

Charlotte Schreiter, **Antike um jeden Preis. Gipsabgüsse und Kopien antiker Plastik am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts.** Transformationen der Antike, volume 29. Publisher Walter De Gruyter, Berlin and Boston 2014. 864 pages, 159 figures.

This impressive monograph is a very welcome treatment of an important chapter in the history and nature of Classicism in central Europe. The author describes and analyses in great detail how plaster casts and copies in other materials of ancient sculpture were produced, procured and used in central Europe in the last decades of the eighteenth century. The title of the book hints to the fact that the establishment of the time gave priority »at all costs« to Antiquity and what it considered its primary works of art. The title at the same time elegantly sets out the main theme of the book: that replicas of antiquities were made available at a much lower price than previously, and thus for the first time in our history, in those last decades of the eighteenth century, were accessible to a much wider range of consumers than just the absolute elite.

The new knowledge as well as new perspectives on already existing information provided by this book, which is a revised version of Schreiter's habilitation treatise in classical archaeology submitted to the Humboldt University in 2010, contributes considerably to our understanding of the dissemination of copies of ancient sculpture and the role this business played for the neo-classical wave in the second half of the eighteenth century. »Antike um jeden Preis« is the twenty-ninth book in the series »Transformationen der Antike«, in which a number of volumes, for example number 17 and 18 in 2010, already touch upon the nature and significance of replicas of ancient art in the history of western art. The book's release thus falls into an important contemporary trend in classical archaeology and art history, with a number of recent publications bringing value to the topics studied and to each other.

The book consists of ten parts of which the first seven deal with main themes: (II) The key actors in production, distribution and consumption of plaster casts in France, England, Italy, and Germany during the eighteenth century, (III) the academies and collections at the German courts, (IV) the Italian travelling makers of those replicas and the workshop of Carl Christian Heinrich Rost in Leipzig, (V) reproduction in other materials than plaster, (VI) the dissemination of the ancient ideal and the significance of certain collections and outdoor park and garden exhibits, and (VII) the new view on Antiquity which took form in the period. Two major parts at the end complete the book with an overwhelming amount of documentation on which the analyses of the previous parts are based.

As a proper archaeological study the book contains a catalogue (IX) of well over one hundred pages and more than two hundred catalogue numbers, listing the most important ancient sculptures that saw wide dis-

tribution reproduced in plaster and other materials in central Europe at the time with accompanying documentation on their origin. Part X provides additional detailed information in schematic form over almost two hundred pages listing sales catalogues of reproductions, articles in contemporary magazines promoting reproductions among other articles of the fashion of the time. The book is concluded by invaluable indices of names and places.

The historical and socio-economic frame as well as background for the study is »middle Germany« (p. 6), which at the time was split into a great number of principalities each with a court, often with art collections, and academies attached to them. This was a world of a numerous, ambitious and competing nobility, which generated an ever increasing need for works of art to be created, collected and exhibited. Ancient objects for such, mostly private, collections were in increasing demand, and in this environment replicas, first of all plaster casts, got more and more popular as an alternative to originals whose supply could not keep up with the demand. But more importantly, plaster replicas provided the practicing artists, and not the least the learned lovers of classical art, the possibility to experience, in fact to own for themselves, the sculptural attributes and qualities of one or more of the canonized torsos and statues.

The canon was a number of statues and other sculptures mainly found in Italy, known to us as Roman copies or variations of ancient Greek works of art. In a world where travelling was expensive, time consuming and dangerous, it is obvious that the possibility of getting exact three-dimensional replicas of the great works of Antiquity must have appealed to those who could procure them. One example is the very significant professor of Archaeology at Göttingen, Christian Gottlob Heyne, who never visited Rome, and therefore, obviously, never saw the Apollo Belvedere, the Laokoon group, or the Belvedere Torso. The great desire to learn about and appreciate the ancient masterpieces and at the same time the great challenge to get to see and appreciate the originals in combination explains most about why casts went hot at exactly this time.

Within a fairly short period of time following the sixties of the eighteenth century, the region saw a substantial influx of travelling makers of plaster casts, mainly from Italy hence known as »formatori«, who offered such replicas. A fascinating network built up with hard competition on price and quality, and the author brings it all out in great detail. Not before the establishment of the Atelier de Moulage in Paris in 1798 did the market shift somewhat in this direction, with offers of casts of ancient sculptures from Italy, and it was not before many decades into the nineteenth century that the British Museum began to offer replicas of the Elgin Marbles to the European market. Prior to those, who were to be among the main actors on the plaster cast market in the nineteenth century,

the *formatori* and later the German workshops like Rost's in Leipzig, were the only sources for such items. Ordering directly from workshops in Italy was very expensive, with transport costs often exceeding the price of the objects themselves, and with even more additional charge when the fragile pieces needed to be repaired after a long journey.

