reminds us that even in Athens, the most sacred image was not Pheidias's fifth-century BCE gold and ivory Athena inside the Parthenon, which was itself a statue that was only partly carved, its body consisting of detachable gold sheets suspended from a wooden core, but a wooden statue that had supposedly dropped from heaven, unmediated by human minds and hands. An artist could do only so much to capture the uncapturable – an admission of defeat and deference that the sculptures from Cyrene make eloquently. God is partially revealed; the deceased imperfectly remembered; and death incompletely understood.

This sense of productive failure reminds us too of the herms in front of Athenian houses, at road-sides, beside altars (*fig. 9*). At the same time as appearing as a beardless youth with a body akin to those at the start of this lecture, Hermes, god of trade, travel, and transition to the Underworld, took the form of a head on top of a rectangular pillar, with struts for arms, and a carved phallus. As a boundary-marker, he is perfectly poised between the human and inhu-

man, comedic and aggressive, image and sign. All Greek marbles were once slabs of stone like this. He highlights how the Spear-carrier's large pecs and small genitals are also a choice, less a stage in sculpture's spontaneous development from block to beefcake than one option amid many – more marked, less natural; anatomy not as given, but as way of seeing. When seen in the same sanctuary, he raises a challenge: if the male figure can be reduced to a head and a penis, intellect and sex, what does the body for which classical art is famous, contribute?

The production of herms, and of the Cyrenaican busts continues into the Roman period when the inhabitants of Thespieae in central Greece are paying homage to Eros in the form of statues by fourth-century BCE sculptors Praxiteles and Lysippus, *and* as an unwrought stone. Praxiteles' most iconic work was an Aphrodite so beautiful that one worshipper is said to have made the ultimate category-error by treating her like a real girl and trying to have sex with her. It is a favoured anecdote of Roman sources and modern text books. Yet Nero's step-father too, twice consul, Gaius Sallustius Passienus Crispus, is so devoted to an outstanding beech tree in a sacred grove in Latium that he too is supposed to have lain beneath it, hugged and kissed it. Perhaps the naturalism/Augustan classicism that is often now regarded as being, by then, a language of empire, and the desire associated with it, are over-rated.

There are many implications of this, not least the relationship of the religious cultures of pre-Christian Greece and Rome to the visual cultures of Judaism, early Buddhism, Islam, and to ongoing debates about their disavowal of the figurative. But again, the special requirements of representing divinity or death need to be contextualised. Vast swathes of the painting and sculpture of even Rome and Pompeii have been regarded as try-hard, cheap, derisory – though only, of course, if naturalism, or the more emotive realism that follows in its wake, are seen as the gold standard. A terracotta relief of a vegetable-seller from the necropolis of Rome's port at Ostia is a case in point: its stunted sales-person and skewed perspective are a world away from the Atticising forms for which the high empire is renowned (*fig. 10*). But there is none of the Prima Porta's posturing here. This is not a piece designed to ask what kind of man (or woman) am I. The answer is obvious. Nor is the emphasis, as it was at Cyrene, on managing loss. Rather this sculpture celebrates life, and a simple life at that: a person just doing their job. Their body, gender and performance of this gender, are irrelevant. The disproportionate size and signalling of the hands leave no doubt that it is the wares that take centre-stage, in a work that is all about work – fitting description, nothing flashy. It is the person's selling of foodstuffs that made them indispensable.

Turn to the Roman provinces, and much of the sculpture trades in this blocky, stocky aesthetic. If it is funerary art we are talking about, some examples are more obviously classicising or imperial than others, but they are closer to each other than to the sculpture of the canon with its subtle contrapposto-contouring and subtler averted gaze, and they tend to get more frontal as we move into late antiquity. Seeing these similarities decentres Rome and Athens, replacing the idea of influence with a sticky net, from Britain to Syria (*fig. 11*). Not that classicism fades even then, or was itself narrowly Hellenic in its origins. How could it be narrowly Hellenic, when, by the end of the fourth century BCE, Alexander the Great, and the imagery that pump-primed his powerbase, had made it into Afghanistan, Pakistan, India? After him, the Ptolemies had ruled Egypt, bringing Pharaonic and Greek imagery into dialogue to produce ruler portraits that were one or the other, or both – sexy syncretisms that paid more than a passing resemblance to Athenian sculptures made *before* the birth of naturalism (*fig. 12*), Athenian sculptures that were themselves part of a sticky net that embraced Asia Minor, Assyria, Cyprus, Egypt.

