

## NACHLEBEN

ELIZABETH ANGELICOUSSIS, *The Holkham Collection of Classical Sculpture*. Monumenta Artis Romanae, Band 30 = Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani, Great Britain, Band 3, 10. Verlag Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 2001. 190 Seiten, 43 Abbildungen, 6 Farbtafeln, 95 Tafeln.

The red-bound volumes in this series, with their even-richer red dust jackets, continue to appear, and The Holkham Collection of Classical Sculptures, by Elizabeth Angelicoussis, Photographs by Raoul Laev and Ken Walton, winches the series up to a new plateau of excellence in every respect, if such is indeed possible. Jens Peuser collaborated in this volume's preparation, and Reinhard Förtsch wrote the Editor's Preface. The last in this series reviewed by me was Band 26, Chatsworth, Dunham Massey and Withington Hall (Bonner Jahrb. 199, 1999, 597–600), and before that, there was Woburn Abbey, Band 20, another masterpiece by ELIZABETH ANGELICOUSSIS (Bonner Jahrb. 193, 1993, 497–501). Remembering the days when there were only the encyclopedia by Michaelis, the survey of portraits by F. Poulsen, entries in the *Einzelaufnahmen*, and single catalogues by Ashmole (Ince Blundell) and M. Wyndham (Petworth), the present state of affairs with the red volumes, originally financed by the University of Cologne, appearing at yearly intervals is a happy one to be sure.

Other initiatives give new substance to the story of ancient marbles in Great Britain in the new millennium. Under the leadership of John Boardman, Christopher Brown, Donna Kurtz, and Arthur MacGregor, the Beazley Archive at Oxford has produced two volumes in *Studies in the History of Collections* and two volumes in *Studies in Classical Archaeology*, the second The Lewes House Collection of Ancient Gems, a new, updated, rephotographed edition of John D. Beazley's classic of 1920, heretofore a book so rare that most modern institutions did not possess a copy. From Liverpool to London, from Edinburgh to Dorset, the air is alive with the sound of marbles, vases, and other antiquities imported into the British Isles being photographed and published. Sometimes, sadly enough, it is the sales rooms, Sotheby's, Christie's, and Bonhams where Grand Tour and later works of ancient art appear briefly (Charterhouse School's Collection) and are dispersed. On the other hand, Jasper Gaunt of Oxford, the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, and the Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, has kept me posted on the completion of a CVA for his alma mater, Harrow. Deputy Director Helen Dorey assures me the Sir John Soane's Museum Catalogue of Antiquities is nearing publication, and I have recently written a chapter on ancient art in London after World War Two for the undertaking. Ancient art includes drawings after the Antique, something touched on frequently in the Holkham Collection, and publication of the Dal Pozzo-Albani Drawings has become a heavy industry in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle.

The saga of Holkham, a great jewel on the forbidding

but fertile flatlands of Norfolk's northern coast, revolves almost entirely around Thomas Coke (1697 to 1759). He inherited land and fortune in 1707 at the age of ten. The "ancient marbles" were mostly acquired during the young squire's Grand Tour of 1712 to 1718. For services to the Whig cause and other ambitious activities, he became a Baron and was created 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leicester in 1744. He was very wise in his choice of subordinates, in this case his principal architect, Matthew Brettingham the elder. The latter's son of the same name stayed in Rome, 1749 to 1754, and virtually completed the collection of Graeco-Roman sculptures, copies every one, but important, interesting examples, often in first-rate condition. In advance of her thorough and perceptive, superbly documented, Catalogue of the marbles and plaster casts, the author provides an understanding of taste and installation hardly found heretofore in these annals of British collecting. In the Catalogue, for the record, there are 57 ancient marbles, 3 mosaics of various dates (one a Roman Republican masterwork), marble portraits after the Antique (Nos. 61 through 68), and the Casts of Statues (Nos. 69 through 78).

The 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of the second creation (1837), (Thomas Coke of Norfolk, MP, made his Grand Tour between 1771 and 1774, but his collecting energies were focused only on the "splendid animal mosaic" (No. 58) and two marble reliefs, one in the perceived tradition of Michelangelo and the other a "Death of Germanicus" by the English Neo-Classic sculptor Thomas Banks. The mosaic, from the Proscenium of the Theatre at Gubbio by way of the Palazzo Mignaelli in Rome, dates from the imperial period of landed gentry at the end of the Roman Republic (50 BC) and presents a Lion Attacking a Leopard (Colour Plate 5). This exciting chromatic experience stands forth in the Hellenistic tradition, extending down through mosaics from Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, ultimately to the inlays from the so-called Basilica of Junius Bassus in the time of the Emperor Constantius II (337 to 361) or slightly later. This long visual tradition culminated in the setting of the mosaic over the fireplace in the Long Library at Holkham. Finally, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl (1908 to 1976), who made my own work at Holkham such a pleasure fifty years ago, purchased the only true Greek original sculpture, a head perhaps from the Temple of Hera at Argos (No. 41), during a Mediterranean cruise in 1955. Whether from the famous building or a related stele, the youth is very Polykleitan. Buying such a sculpture in Greece at that time was not easy, but the Antiquities Service and Pandrosou ("Shoe Lane") could always accommodate a Lordos.