As the author explains (p. 32), the popularity of the sculptural canon and its spread northwards were not only a story of selective availabilities due to the difficulties of transmission of three-dimensional forms over long distances. Since its early establishment in the city in the seventeenth century, the Académie de France in Rome had built up a collection of the most cherished sculptures from which copies were made and sent northwards. The collection consisted mainly of replicas of works existing in Rome. The collection of them in one place, however, made the Académie a conceptual model to follow with its collection and the vibrant environment of visiting and working artists.

A very important part of the book is the description of the environment surrounding the courts of the German principalities, and how they developed into intellectual and cultural centres inspired by the French Enlightenment. The example of the ambitions of Duke Ernest II at Gotha (pp. 64–70), and his acquisitions of replicas from the Ferrari brothers, is explained in great detail with quotes from a rich source of correspondence that demonstrates many of the contemporary concerns and issues connected with the acquisition of plaster casts of ancient sculptures. Also from the sixties (1767) is the important earliest documented establishment of a collection of such pieces at the university, of Göttingen (pp. 88–94). This collection was built up by professor Heyne and its establishment was of great significance for the development of the Classical Archaeological discipline. The »Archäologie der Kunst« was invented, as it became possible – via plaster casts – to compare two (or more) Hellenistic or Roman replicas of the same earlier Greek original in a search for the vanished »Urbild«, an exercise that has occupied many archaeologists and art historians ever since. Again, preserved correspondence shows the interest that was taken at that time in the quality of the copies available and the challenges the purchasers faced assessing this quality: if original and cast are not available for study right next to one another, how does one estimate the quality of the plaster? As the collection grew Heyne's eye sharpened and he got more and more sceptical about the quality of at least some of the replicas provided by the Ferraris, who claimed that their moulds had been made directly from the originals. Heyne eventually concluded that this in fact could not be the case, and he simply ceased acquiring from this source (p. 91).

One aspect surrounding the acquisition of plaster casts in the eighteenth century, which becomes increasingly clear when reading through the many well-researched chapters of this book, is the high costs and

hassle of transportation. The sources speak, again and again, of the high expenses and long duration of transportation, and about the circumstance that the new acquisitions often were damaged when they finally arrived (e. g. pp. 65 f., 101, 174 and 256). Great challenges and high expenses in connection with transportation, perhaps in general even more so over land than by sea, of course formed a general circumstance of the whole pre-modern era, but the fragility of plaster casts made this commodity even more difficult to deal with. Plaster has been used as the primary medium to produce replicas of sculptural objects since antiquity exactly because it is cheap, pours easily into any form and because when it solidifies it represents an exact copy of the volume of the replicated object. The surface of the replicated object, with sculpted details like hair, fingernails etc., is reproduced with high accuracy if the mould is of high quality. The main problem with the finished plaster cast is its fragility. Even though the objects are always hollow (if the mass exceeds around one cubic decimetre) they are comparatively heavy and very fragile, and are easily damaged by bumps to the surface or contact with water. The surface – so important for the aesthetic quality of any sculpture – is of course the part of a replica that is directly exposed to damaging incidents. Given the distance, repairs obviously had to be done without the possibility of consulting the replicated object. This was of course a real problem once a part of a cast had been damaged beyond repair.

The role played by the travelling *formatori* is described (pp. 101–133) before the author turns to one of the main parts of the book (pp. 133–255), which is the treatment of the art dealer Rost (1742–1798). He had an art and book shop in Leipzig and basically changed the scene of plaster cast production from being a business dominated by travelling craftsmen to a business run from a factory in Leipzig. Rost acquired a number of moulds from the Ferrari brothers in 1778, who travelled around with them as opposed to replicas, which was the normal practice of the *formatori*. Possessing the moulds meant that from then on Rost could compete on much better terms, working from a single place with storage space and the possibility of stocking numerous casts ready for sale, conditions which the travelling competitors exactly did not have (p. 143). The quality of the replicas made from the old moulds of the Ferraris was of course praised by Rost himself, as he could demonstrate that his copies were indeed made from the moulds that (allegedly) had been taken directly from the originals in Italy. For the customer it was always an important but difficult issue to settle, whether a plaster cast offered on the market had been made using a mould made from the original or from a mould made from another replica. The potential customers of travelling salesmen as well as of Rost, were always in the situation of only having their own eyes and more or less good judgment, perhaps assisted by a drawing or print of the original, to assess the quality

of a cast (p. 143). Having the Ferrari moulds meant everything to Rost's business. They were the source of his production and of his credibility at the same time, until the point when it was realized that the Ferrari moulds were not, after all, taken directly from the originals but from other replicas (p. 386).

Rost's dealing was a great success, his commerce was the biggest in central Europe in the eighties and up to his death in 1798. He was able to bring more volume into the market (p. 161) and offer his casts at a better price, not the least because of the reduced costs of transport compared to ordering items directly from Italy (p. 171). But Rost's success also had other reasons: Again quoting rich and enlightening archival material, the author demonstrates how this business man used his trading privileges as a citizen of Leipzig to keep foreigners out of business (pp. 156 f.), how he occasionally competed in a doubtful way (p. 191) and how he used his connections to promote sale through the contemporary media (e. g. p. 169). The archival material also shows, however, that while Rost surely had great success in selling to a wide range of customers, the more selective individuals and institutions concerned with the acquisition of plaster casts of the highest quality became more and more sceptical of the commodities on offer from the factory in Leipzig. The discussions and consulting visit to Leipzig by the Prussian Academy of Arts – even though it resulted in the purchase of some replicas – reveal in illuminating detail that Rost's items were not of the desired quality (pp. 175–182).

