

## Excavating in the *Wanderstraßen der Kultur* Piranesi's Candalebra and the material Reception of Antiquity

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### 1. Warburg on *Nachleben* and style formation

Usually we do not think of Warburg as an archaeologist. He rather appears, carefully dressed, as the scholar in his studio, surrounded by the images he cut out for his collages. But his favourite metaphor to describe his life's work was that of the excavator: to retrace, as he put it in one version, the vagaries of *Nachleben* as the unearthing of villages and towns of which only isolated road blocks and fading road numbers survived. In another version of the archaeological metaphor he described his study of the survival of pathos formulas as “preliminary excavation reports about the first stages of the migration routes along which ancient gesture travelled from Athens to Rome, Florence and Nuremberg”.<sup>1</sup>

These metaphors suggest something that until now has remained somewhat neglected in both reception and *Nachleben* studies: that not only images survive, but objects as well, and that they survive not just as the carriers of images, but as material objects as well. And whereas reception studies of images is by now a well-established and flourishing discipline, especially in the UK, the material reception of Antiquity is still an emerging field.<sup>2</sup> Biographies of objects over long periods are now occasionally written, but the biographical model is a bit of a mixed blessing: it helps structure the narrative, but tends to favour a conception of an object as a unique individual, rather than a member of a class or type. Also, the metaphor of the life of an object gives the narrative a certain shape and drive that obscures all sorts of methodological issues.

This is where Warburg comes in, and in particular the late Warburg who in the 1920s worked mainly on his collages, or *Bilderreiben*, conceived as the visual demonstration of the workings of *Nachleben* and *Mnemosyne*. With the recent

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hartmut Böhme, “Aby Warburg”, in *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft. Von Friedrich Schleiermacher bis Mircea Eliade*, ed. Axel Michaels (München: Beck, 1997), 133–57, in particular 137–41.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent overview of reception studies see Michael Squire, “Theories of Reception”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Art and Architecture*, ed. Clemente Marconi (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 637–62.

publication of these *Bilderreihen* we are now in the fortunate position of being able to observe Warburg at work at close range.<sup>3</sup> What they make very clear is how much thought he devoted to mapping and documenting the *Wanderstrassen*, the migration routes on which classical gestures, pathos formulas, as well as artefacts travelled through Europe and into the present; but also how much effort he made to understand the dynamics—psychological, cultural and religious—that propelled these migrants. The lecture he gave in January 1929 in Rome on Roman antiquities in the studio of Ghirlandajo is particularly interesting, because there he returns to the problem of style formation or *Stilbildung* that had been the subject of his early Florentine essays. But this time the connection between *Nachleben* and *Stilbildung* becomes central.<sup>4</sup>

Now connecting the reception of Graeco-Roman art with the question of how styles are formed may not sound very new, because in a sense this has been the major theme of Western art since Charlemagne, if not Hadrian or Augustus. But Warburg formulates this old problem in a totally new way. For him it is no longer a tale of imitation and emulation, a rational process of mastering the principles of classical art that are intrinsically learnable—the guiding principles of the European academies—and an equally rational process of selecting the best models. The paper on Ghirlandajo, like the one on Manet also included in the *Bilderreihen*, very clearly shows the astonishing modernity and continuing relevance of Warburg today. For instance, he completely did away with aesthetic canonization, prioritising of the art of the West or the Italian Renaissance, or rather, such traditional art-historical concepts have lost their meaning or use for him. He is also one of the pioneers of a global art history. Following in the footsteps of Semper, he was one of the first to develop the conceptual foundations for considering art, or rather image-making, as a feature of human nature across the ages and across the globe.<sup>5</sup> The result is an historical investigation of such making, and the use of images across the globe, that

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<sup>3</sup> Uwe Fleckner and Isabella Woldt, ed., *Aby Warburg. Bilderreihen und Ausstellungen*, Gesammelte Schriften Vol. II.2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> “Römische Antike in der Werkstatt des Domenico Ghirlandaio” (held in Rome, Biblioteca Hertziana 19–31 January, 1929), Fleckner and Woldt, *Bilderreihen und Ausstellungen*, 303–10.

<sup>5</sup> On this aspect of Semper’s thought see Caroline van Eck, “Le cannibalisme, le tatouage, et le revêtement: de l’histoire de l’architecture à l’anthropologie de l’art”, *Gradhiva. Revue d’anthropologie et des arts*, special issue Summer 2017: *Gottfried Semper – habiter les couleurs*, ed. Isabelle Kalinowski, and “The Primal Scene of Architecture: Gottfried Semper and Alfred Gell on the Origins of Art, Style and Agency”, *Revue Germanique Internationale* 26 (2017), accessed August 1 2019, doi: 10.4000/rgi.1695.

concentrates on their ritual, political and social functions, but it is largely an art history without names, in which large-scale and long-term processes have taken over from individual artists of genius as the motors of change.

As a consequence, he also developed an entirely new concept of style, and of style formation, or *Stilbildung*, which no longer centers around the rhetorical idea of the form of content, or considers style as a set of recognizable design features; nor does Warburg's concept of style adhere to the traditional program of imitation and emulation; or serve as an instrument of classification. Instead style formation for him is about the development of consistent patterns of adaptation, or resurgence, of classical motifs, in new, post-classical situations, in the work of individual artists, genres, or places. Therefore style is no longer defined as forward-looking innovation driven by artistic genius; it is instead a process of remembrance, reception, and in one word, restoration—something to which I will return.