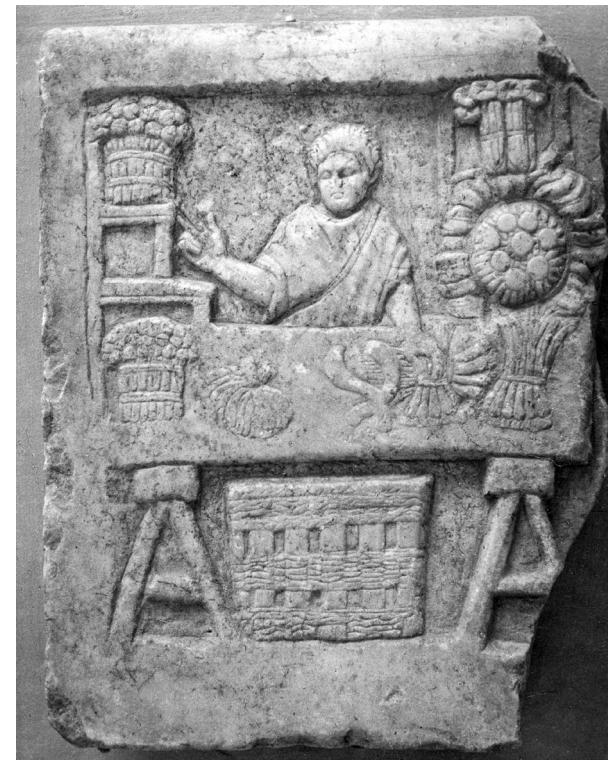


Fig. 10: Funerary relief of a vegetable seller, Isola Sacra Necropolis, Ostia, second half of the second century CE, Museo Ostiense, Ostia.



Fig. 11: Funerary relief from Palmyra of a banqueting or 'Totenmahl' type popular across the Roman empire, second-third century CE, h. 51.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Rome was successor to the Ptolemies, and made its choices dependent on the patron's taste and the object's function. Surprisingly perhaps, given what has happened since the Renaissance when the popularity of Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* dictated that the history of art was a history of Greek artists, Egypt, ancient and Alexandrian, was very much part of this palette, imported into the capital by Augustus and his successors, and not just as evidence of its incorporation of Egypt, but as part of its sculptural and painterly language, its classical language. This in turn led to further adaptation: just as they put the Spear-carrier in a breastplate so as to body forth Roman imperial virtue, so, in the second century CE, Rome's image-makers cast the emperor Hadrian's male lover, Antinous, both as a Greek Apollo, and in an Egyptian kilt and headdress (*fig. 13*), to honour him and his premature death in the Nile. Displayed at Hadrian's villa at Tivoli with versions of the greatest hits of Greek sculpture, this 'Egyptian' statue is Greek in body and face, a male Arsinoe. If the notoriously philhellenic Hadrian can foster forms like this, then maybe 'philhellenic' is the wrong adjective. Perhaps 'cosmopolitan' is better.



Fig. 12 (left): Ptolemaic statue, identified as Arsinoe II, found in the sea at Canopus, third century BCE, black granodiorite, h. 150 cm. Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum.

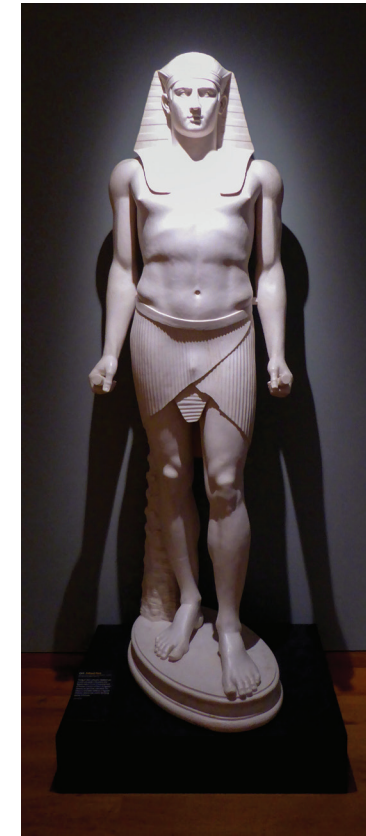


Fig. 13 (right): Cast of the second-century CE statue of Antinous-Osiris in the Vatican Museums, h. 241 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

And if the Egyptian contributes to this definition of the classical, then so does the Gandharan, in an area outside of the Roman empire in modern day Pakistan, its images of Buddha sharing something of the modelled drapery, top knot and serene features of the Apollo Belvedere (*fig. 14*), while his protector and guide, Vajrapani, assumes the form of a fourth-century Hercules figure. Both are born of cultural contact, under Alexander, and under Rome, and not just contact with Greece and Rome, but with Palmyra, Parthia, central Asia, China. This is not to say that they owe their beauty, never mind their meaning, to the glory that was Greece. Rather, they are one expression of a multifaceted cultural identity that had crystallised over centuries. Fasting Buddhas were part of the same visual field (*fig. 15*), and the sinewy, hollowed out form of the fasting buddha without parallel in Greek and Roman tradition.