Another interesting and important part of this book is its description and discussion of the character and number of eighteenth century artistic products which – in addition to the regular replicas of the canonized sculptures of antiquity – were on offer from workshops and factories like Rost's. An example is the decorative elements of stoves (*Ofenaufsätze*) of which Rost apparently sold great numbers, but of which none has survived (pp. 183 f.). Assessing the significance of such objects and their use in the homes of elite as well as non-elite members of the growing urban European bourgeoisies is of great significance in our attempt at describing the impact of the classical forms on the society of the time on a broad scale.

At the same time as Rost's business flourished in the eighties the demand for replicas in materials suited for outdoor use was met by a simultaneous growth in the offer of such products. Statues and other sculptural art commodities of materials such as iron, terracotta and papier-mâché were sold by Rost and others. The treatment of these products, their technical attributes, distribution and use, forms an important contribution to our understanding of classicism in central Europe (pp. 261–382), and again, central Germany plays the key role. Rost's impact was again essential with his invention of a terracotta-like product with which he was able to cast weather-resistant sculptures from 1782 on. Being a good businessman, he kept the recipe of this »Feste Masse« a secret (pp. 182–184 and 263).

At least since 1765 the first experiments with papier-mâché were made in Ludwigslust and from 1784 on techniques were developed in Lauchhammer for making full scale statues in cast iron. The use of papier-mâché as such for forming art objects of course had a much older tradition (p. 265). What was new about the products offered from Ludwigslust (pp. 264–293) was a durability hitherto not obtained for this material which made them weather-resistant. The production of replicas from the workshop at Ludwigslust grew out of a local tradition, which had developed and refined this very special technique to replace for example stucco for interior decoration. Contemporary visitors ironically described how the castle of Ludwigslust was 'all of paper', which somehow fitted the image of the court of Mecklenburg as being poor. Documentation of sales from the factory shows that the business was a great success, and up to the beginning of the nineteenth century sculptures of papier-mâché were on offer as an even cheaper option than plaster casts were, for those who wished to buy in to the contemporary ideals and taste.

At approximately the same time, the middle of the eighties, the ironworks at Lauchhammer began selling statues and other sculptures of cast iron (pp. 293–329). The price of the material, the production and transport of replicas of the items, made the ultimate price of them much higher than that of plaster and papier-mâché, but cheaper than that of bronze, a material which had to be imported. Our information about the dissemination of sculptures from Lauchhammer is better than that of copies in other materials despite their more limited numbers; although many have gone lost, some still exist in their original position (e. g. figs. 120–122).

The plaster cast business yet saw a fundamental change by the establishment of the *Atelier de Moulage* in Paris, which from the beginning of the nineteenth century offered many of the same products and in a better quality, than what had been offered by Rost and others in the latter decades of the eighteenth century (p. 389). This new situation coincided not only with the death of the entrepreneur in Leipzig in 1798, but with that of many other key-actors important for the replica business around 1800, resulting also in the discontinuation both of the Lauchhammer cast iron business and the papier-mâché factory at Ludwigslust.

The main conclusion of the book is the interesting one that the popularity of the classical ideals as spelled out first by Johann Joachim Winckelmann and followed by the artistic, academic and political elite, also saw substantial dissemination in other parts of society. The careful and immense effort of Charlotte Schreiter allows her to describe with great authority – given the vast amount of documentation – exactly how these trends on the one hand developed into proper museum exhibitions in for example Dresden and Mannheim, on the other in exhibits of single or small group statues in gardens and parks. The story of the

spread and use of classical sculpture in replicated form goes to the very heart of the Enlightenment, both in its exclusive and its popular form: The antique world was the ideal epoch in the history of the western world, and people wanted to show explicitly that they were part of the contemporary classical trend. This artistic language is like a wave that has hit the western world several times since the classical period itself: Already since the time of Alexander the Great (kingship 336–323 B. C.) classical ideals were cherished, the Romans of the late Republic admired and used Greek art, the first emperor Augustus used the fifth century Athenian language for architecture for his own architectural monuments in Rome and that of Greek sculpture of that age for his self-representation, and Hadrian took up the thread in the second century A. D. Then a long pause ensued, until the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries appeared introducing its focus on the ancient world. It was not before the era of the Enlightenment and the New Classicism of the eighteenth century, however, that the classical ideal forms were rediscovered. Schreiter's book enables us to understand better and deeper the processes through which this happened, and we should thank her for undertaking the painstaking effort to present all the evidence in a very clear and comprehensible form. This book is a must-have for any scholar, student or library interested in classical archaeology, art history, history and the history of collecting.

Copenhagen and Athens

Rune Frederiksen