Yet the lecture on Roman antiquities in the workshop of Ghirlandajo also clearly show the problems of this intellectual project. The purpose of this lecture, as he put it in the singularly clear summary of the lecture for the Yearbook of the Hertziana, was to discover

die Rolle der klassischen Antike beim Eintritt des Idealstils in die Malerei der Florentiner Frührenaissance und ihr Einfluß auf die Stilwandlungen der europäischen Kunst des 15., 16., und erste Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts. Hierbei handelt es sich nicht darum, Nachweise stofflicher Übernahme zu erbringen. Diese bilden vielmehr ihrerseits erst das Substrat einer Frage nach den Gegensätzen, gemäß deren sich diese Übernahme vollzieht. Die klassische Antike hat dem Gedächtnis der nachforschenden Menschheit in den Gestalten ihrer bildenden Kunst und ihrer religiösen Mythendichtung einen Schatz vorgeprägter Ausdruckswerte überliefert, auf den immer dann zurückgegriffen wird, wenn der künstlerische Gestaltungsprozeß eines Erlebnisses nach maximalen Ausdruck verlangt.<sup>6</sup>

Or, as Uwe Fleckner, one of the editors of the *Bilderreiben* put it: “In Neben- und Gegeneinander der ausgewählten Reproduktionen sollte ein eher mechanisches kunsthistorisches Modell von Einflußbeziehungen durch eine umfassendere kulturpsychologische Theorie der *Bildwanderung* ersetzt worden”; and as Warburg

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<sup>6</sup> Warburg, “Römische Antike” (as in note 4), 307.

himself put it: “die lebendige Selbstbeleuchtung des Problems durch polare Gegensätzlichkeit”.<sup>7</sup>

After these introductory remarks, Warburg proceeded to analyse the first *Bilderreihen* presented in the Hertziana (in total there were more than 300, and the lecture lasted for more than two hours, for Warburg a relatively moderate length).

Tafel 1 zeigt die zweifache griechische und römische Wurzel in der Gestaltung des innerlichen und äußerlichen bewegten Lebens [...] nur in summarischer Antithese veranschaulicht.

He then adds one of his wonderfully suggestive descriptions of *Nachleben* in action:

Wer von der Via Appia aus Rom betrat, sah den erschütternden Gegensatz heidnischer und christlicher Kultur im drohenden Symbol paganer Mauerwerke vor sich. Die Stadt des Lorbeers und der Palmenzweige ragte auf im Konstantinsbogen und im Kolosseum. Superbia und Pietas forderten Entscheidung am Lebenswege.

The manuscript stops at the point where Warburg should have elucidated the wider methodological issues:

Von den Unzulänglichkeiten dieser Versuchsreihe kann niemand tiefer durchdrungen sein, als ich selbst. Auch meine Polaritätspsychologie ist gewiss nur ein Notbehelf./ Lassen Sie es uns mit Carlyle halten, und die Pflicht des berufsmäßigen Erinnerns einfach da tun, wo sie am nächsten liegt: die Urkunden im Seelenarchiv aufmerksam lesen.<sup>8</sup>

The *Bilderreihen* are thus staggeringly learned, highly suggestive programmatic statements of possible connections between Graeco-Roman motifs and their return in the 15th and 16th centuries, full of intriguing flashes of insight and evocative phrases. But they offer very little historical evidence or documentation of the actual existence of these connections. Instead, the argument very often proceeds by means of style not evidence: personifications of periods and concepts, suggestive metaphors, and juxtapositions of images from very different times and places.

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<sup>7</sup> Fleckner and Woldt, *Bilderreihen und Ausstellungen*, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Fleckner and Woldt, *Bilderreihen und Ausstellungen*, 307–8.

## 2. The challenge of the object: a Warburgian tale of loss, retrieval and restoration

So we have here on the one hand a rather mixed list of problems and assumptions, with a largely outdated psychology, and an historical method full of lacunae, but on the other a series of redefinitions and rethinkings of art history and its objects that still speak to us. Also, the art history, or rather the *Bildwissenschaft* that Warburg created, is a history of motifs and above all *images*. This prompts the question, also suggested by his own characterization of himself as an archaeologist, of what would happen if we turned our attention to a story of the *Nachleben* not of an image, motif, or pathos formula, but of a group of objects, where we could document at least some of the connecting links between its episodes? As we will see, looking at the actual *Objektfahrzeuge* of one type of artefact will show that the dynamics feeding these migrations may be of a very different nature to the psychological and psychopathological processes Warburg assumed. It will also suggest that there are different kinds of reception of Antiquity, taking place simultaneously, that often clash, and that sometimes it is not Antiquity that is received, but its creation by 18th-century artists. As the poet Novalis observed in his *Großes Brouillon*, “antiquity is only now coming into being. It grows under the eyes and soul of the artist. The remains of ancient times are only the specific stimuli for the formation of antiquity”.<sup>9</sup> So first we will look at material reception, next at what for want of a better term I will call museum reception, a shorthand abbreviation for art history conceived as a *historia rerum gestarum*, or in terms of Nietzsches *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, a text that much shaped Warburg’s thought, a combination of archival and monumental historiography.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Novalis, *Philosophical Writings. Translated and edited by M.M. Stoljar* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 111–2.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen, Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, in: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in Drei Bänden*, ed. Karl Schlechta (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 1:219–37 (section 2–4). See also Roland Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm: Geschichte, Erinnerung und die Andacht zum Unbedeutenden im Werk von Usener, Warburg und Benjamin* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987) and Helmut Pfotenhauer, “Das Nachleben der Antike: Aby Warburgs Auseinandersetzung mit Nietzsche”, *Nietzsche Studien* 14 (1985): 298–313.



Figure 1: Triangular basis of a Neo-Attic candelabrum from the first century CE, marble, Venice: Museo Archeologico.



Figure 2: Raphael (1483–1520), attr., *Madonna della Quercia*, oil on wood, 144 x 110 cm, 1518/19, Madrid: Prado [photo: akg images].

### The material reception of candelabra

Candelabra are the protagonists of this tale. They are a very old object-type, but notably understudied. In a singularly Warburgian twist, the first Roman object to be imitated by Renaissance artists as an object, and not for the image it carried as a relief, sarcophagus or vase, was a fragment of a candelabrum and, in an even more Warburgian twist, a fragment that sported a relief of an ecstatic maenad. According to the census of Antique sculpture known in the Renaissance by Rubinstein and Bober, a drawing made in c. 1430 in the circle of Ghiberti is the first documented sign of a revived interest in antique candelabra as objects to be imitated and revived. Now in Venice, it shows a triangular basis of a Neo-Attic candelabrum from the first century CE that had stood in the church of San Lorenzo in Tivoli (figure 1). Bought by the Venetian collector Domenico Grimani in the 1590s, it became part of the collection of the Republic of Venice, where many artists saw it. It was drawn by Giuliano da Sangallo, included in major drawing collections such as the *Codex Escurialensis* and painted, in a ruined condition, in the Prado *Madonna della Quercia* once attributed to Raphael