Fig. 14: Statue of Buddha, third century CE, from the ancient region of Gandhara, h. 92.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 15: Fasting Buddha, third-fifth century CE, from the ancient region of Gandhara, h. 27.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

FLESHING OUT THIS EXPANDED TERRAIN

Or is he without parallel? In 1908, the son of London-based collector Wyndham Francis Cook saw to the publication of his father's assemblage of Greek, Etruscan and Roman antiquities. Prized among them (so prized that it had been included in a major exhibition of Greek art five years earlier) was a bronze statuette, the fine features of which would not be out of place under Alexander or Augustus, but with a weak wrist, stick arms, and exposed skeleton (*fig. 16*). Lots of ink has been spilled on his particular sickness, but this detracts from his importance as an artwork, and from the popularity, especially post Alexander, of bodies that depart from the classical ideal – blighted, bloated or disabled bodies that show the vagaries of nature and nurture. Inequalities of feast and famine were surely greater under Alexander's dynastic successors than they were under a democracy, but they were there all along, rubbing up against

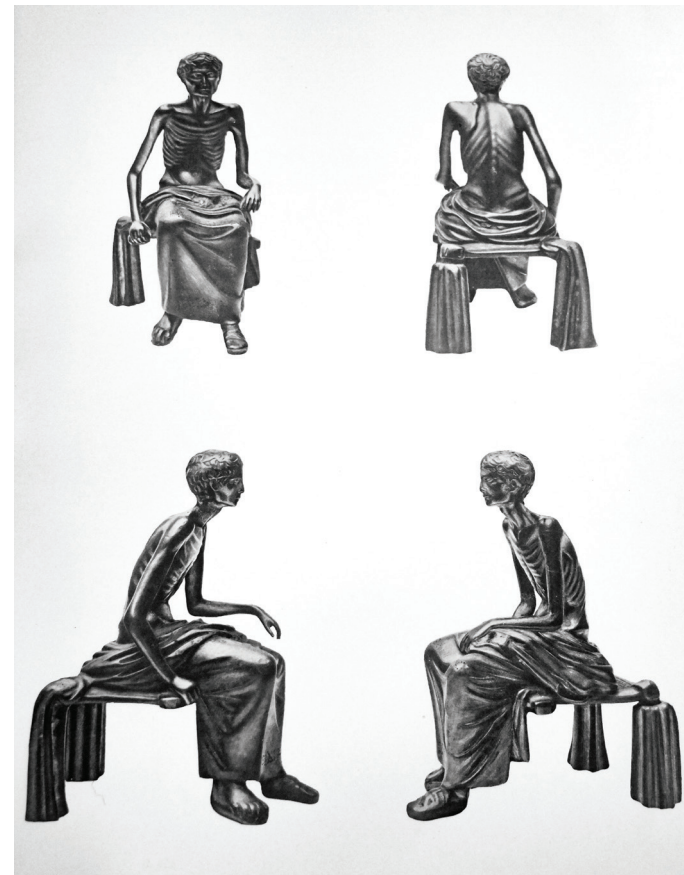


Fig. 16: Statuette of an emaciated youth, probably first century BCE-first century CE, h. 11.5 cm. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

the ideal in fifth and fourth-century Athens, in lives devoted to the mind rather than the body, and in Aristophanic comedy and caricature on pottery. The body beautiful invited them.

Like Cook's statuette which would once have had silver eyes, many of these are exquisite in their execution. Some of them are also monumental in scale (*fig. 17*). In terms of its workmanship, the 'Old Market Woman', discovered in Rome in 1907 and now in the Metropolitan Museum, is a masterpiece. It is also often dismissed as profane, ugly, its open mouth and stooped posture a stark antithesis to Praxiteles' Aphrodite. Obscure the head, however, and she becomes a crumpled Arsinoe, her body less haggard than we might at first have realised. She is sometimes identified as a prostitute – though this says more



Fig. 17: Old market woman, copy of a Greek work of the second century BCE, h. 125.98 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

about our discomfort at her gaping gown than it does about Greek and Roman culture, and it overlooks the ivy-wreath that marks her as a follower of Dionysus, god of wine, ritual ecstasy, alterity. Whoever she is, she has her own beauty, religiosity, strength, resilience in the face of adversity. She is less 'ugly' than she is 'grotesque', with all of that category's destabilising, life-affirming qualities.