To his eternal credit, Coke of Norfolk, MP, did not mess with the careful, thoughtful installations of the major sculptures at Holkham. He concentrated on the contiguous buildings, including the Conservatory where the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl showed me the heroic statue with (broken apart) head of the Dresden Zeus (Nos. 21, 42) lying amid the potted plants. Coke of Norfolk's labours on the Stables, the gardens, and the agrarian aspects of the estate kept him away from the lucid, symmetrical arrangement of

Sculptures, in the Marble Hall (Fig. 14). Modern organizers of sculptural setting struggle to do what Thomas Coke and Matthew Brettingham achieved. The Metropolitan Museum in New York had a dream of putting the statues back in their niches in the reinstated Dining Room from Lansdowne House in Berkeley Square, but the sculptures had strayed too far after the great Christie's Sale on the premises in 1930, although a group of Lansdowne marbles remained available to a deep-pockets buyer in the Stables at Bowood in Wiltshire. (The heroic, young Marcus Aurelius, for instance, is now a centerpiece of the Gilbert Denman Collection in the San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas.) To see classical statues in a modern hall, in a symmetry and balance or in a mirror of poses, I recommend a concert at Symphony Hall on Huntington Avenue in Boston. These plaster casts were made by the Caproni Gallery of Boston, America's foremost suppliers of same, and were installed over the years from about 1910 to 1940. They fill the horseshoe of niches between pilaster columns from either side of the stage around the back of the Second Balcony and have now been backlit for maximum effect. Holkham's richness of colored stones, painted wood or gilded plaster, and oils on canvas conveys what the Romans achieved in their basilicas and baths.

Having put Holkham history and setting in perfect perspective, with exhaustive documentation, the author provides an equally thorough and illuminating catalogue of the marbles, mosaics, and plaster casts, with appreciations of the busts of Thomas Coke and Coke of Norfolk, each a 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leicester. In this era of revived Egyptomania, I am intrigued by the youthful Thomas Coke's first documented purchase, "an image of the god Canopus" (p.23), but the object is not described in detail or illustrated. Was it merely a Canopic jar or was it a Roman statue of Canopic form, like the sculptures in the Museo Capitolino and the Musei Vaticani from the Iseum and Sarapeum in the Campus Martius? Those glorious black Sekhmet from the Temple of Mut at Karnak, once set above the Tennis Courts at Chatsworth (Bonner Jahrb. 199, 1999, 598), wetted my appetite for Egyptian antiquities in the British Isles. (The ex-Royal Athena, New York, Sekhmet mentioned in connection with Chatsworth is now in the Walter Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia.) My Egyptologist colleague at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Larry Berman, has recently done what a Cavendish (or a Coke) could do. He has installed the upper part of a rare, standing Sekhmet in the Lounge where Museum Members meet, while her similarly feline, leonine seated counterpart remains a formidable presence among the New Kingdom statues, tombs, and examples of giant architecture.

To each reviewer, a heroic catalogue like this suggests conclusive visions akin to the Chinese tale of the visually challenged males and the pachyderm. To me the sculptural stimulation at Holkham lies in the Roman imperial portraits, from a statue of Livia as Ceres (No. 17) to a head of the Emperor Gordianus III (238 to 244), in the first part of his boyish rule (No.36). The unusual commences with the over-lifesized portrait of the Emperor Nerva (96 to 98, a "Pope John" solution), recarved so it seems from a portrait identified as the

Emperor Vespasian (69 to 79) (No. 22). The glutton Emperor Vitellius (69) would have been, as the author suggests, a more likely identification for the "host" portrait, but shape of the head, rolls of fat on the neck, and minimal recutting lean toward the First Flavian. Perhaps the portrait sat almost finished in a Roman atelier when the Emperor Domitian (81 to 96), the last Flavian, was terminated, a place (in an old necropolis?) akin to the find-spot of the Cancellaria Reliefs. The dynastic portrait of Lucius Aelius Verus Caesar (died 138) (No.28) is dated in the reign of the Emperor Commodus (177 to 180 to 192), the subject's collateral descendant, but Roman provincial coins show an Aelius Verus Caesar just like this marble back to the reign of his son, the Emperor Lucius Verus (161 to 169) (here No.18). (For this Aelius at Alexandria in Egypt, in or after COS II, 137, see D.R. Sear, *Greek Imperial Coins*, 124, no.1347.)