(figure 2), as part of a figuration of the triumph of Christianity over pagan religion.<sup>11</sup> Next to this first case of the *Nachleben* of a Roman artefact, the candelabrum in the early Christian basilica of Sant'Agnese fuori le Mura, probably of the Hadrianic period, was also one of the first, if not the first of this type, to be imitated as a sculptural object, and not copied, drawn or painted as an image.<sup>12</sup> With the excavation of Hadrianic candelabra at Tivoli in the 1640s this type became more prominent (figure 3).<sup>13</sup> Until quite recently these Barberini candelabra were considered to be reasonably complete, authentic objects from Hadrian's age, but recent investigations have shown that the restorer Cavaceppi tinkered quite substantially with them, moving around bits and integrating parts from other candelabra. The result is now considered rather as an eighteenth-century pastiche.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Daniela Gallo, "Entre érudition et création artistique. Les objets antiques en marbre au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle", in *L'artiste et l'Antiquaire: L'Étude de l'Antiquité et son Imaginaire à l'époque moderne*, ed. Emmanuel Lurin and Delphine Morena Burlot (Paris: Picard, 2017), 209–223; Philipp P. Bober and Ruth Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture. A Handbook of Sources* (London: Antiques Collectors' Club, 1986), 121–2, cat. 89; see also Warren Tresidder, "A Borrowing from the Antique in Giovanni Bellini's 'Continenza di Scipione'", *Burlington Magazine* 132, no. 1075 (October 1992): 660–2, and Henri Lavagne, "La Base du Candélabre Borghese au Louvre", *Monuments et Mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 86 (2007): 5–30, for a discussion of the candelabrum pedestal formerly in the Villa Borghese, now in the Louvre. This is a Neo-Attic specimen rediscovered in the first half of the sixteenth century in Rome, and acquired by the Borghese c. 1610. It remained on display in the villa until Napoleon acquired the collection in 1806.

<sup>12</sup> Gallo, "Entre érudition et création artistique", 209.

<sup>13</sup> See Gallo, "Entre érudition et création artistique" for a first overview of the recovery, exhibition, and use in design of the Barberini and S. Agnese candelabra. On the Barberini excavations see Marina De Franceschini, *Villa Adriana, Accademia: Hadrian's Secret Garden, 1: History of the Excavations, Ancient Sources and Antiquarian Studies* (Pisa/Roma: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2017), 144–63.

<sup>14</sup> Franceschini, *Villa Adriana*, 150, whose analysis is based on recent autopsy and Brendan Cassidy, "Thomas Jenkins and the Barberini Candelabra in the Vatican", *Bollettino dei Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie* 10 (1990): 99–103. Jenkins incidentally believed them to be Greek, and made during the reign of Alexander the Great.



Figure 3: Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), one of the Barberini Candelabra, Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi* (Roma, 1778).

From the 15th century onwards a second type would be developed, in some respects the successor to the mediaeval candelabra made to bear the Paschal Candle. This second type is much more elaborate. Acanthus leaves or balusters are not the main parts of their design, nor the clear anthropomorphy of early Greek and Etruscan examples. Instead the shaft is hidden from sight by a vertical proliferation of ornament, often grotesque. There is a drawing by Giovanni Bellini showing this layering of grotesque ornament, now in Bari (figure 4).<sup>15</sup> Andrea Riccio's rectangular bronze pascal candelabrum for San Antonio in Padua is the most famous representative of this type (figure 5). Made between 1507–1515 it is almost four meters high, and combines elements of a pagan altar adorned with sphinxes and satyrs, with a Jewish and Christian iconography of sacrifice, and reliefs showing the *artes liberales*. It stands out because of its heterogeneous composition, layering and complex iconography.<sup>16</sup> Another

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<sup>15</sup> Andrea Bacchi and Luciana Giacomelli, ed., *Rinascimento e Passione per l'Antico. Andrea Riccio e il suo tempo*. Exh. Cat. Trento 2008 (Trento: Provincia Autonoma di Trento, 2008), 42, figure 26.

<sup>16</sup> On Riccio see Bacchi and Giacomelli, *Rinascimento e Passione per l'Antico*; Davide Banzato, *Andrea Briosco detto il Riccio. Mito pagano e cristianesimo nel Rinascimento. Il candelabro pasquale del Santo a Padova* (Milan: Skira, 2009).



famous example is the one by Maffeo Olivieri in the Basilica of San Marco in Venice. Here feline legs and lion's heads support layers of grotesque figuration, to culminate in a disc with a burning fire (figure 6).<sup>17</sup> Candelabra of this type were also made in Florence. Michelangelo or his studio designed a pair of marble candelabra for the Capella Medicea (figure 7).<sup>18</sup>



Figure 4: Andrea Riccio, called Riccio (1470–1532), Bronze candelabrum, Basilica of Saint Anthony, Padua. Photo: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris



Figure 5: Giovanni Bellini, Drawing for a candelabrum, c. 1430, pencil on paper, Bari: Pinacoteca Nazionale.

<sup>17</sup> Leo Planiscig, *Andrea Riccio* (Vienna: Anton Schroll & Co, 1927), 321–3, who also shows a photo of candelabrum from Riccio's workshop now lost.

<sup>18</sup> On the candelabra in the Medici Chapel see Frederick Hartt, *Michelangelo. The Complete Sculpture* (New York: Abrams, n.y.), 175–6: “It has been shown that the only point of view from which all the elements of the Chapel and their interrelationships become visible is that of the priest behind the altar. [...] celebrant stood between two candlesticks. On the Gospel side was represented the pelican [...]. On the Epistle side was the phoenix, which Michelangelo had already represented in the ornamentation of the Tomb of Julius II as a symbol of Christ's resurrection.”



Figure 6: Maffeo Olivieri, Candelabrum for San Marco, Venice, photo: Jahmuth, *Lichter*.



Figure 7: Florence, San Lorenzo, New Sacristy (Medici Chapel), altar with candelabra now attributed to Michelangelo's studio, 1519–34, photo: Ralph Lieberman Archive, Harvard.