In putting the diversity of an expanded Greek world under the microscope, artists, post Alexander, were also more interested than ever in non-Greek bodies. African bodies from the Nubian to the Ethiopian figured large here in the form of statuettes, perfume jars, oil lamps, paintings and mosaics, some of them in their full humanity, others uncomfortably exaggerated, in our eyes. Many represent athletes or artisans; some are surely supposed to be slaves. It is doubtful that any made the Greeks and Romans uncomfortable. Slaves, from Africa and elsewhere, were a fact of Greek and Roman life, their bodies bought and sold, abused, neglected and fetishized. A utopia ancient Greece was not. In democratic Athens already, potters had modelled vases with a female face on one side and a black male face on the other (*fig. 18*). They ask the question: is this coupling about equivalence or hierarchy? Women were widely regarded as the weaker sex, but in another example, the black male is paired with the Greek



Fig. 18: Athenian double-headed vase, ca. 480-470 BCE, h. 14.9 cm, Princeton University Art Museum.



Fig. 19: Head of a man with tight, curly hair, possibly made in Asia Minor, second century BCE, h. 28 cm. The Brooklyn Museum.

hero, Hercules. Three centuries later, in the eastern Mediterranean this time, and these images are still raising questions about status: who is the man with cork-screw curls whose stunning grey marble head, just short of life size, has since been sliced from its statue (*fig. 19*)? He reminds us that Greek and Roman culture, especially by the time we get to the second century BCE, was not white at any level of society, any more than that its statues were white, that one of the stars of even early Greek epic had been the Ethiopian king, Memnon. Not that the art-materials used map neatly onto skin colour in any period: on Athenian black-figure vases, Memnon looks like any Greek or Trojan hero, his ethnicity marked by the squires with him. In addition to the use of bronze, even Rome's emperors and empresses, Hercules, and fourth-century Apollo-types, could be sculpted – like Arsinoe – in black rock.

Greek and Roman art is complicated, and the Apollo Belvedere, and its baggage, just one manifestation of the very best it has to offer. Not that all of this is easy to admire or understand, any more than the Belvedere is *obviously* beautiful to look at. It is an acquired taste that can, as recent alt-right appropriations have demonstrated, prove poisonous. Perhaps it is time for him to be toppled from his pedestal. Although do that, and we topple centuries of artists' appreciation (by Goltzius, Rubens, Turner – studying casts of classical statues was how they learned to draw), and with them, Winckelmann, without whose scholarship working with Greek and Roman art would be even more difficult. For Winckelmann, the Apollo Belvedere stimulated a subjectivity that would prove liberating for him and other gay men. Topple Apollo, and we risk toppling our discipline – and that is to lose key co-ordinates.

In the same decade as the alt-right targeted US campuses with posters that peddled white supremacy, sculptors Matthew Darbyshire and Sui Jianguo were making their versions of canonical Greek nudes, in popsicle-coloured polycarbonate, and dressed in a Chinese suit respectively, tackling the whiteness of these statues head on. In his retrospective in Manchester Art Gallery in 2015–16, Darbyshire set his Spear-carrier and a Dyson Hoover-shaped sculpture on either side of the grand stone staircase (*fig. 20*), against the Gallery's nineteenth-century casts of reliefs from the Parthenon, which themselves have coloured backgrounds – in a comment on tradition, brand recognition, commodification, authority.

Classical art is here to stay, and not only because kicking against something necessitates contact, but because it has so much more to teach us, not least the crucial lesson of why we look and talk about the material culture of the



Fig. 20: Matthew Darbyshire, CAPTCHA No. 41 – Dyson, 2015, multiwall polycarbonate and stainless steel armature, 180 x 70 x 70 cm, and CAPTCHA No. 40 – Doryphoros, 2015, multiwall polycarbonate and stainless steel armature, 220 x 70 x 70 cm.

Mediterranean, and of Renaissance- and post-Renaissance-Italy, France, Spain, England, the Netherlands and so on, in the way that we do – of how it shapes and has come to shape, politics, aesthetics, anatomy, genetics. It is a classical art largely seeded by Pliny and other ancient authors, for it is Pliny who told the Renaissance what to look for. It is an art as elite as Pliny's readers.

Classical art will adapt. It was constantly adapting in antiquity already with every new iteration, and every new conversation with the material culture in its immediate purview and further afield – and was no more *the* style of any given moment than 1920s France was art deco. 'Greece' and 'Rome' were no less eclectic than France in bringing the classical into new constellations across territories as disparate as the remains of the French colonial empire, not to mention differences in class, age, gender. There was so much more on the table: other choice pieces like sky-spawned Athena, the busts from Cyrene, Passienus's tree,

Hadrian's kilt-wearing Antinous, the market woman, the statue with the curls, all of which call the classical to account. In Cambridge, the University's Palmyrene sculpture is not exhibited in the Fitzwilliam Museum's Greek and Roman gallery, but in an annex by the loos, and the Romano-British in a different museum. Put these into the same space, and we challenge ourselves to do better.

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