This extremely potted overview of the resurgence, transformations and adaptations of this very old type of artefact, whose roots go back to ancient Egypt and prehistoric Spain (figure 8), acquires an added Warburgian dimension when Piranesi enters the stage, or rather, went to hear Mass in the village of Pantanello, near Tivoli, the site of the famous villa by the Roman Emperor Hadrian, in 1769. Together with the Scottish painter and excavator Gavin Hamilton, Piranesi had to wade through the mud to come upon a vast amount of broken fragments of statues, vases, furniture and buildings.<sup>19</sup> This tale is a perfect illustration of what Aby Warburg would call, more than a century later, the resurgence of classical forms and objects out of the night of time, of the sudden intrusion of the Graeco-Roman past in the present. From this chaotic mass of muddy rubble Piranesi conjured up objects that would fetch enormous

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<sup>19</sup> Gavin Hamilton, Letter to Charles Townley, 1779, reproduced in G. J. Hamilton and Arthur Hamilton Smith, "Gavin Hamilton's Letters to Charles Townley", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21 (1901): 306–21, here 309.

prices. He constructed monumental vases, tripods, pedestals, and not least three monumental candelabra. Just to give you an idea of their market value in the 1770s, people paid much less for good, reasonably intact Graeco-Roman statues excavated at the same time. For instance, a very nice version of the Discobolus or Discus Thrower was required to fetch only 700 scudi.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 6: The “Candlesticks” of Lebrija, Spain, late eighth–early seventh century BCE, gold, c. 1 m high, found near Lebrija (Sevilla), Madrid: Archaeological Museum.

Piranesi played a considerable role in the fabrication of these candelabra, both materially, since he had them put together out of fragments submerged in the swamp of Pantanello, as well as in the creation of their reputation.<sup>21</sup> He was even

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<sup>20</sup> Ilaria Bignamini and Clare Sekul Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome* (New Haven et al.: Yale University Press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010), 290.

<sup>21</sup> See the statements by contemporaries quoted in Jonathan Scott, “Some Sculptures from Hadrian’s Villa”, in *Piranesi e la Cultura Antiquaria. Gli Antecedenti e il contesto*, ed. Anna Lo Bianco (Rome: Multigrafica Editrice, 1985), 339–47. Henry Blundell for instance wrote that “This ancient vase [...] was bought in 1777, of Piranese, senior, a noted artist whose house was then loaded with all kinds of antique marbles and curiosities. His fertile imagination led him to the business of restoring ancient marbles; and he often from small fragments, formed very elegant things: witness the two candelabrum in the Radcliffe Library in Oxford which [...] are a curious specimen of Piranese’s genius.” This quote on 347 note 18 is taken from Henry Blundell, *An Account of the Statues [...] at Ince*, 1803, 174. Piranesi was not alone in adopting this approach to restoring antiquities. See Bartolomeo Cavaceppi, *Raccolta d’antiche statue [...]* (Rome: Generoso Salomoni, 1768–72) and Giovanni Battista Casanova, *Discorso sopra gl’antichi [...]* (Lipsia: Dyck, 1770) for contemporary statements about restoration, and Seymour Howard, “An antiquarian hand list and the beginnings of the Pio-Clementino”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7/1 (1973): 40–61.

called the “Cavaliere of the Candelabra”, by the British art dealer Thomas Jenkins.<sup>22</sup> He started to design them for San Giovanni in Laterano, and included them frequently in the *Diverse maniere di adornare le camini*. His publication of the candelabra in one of his last published works, the collection called *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi*, in circulation since 1775 and published in 1778, the year in which he died, played a major role in making these outsized lamp-stands very hot property in the circles of collectors in Rome (figure 7 and 8).



Figure 7: Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1770–1778), marble candelabrum, 353 cm high (Paris: Musée du Louvre).<sup>23</sup>



Figure 8: Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1770–1778), marble candelabra, h. 300 cm, made out of various elements (Roman, fifteenth and eighteenth century), after a design by Piranesi. Acquired by Sir Roger Newdigate in 1774, donated to Oxford University in 1775 (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum).

Piranesi claimed that he had found the one now in the Louvre in the collection of the Palazzo Salviati alla Lungara. Unfortunately, no inventory of the collection as it was in the late 18th century survives, so we cannot assess this claim.<sup>24</sup> The two other candelabra were bought by the British collector and politician Sir Roger Newdigate in Rome in 1775 and transported to Oxford under supervision by Thomas Jenkins. They were excavated “tale quale”, Piranesi claimed, in 1769

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<sup>22</sup> Nicholas Penny, *Catalogue of European Sculpture in the Ashmolean Museum*, vol 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 108.

<sup>23</sup> Roman, fifteenth and eighteenth century, after a design by Piranesi. Acquired from his estate in 1815 (Paris: Musée du Louvre).

<sup>24</sup> Marina Sapelli, “Le sculture antiche di Palazzo Salviati”, in *Palazzo Salviati alla Lungara*, ed. Gabriele Morolli (Rome: Editalia 1991), 159–63.

in the Villa Hadriana. He was quite emphatic about their provenance and authenticity in the publication in which he included etchings of them: the *Vasi, Candelabri e Cippi*. Of the pelican candelabrum he claimed as well it was a “[P]ezzo singolare di antichità [...] Fu ritrovato fra le altre antichità nello scavo fatto nel sito detto Pantanello”.<sup>25</sup>

These candelabra, like many other objects Piranesi made from the Pantanello fragments, raise many issues. The artist himself claimed they were “opere romane”, “antiquities”, “pezzi singolare di antichità”, found “tale quale” in the swamp at Pantanello. He made similar claims about other objects – vases, tripods, a rhyton in the shape of a boar, now in Oslo – that were exhibited in what he called his Museo in the Palazzo Tomati.

Yet these claims should make us pause, because these candelabra, like other artefacts included in the *Vasi*, are many things, but do not look at all like the authentic Roman candelabra from Hadrian’s period with which Piranesi was very familiar, and which had recently been transferred from the Barberini Collection and Santa Maria in Trastevere to the newly opened Museo Pio-Clementino’s Sala dei Candelabri.

### 3. Museal and monumental reception

So we have here a history of survival, retrieval, transformation, and possibly even faking of a Roman artefact-type. There are strange loops in its reception history. The Barberini candelabra, we now know, turn out to be 18th-century creations, but this was not at all clear to 18th-century viewers and collectors, who took them to be genuine Roman artefacts. The moment these candelabra enter into museums, a different reception begins, with very different interests: instead of Michelangelo’s concern with displaying his own individual style, or Piranesi’s concern with recreation and transformation, a critical apparatus is developed, very close to textual philology and *Kopienkritik*, that slowly but inexorably detects all the later additions and new elements in Piranesi’s candelabra. At the same time much Roman lamp lore about lamps being the conscious witnesses of everything they illuminate, recorded by Homer,

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<sup>25</sup> Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi* [...], (Rome, 1778), caption of plate 25.

Petronius or Lucian, or views of candelabra as body doubles, is completely lost.<sup>26</sup> The successive catalogue entries for the Louvre candelabrum illustrate this very clearly. In the 1817 catalogue Visconti the successor to Winckelmann as papal antiquary, and subsequently the first keeper of antiquities in the Louvre, praised the candelabrum as

un des plus grands [candélabres] qui nous restent de l'antiquité, et un des plus remarquables, tant par la singularité de sa forme que par l'excellence et la variété des sculptures qui en font l'ornement.<sup>27</sup>

But in subsequent editions of the catalogue, starting with the edition revised by his successor Clarac of 1830, its authenticity is increasingly questioned. Clarac now suggested that it is a restoration, and possibly even a fake:

Ce magnifique candélabre *serait* le plus grand qui nous reste de l'antiquité [...] s'il avait toujours existé ainsi; mais il a été formé de différens fragmens d'autels, de candélabres et de trépieds antiques en grande partie, par J.B. Piranesi [...] [*italics added*].<sup>28</sup>



Figure 9: Close-up of the candelabrum by Piranesi in the Louvre showing differences in carving of the pedestal [photo: author].

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ruth Bielfeldt, “Lichtblicke – Sehstrahlen. Zur Präsenz römischer Figuren- und Bildlampen”, in idem, ed., *Ding und Mensch. Gegenwart und Vergegenwärtigung in der Antik* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2014), 169–238; and by the same author, “Candelabrus and Trimalchio: Embodied Histories of Roman Lampstands and their Slaves”, *Art History* 41/3 (2018): 423–43, in particular 425–8.

<sup>27</sup> Ennio Quirino Chevalier de Visconti, *Description des antiques du Musée Royal, par le Chevalier Visconti, membre de l'institut, antiquaire et conservateur des statues [...]* (Paris, 1817), 67 no 172 [Salle du Candélabre].

<sup>28</sup> Charles Othon Frédéric Jean Baptiste de Clarac, *Description des antiques du Musée National du Louvre* (Paris: Vinchon, 1848 [1826<sup>1</sup>]), 89–90.

As a result of this gradual shift in appreciation, the candelabrum travelled even more around the Louvre, and this erratic trajectory reflects the general trouble the Louvre has with categorizing artefacts or *objets d'art*, as opposed to paintings or monumental sculpture. The candelabrum was first moved, probably in the 1850s, to the Salle des Caryatides. In 1869 Wilhelm Fröhner, the successor to Visconti and Clarac, gave a very detailed and quite damning assessment of its authenticity, carefully listing authentic parts, restorations and 18th-century additions: “Assemblage arbitraire et on ne peut plus bizarre de fragments antiques, mêlés de pièces modernes.”<sup>29</sup> Fröhner did not give arguments for this assessment, but when one takes a close look at the candelabrum, the cracks, joints and differences in carving are very clear to see, for instance in the mouldings on the pedestal (figure 9). He also noted that Piranesi, when producing series of elements, such as the three rams' heads or feline claws, would very consistently use one Roman specimen and have it copied twice to make up a complete triad. Possibly as a result of this evaluation, the candelabrum was

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<sup>29</sup> Wilhelm Fröhner, *Notice de la sculpture antique du Musée Impérial du Louvre* 1 (Paris: Charles de Mourgues Frères, 1869), 303, No 312: “Assemblage arbitraire et on ne peut plus bizarre de fragments antiques, mêlés de pièces modernes. Trois bases entassés l'un sur l'autre en forment le piédestal. Sur la plinthe triangulaire sont posées trois griffes, couvertes de dépouilles de têtes de panthère. Elles supportent une base [...] dont les coins sont occupés par trois de ces êtres fantastiques que les anciens avaient l'habitude de mettre sur certains monuments pour en empêcher la violation. [...] troisième base: absolument moderne, sauf le petit support, revêtu de feuilles d'acanthé, et une partie des têtes de bélier que le restaurateur a ornée de fleurs. [...] le fût (*scapus*) du candélabre. Le premier membre, qui affecte la forme d'une corbeille, est moderne, et le restaurateur l'a revêtu de branches de pin. Les attributs bachiques qu'il y a suspendus (syrinx, pedum, paire de cymbales) ne sont pas de meilleur aloi; seul, le petit masque de théâtre, enchâssé dans le milieu, est antique. La scène principale représente un Satyre qui [...] grimpe sur un arbre pour en recueillir les fruits. Silène [...] est appuyé contre un masque et relève la tête vers son compagnon. [...] A leurs pieds [...] quatre masques colossaux d'une beauté achevée. La partie supérieure du candélabre se compose d'un balustre et d'un nouveau support orné de trois têtes de lion, de guirlandes et d'instruments de sacrifice [...] Les feuilles d'acanthé sur lesquelles se dresse la coupe, le haut de la tige et le plateau sont modernes. [*parties restaurées*: Quelques morceaux des griffes de lion; le balustre et une partie considérable de la plinthe qu'il supporte; plusieurs morceaux de la base aux monstres et du chapiteau corinthien; deux têtes de bélier et la moitié du troisième; la base ronde enrichie d'entrelacs, de frise de feuillage etc. Les pins (sauf un morceau de bas d'un branche d'arbre). Le nez des deux masques de Satyres-femelles; la partie gauche du masque de Silène; le nez et l'occiput du Satyre barbu. Les bras, les jambes, la cuisse droite et la moitié de la cuisse gauche du Satyre vendangeur. Le bras droit, à partir du milieu du biceps, les pieds et le genou gauche du Silène, avec le devant de la cuisse et de la jambe. Les attributs bachiques (sauf le masque comique). Quelques morceaux du balustre et tout ce qui se trouve au-dessus des têtes du lion.]

moved to a position outside the Salle des Caryatides. In the early years of this century it was restored and put into storage during the preparations for the new display of the Département des Objets d'Art, to become a part of the recently opened Salle Piranèse, devoted to the 18th-century culture of collecting, next to some much smaller, but authentic Roman specimens from the periods of Augustus and Hadrian. Its trajectory in the Louvre thus very clearly documents the radical change in its appreciation, from a masterpiece of antique sculpture to a document in the history of collecting, now ascribed to Piranesi but of doubtful authenticity. In the most recent sculpture catalogue of the Louvre it is now listed under the rubric of restored ancient sculpture, “complétées ou transformées – copies d’antiques”.<sup>30</sup> Somewhat similarly, the companion candelabra in Oxford are now attributed to eighteenth-century sculpture restorers such as Francesco Franzoni.



Figure 10: Louis-Joseph le Lorrain, Desk, c.1756, Chantilly: Musée Condé.

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<sup>30</sup> Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, *La Sculpture Européenne. Moyen-Age, Renaissance, Temps Modernes* (Paris: Somogy, 2006), 394.



#### 4. The role of the candelabra in the formation of style

All this makes the candelabra very intriguing test-cases when thinking about the relations between *Nachleben* and *Stilbildung*, because they led a very chequered afterlife, full of doubtful origins spurious claims about their authenticity, but also exercised an unmistakable impact on the formation of a style, in this case what came to be called Neo-Classicism in the 1920s and 30s.<sup>31</sup>

As I have argued elsewhere, standard accounts of the arts around 1800 as imitation and *aemulatio* of Graeco-Roman art do not hold up to close scrutiny, because these accounts, neither those by the artists themselves, nor current histories of the Age of Neo-Classicism, don't really fit how the art works actually look. Zoomorphism for instance is rarely mentioned, one of the most conspicuous features of this style, as is shown for instance in the desk by Le Lorrain, generally considered to be one of the founding artefacts of the style (figure 10). If anything, both the late *opere romane* by Piranesi, as well as Style Empire objects, look like an exaggerated, heightened version—collage, bricolage—of a particular phase in Imperial Roman art, that of Hadrian. This is interesting, because among Neo-Classicists this period was generally rejected as a period of decadence. In the light of present-day archaeological knowledge, the account fits even less: we know much more about what went on at the Villa Hadriana, and the great geographical and chronological range of artefacts imported and imitated or appropriated there. Roman art is no longer considered to be a series of decadent copies of Greek art; it is seen, thanks for instance to the work of Tonio Hölscher, as a series of conscious revivals and appropriations of preceding styles, from the Archaic to the Hellenistic, based on the semantics of these styles and the political context in which these choices were made.<sup>32</sup>

And finally, we can no longer go along with the underlying assumption of this traditional account that style formation is an autonomous, independent artistic process, driven by aesthetic reasons, as Percier and Fontaine, for instance, and many 20th-century historians of Neo-Classicism would have it.<sup>33</sup> In particular,

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<sup>31</sup> Sigfried Giedion, *Spätbarocker und romantischer Klassizismus* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1922); Franz Landsberger, *Die Kunst der Goethezeit. Kunst und Kunstanschauung von 1750 bis 1830* (Leipzig: Im Insel, 1931).

<sup>32</sup> Tonio Hölscher, *The Language of Images in Roman Art*, intr. Jas Elsner, transl. Anthony Snodgrass and Annemarie Künzl-Snodgrass (Cambridge et. al.: University of Cambridge Press, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Charles Percier and Pierre François Léonard Fontaine, *Recueil de décoration intérieure* (Paris: chez les auteurs, 1812), “Discours Préliminaire”.

Aby Warburg has shown, even if we don't agree with many of his assumptions about collective human memory, that revivals of classical forms cannot be understood exclusively in such terms. They are driven by much more varied motives, emotional, religious, or political; the artists are not the main actors in such revivals; and such revivals should rather be seen as part of a general, recurring anthropological feature of human material culture.

So how can we rethink, in this light, style formation in the Age of Neo-Classicism, taking our departure from Piranesi's *opere romane*, which proved to be such an inspiration for artists c. 1800? I would suggest that we should understand style formation in the case of Piranesi's *opere romane*, but also in the case of the Style Empire he so much inspired, not in the traditional art-theoretical terms of imitation and emulation, nor in terms of artistic invention, creativity, if not genius, nor as bad imitations, fakes or fraud; nor in the Warburgian sense of *Nachleben* as an irrational irruption of the past into the present. Instead, taking a cue from Warburg's observations on style formation in Ghirlandajo's studio, as *Erbgutverwaltung*, I would propose to consider style formation as a kind of *restoration*, in three senses: first of all, its material and formal aspects; second, the conceptual aspects: what did restoration mean in the late 18th century in Rome? and finally, turning from the artefacts to the persons involved, in a psychological and anthropological sense: of the emotional—and often substantial financial—investment in giving objects a new integrity and coherence.

## 5. Restoration: material and formal aspects

It is, I believe, an essential, but often overlooked fact, that Piranesi's late works, the artefacts he created from Roman fragments, are all very much based on acts of restoration. First of all in the literal, basic sense of conserving and restoring ancient fragments into new wholes that more or less look like ancient prototypes. The Bacchus and Ceres Thrones for instance now in the Louvre, is based on Roman fragments, but was heavily restored by the sculptor Franzoni, who worked for Piranesi but also on the animal statues in the Museo Pio-Clementino (figure 11).<sup>34</sup> But “more or less” is the operative term here. Consider for instance the moulding of the Louvre candelabrum mentioned above: one

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<sup>34</sup> Alvar González-Palacios, *Il Seraglio di Pietra. La Sala degli Animali in Vaticano* (Vatican City: Edizioni Musei Vaticani, 2013).

part looks Roman, but is a fragment, and Piranesi's workshop has added the rest of the moulding, and in far less refined workmanship (figure 9).

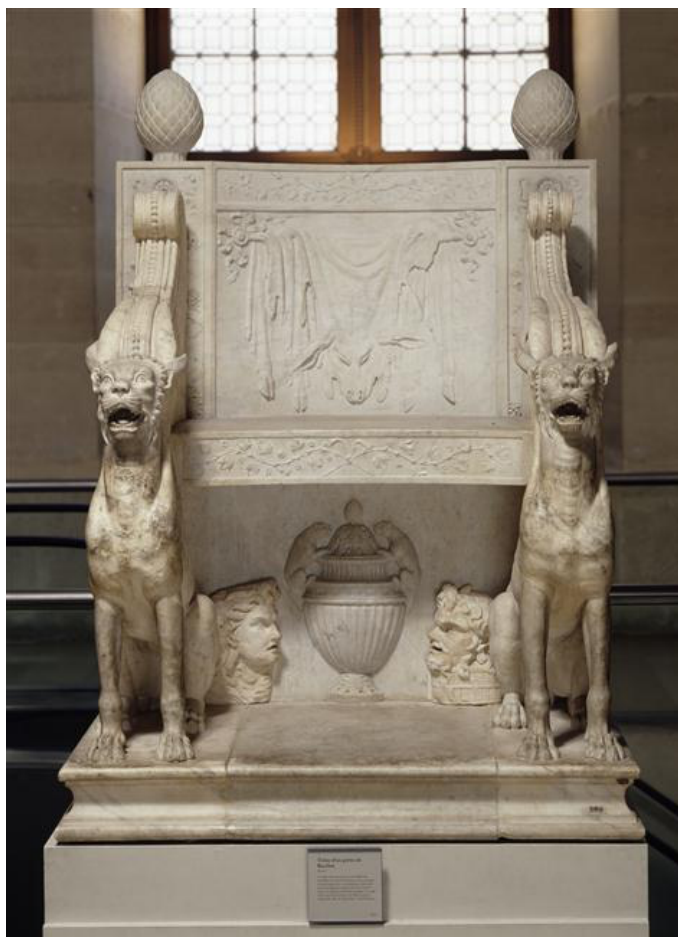


Figure 11: Ceres Throne, marble, 1.85 x 1.05 x 1, now dated eighteenth century and attributed to the sculptor F.A. Franzoni, with some Roman elements, mainly the sphinxes, Paris: Musée du Louvre (photo by the author).

But then something happens, which becomes clear when we compare again the Louvre candelabrum with authentic Hadrianic specimens: Piranesi goes into what we might call a typical Piranesian design overdrive, transforming the Hadrianic tripartite prototype into something much more varied and rich, if not excessive. Something similar can be observed in other *opere romane* published in the *Vasi*: the boar-shaped rhyton for instance now in Stockholm (figure 12). All these objects would have a significant progeny in Empire and Neo-Classical design circa 1800.



Figure 12: Rhyton, urn and a candelabrum sold by Francesco Piranesi to the Swedish Royal Collection, now on display in the Royal Palace in Stockholm.

Therefore the artefacts he presented as genuine Roman works are in fact imaginative transformative restorations. He developed an art, we might say, of transformation rather than imitation. Such transformation is the design process that drives the formation of a style out of the revival of ancient artefacts. Fragments from Pantanello, Tusculum or Roman collections such as the Barberini or the Salviati are completed, like the moulding in the Louvre candelabrum, but the process only starts here. These fragments are then appropriated, to create, or rather, in Piranesi's view, recreate the splendours of Roman, Greek, Etruscan and Egyptian art, in new compositions that disobey the restraint of Vitruvian decorum, and instead aim at maximum richness, variety, delicacy and opulence. So from reparation and simple restoration we move here to appropriation to end with a recreation, in what Piranesi conceived to be an entirely historical manner, of what he considered the best elements of Mediterranean material culture.

The result comes very close to Warburg's analysis of style formation in the studio of Ghirlandajo, in the sense that we can develop a mapping of the trajectories of Roman artefacts into Piranesi's studio, and their transformation there into

new works. However, the underlying artistic mechanisms that drive it are very different in character.

Now this is a very different view of restoration from the one put forth for instance by Bartolomeo Cavaceppi, the philologist Carl Gustav Heyne, or Giovanni Casanova, the brother of Giacomo, who taught at the Dresden Academy of Fine Art, and it presents a problem for us, because their view is completely contradicted by what actually went on in Piranesi's Museum.<sup>35</sup> They all stress the importance of limiting the addition of new elements to one third at the most, the ambition or ideal to somehow come to understand the original in its pristine state, and the primacy of that original. The results however could vary, as the restoration of a Discobolus as Diomedes quoted by the historian of restoration Seymour Howard shows (figure 13).<sup>36</sup> This contradiction between the professed ideal of return to an original coherence, particularly in Cavaceppi's text on restoration, and the practice of combining very heterogeneous elements, points in my view to a very important implicit concern, which could not, for be stated explicitly by restorers because of its implications for what went on in their studios: that restoration is driven by a desire to restore coherence: in a formal, stylistic, and material way, at the cost of preserving the object as it was rediscovered, or the traces left by the passing of time.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Giovanni Casanova, *Discorso sopra le antichi e varj monumenti* (Dresden, 1770); Christian Gottlob Heyne, "Irrtümer in Erklärung alter Kunstwerke aus einer fehlerhaften Ergänzung", *Sammlung antiquarischer Aufsätze* 2 (Leipzig: Weidmann und Reich, 1779), 172–258; Giovanni Gherardo de Rossi, "Lettera sopra il restauro di una antica statua di Antinoo", *Nuova Giornale di Letterati* 13 (Pisa, 1826): 23–38; Bartolomeo Cavaceppi, *Raccolta d'antiche statue*, 3 vols (Roma: Stamperia Di Marco Pagliarini, 1768–72). On the history of sculpture restoration see Orietta Rossi Pinelli, "Chirurgia della memoria: scultura antica e restauri storici", in *Memoria dell'antico*, 3, *Dalla tradizione all'archeologia*, ed. Salvatore Settis (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1986), 183–253, and Janet Burnett Grossman, Jerry Podany and Marion True, eds., *History of Restoration of Ancient Stone Sculptures* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Seymour Howard, "Restoration and the Antique Model. Reciprocities between Figure and Field", in *History of Restoration of Ancient Stone Sculptures*, 25–45. See also Jürgen Paul, "Antikenergänzung und Ent-Restaurierung", *Kunstchronik* 25 (1972): 93–9.

<sup>37</sup> On the contrast between what Cavaceppi wrote and what he did, see Vicky Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain since 1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 84–6.



Figure 13: Copy of Myron's Discobolus from c. 450 BC, restored by Gavin Hamilton and Bartolommeo Cavaceppi c. 1776 as Diomedes Stealing the Palladion. Marble, Bowood: Shelburne Collection.

## 6. Psychological aspects of restoration

But that is not all. There are also psychological and anthropological aspects to restoration. We can observe them in the restorations commissioned by individuals, such as Caroline von Humboldt or the British painter and collector August Buck, who both had the missing heads of antique statues replaced by portrait busts of their dead children (figure 14).<sup>38</sup> On a general, cultural level, the so-called restorations or repairs undertaken in Piranesi's Museo, like the practices of Cavaceppi, Franzoni and his colleagues working for the Museo Pio-Clementino, are driven in my view by a desire to reach, and reinstate, a new coherence.<sup>39</sup> Not a ritual or religious one, but rather a material, artistic or

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<sup>38</sup> On Humboldt see Pascal Griener, "Plaster *versus* Marble: Wilhelm & Caroline von Humboldt and the agency of antique sculpture", in: Caroline van Eck, ed., *From Idols to Museum Pieces* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 170; on Buck see his self-portrait *The Artist and His Family*, 1813, now in the Paul Mellon collection of the Yale Center for British Art.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, 6th ed. (München: Beck, 2007), 16–22; Aleida Assmann, Dietrich Harth, ed., *Mnemosyne: Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1991); Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: Beck, 1999).

aesthetic one. I would argue that we should consider stylistic revivals such as the one driven by Piranesi's late work or the Style Empire, in performative terms, as restored coherence. That desire is driven not only by artistic or aesthetic ideals. There is the impact of the fundamental changes in the object scape of Rome that took place, starting in the last decade of Piranesi's life, as a result of the renewal in excavation campaigns, for instance at Tivoli, that led to a significant increase in artefacts, statues, vases, sarcophagi etc available on the art market.



Figure 14: Adam Buck, *The Artist and his Family*, 1813, watercolour, 44.6 x 42.4 cm, Yale Centre for British Art.

As a result new object scapes emerged, in which the traveller, collector or art lover could suddenly wander around in a totally new environment, peopled by objects, on show and for sale, that had been hidden away from most viewers in private collections, visible only in dim conditions in churches or sanctuaries, covered in sand and rubble, or inaccessible simply because of the distance. But this happened, we should remember, in a period of c. fifty years that preceded the great age of the new museums and art galleries, built to display the national artistic patrimony to the public at large. In this period Rome and Paris became the stage for an unprecedented concourse of objects; a peak in connectivity, as archaeologists today would say, that radically changed the range of things to be seen, and by implication viewing habits and design trends as well. Among other things the emergence of these new object scapes gave the final blow to the humanist approach to the study of the past, that considered texts as the major

source and evidence for knowledge of the past. The fatal blow to the traditional textual approach was dealt by the relentless discovery or arrival of unknown artefacts, which forced antiquarians, archaeologists, art historians and art historians to close their handbooks and treatises and pay close attention to the evidence in front of their eyes. When we look for instance at the way in which Piranesi depicts the pedestal of Column of Antoninus Pius, near the Corso, it becomes evident how much his etchings convey the *material presence* of these ruins; their very material nature, the incursion of time upon their pristine integrity, but also their stubborn endurance (figure 17). This new, intensified awareness of the material presence of Antiquity is one of the driving factors for a material reception of antiquity, which would manifest itself in restoration.

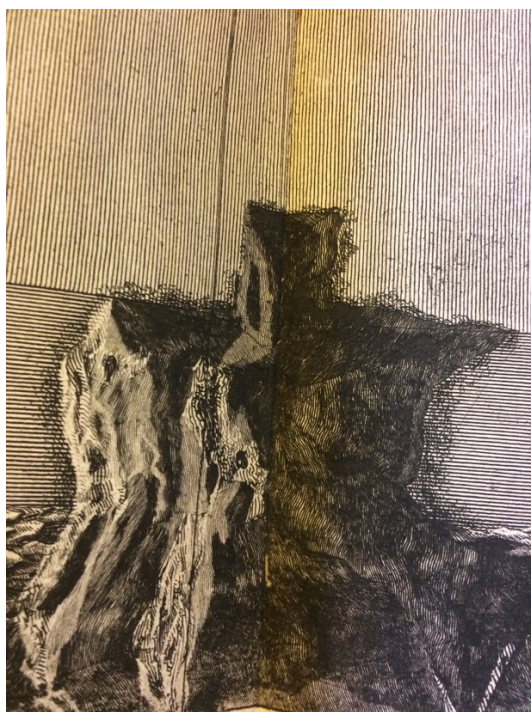


Figure 15: Piranesi, Fragment of the Pedestal of the Column of Antoninus Pius, from *Opere* (Rome 1748–79), vol. 17: *Trofeo o sia magnifica colonna. – Colonna Antonina come si vede oggidi.*



### Conclusion: *Objektfahrzeuge*

What does this Warburgian tale of the afterlife of an object suggest? To begin with, that *Nachleben* can be very well understood as restoration, in the three senses I outlined above, rather than the Warburgian irrational irruption of past ways of expressing emotions into a conflicted present. The connection between style formation and the afterlife of Antiquity, in other words, is not to be found in the psychohistory of mankind, or its long-term psychopathology, but in redefining style formation as a series of acts of restoration. In a material sense, when for instance the Isis tripod found in Herculaneum is depicted in a visual restoration by Piranesi, then to embark on a long afterlife as a wash stand, tripod, lavabo etc. We could even go further, and adopt the concept of style as restored behaviour, as developed in theatre studies to artefacts, to consider such restorations and adaptations as elements of the material coherence that all successor states aim for, if we follow Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory as expressing itself in various forms of coherence: textual, ritual, and we could add, material. In the second place, the conditions of *Nachleben* are not, or not exclusively, psychological or evolutionary: objectscales and their transformations fundamentally condition which artefacts have an afterlife, and of what kind. Thirdly, style turns out to be, above all, as Warburg himself noted, a medium for transfer: of ancient artefact-types, of patterns of design, but also of the cultures that produced these artefacts.<sup>40</sup> That is, style formation is directed at creating a new present, not the manifestation or symptom of a resurgence or recreation of the past. The psychological foundation for such transfer is what anthropologists call human-thing entanglement. It then becomes the task of the historian to reconstruct the historical, social, religious etc conditions of such entanglement, or such attribution of agency to objects. And finally, considered in these terms, style formation becomes reception history, but to be written it still needs the historical research of archival or monumental art history to be refined, tested and completed. The *wechselseitige Beleuchtung* of which Warburg spoke is not psychological, but material and historical.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Uwe Fleckner, Introduction to Fleckner and Woldt, *Bilderreiben und Ausstellungen*, 12: "Konstellation, die anhand eines geographisch-historische Motivtransfers das Problem der zu bewältigenden Leidenschaftlichkeit zur Anschauung bringen soll. [...] Kräftediagramme energiegeladene Körper [...] eine Doppel- und Mehrpoligkeit der historischen Entwicklung durch Bildkonfrontationen generiert".

<sup>41</sup> This essay is based in part on the Slade Lectures I gave in Oxford in 2017, and is much indebted to the research I was able to carry out as Panofsky Professor in Munich in 2018.