Strengths of numbers in the collection lie in the Antonine and Severan Emperors, Marcus Aurelius (Nos.30, 31), Septimius Severus (No. 19), Caracalla (No. 32), and Geta (No.33). Lucius Verus and Septimius Severus surmount unrelated togati, as so often with Grand Tour marbles, the elusive Hadrian from Hamilton Palace being another, random example. Marcus Aurelius appears as Caesar, 140 to about 145, and then as Emperor (161 to 180). Caracalla is a winsome child. (No.68, a 1740's marble after both Farnese portraits in the Museo Nazionale, Naples, presents the monster who would be a new Alexander the Great, his Macedonian near ancestor.) The Geta is the unfortunate younger brother's last portrait, as co-Emperor in 212, before Caracalla had him murdered at a meeting of reconciliation with their Mother, the Empress Julia Domna. Coins of Augusta Traiana in Thrace and Corcyra show this portrait (D. SEAR, *Greek Imperial Coins*, 265, nos.2790, 2794).

Antonine to Gallenic ladies do not fare well at Holkham, those given important imperial names are nearly all private persons, not necessarily unimportant or uninteresting. To my mind and view, the masterpiece in Leicester's Norfolk is the ancient, marble bust of the Empress Julia (Avita) Mamaea, purchased in Rome in 1752 (No.40, pls.75, 77,1-4, and 78,4). The nose and upper lip have been correctly restored. Head and neck are unbroken from the draped bust, which has minor reworkings. This portrait may be only number fifteen in the list of monumental portrayals of the dominating Mother of the Emperor Severus Alexander (222 to 235), but the face gives us everything history and coins have told us about the Augusta. There is, obviously, no shortage of ancient Julia Mamaeas, only, sadly, a seemingly complete lack in North American museums. Jasper K. Burns has recently made a graphic reconstruction of her features, dress, and Late Severan imperial surroundings. Not surprisingly, the Holkham portrait is everything Julia Mamaea ought to have been. (See *The Celator* 17, 2 [February 2003] Cover and 6-22.) The sheer Olympian clarity, lucidity, and power of this Augusta makes a telling contrast with the head of the young lady on the Plate opposite (No.39, Plate 74), who may be one of the wives of the Emperor Elagabalus (218 to 222), Severus Alexander's First Cousin, predecessor, and Julia Mamaea's Nephew. The brooding, hardly happy

princess might be Julia Paula. Her portrait in marble also resides at Petworth House, Midhurst, Sussex.

The “true gem among the many treasures of Holkham”, the Trajanic Thucydides (No.23) cannot be passed by, nor can the Hadrianic-Early Antonine Plato (No.24), and the Carneades of the same date (No.25), a big, right-profile fragment made into a medallion by Cavaceppi’s studio. As the writer states so eloquently, the triad gave (and still gives) those associated with Holkham an opportunity to commune with three great writers, philosophers, teachers in Athens from the age after Perikles to the power of Pergamum.

Finally, the copies of divine, ideal, and mythological statuary must figure in any review, since, as suggested throughout here, they are so impressive as arranged at Holkham and, indeed, in themselves. The Holkham-Louvre Aphrodite (No.3), the ‘Venus Genetrix’ of Hadrian’s coins, is given the Olympian appreciation she deserves. While writing this, *Minerva* 14, 2 (March/April 2003) dropped into eyesight, and there, on the back cover, was the “Roman Marble Head of the Frejus Aphrodite after a Greek original of the late 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC, possibly by Kallimachos or Alkamenos”, dated around 150 (AD) and offered for sale by Royal-Athena Galleries, New York and London, as “Ex-old French collection, acquired in the 1950’s”. I was impressed but also hope the head’s next owner will add the Holkham Collection of Classical Sculptures to his/her library, to understand what Aphrodites in this class are all about, especially when their bodies are not being used for portraits of Hadrian’s Augusta Sabina.

The awesome standing Marsyas (No.11) takes on new meaning with relationship to a group, now represented by the Marsyas, Muse, and Apollo from the Gallery of Claudius Piso (Peison) in the South Baths at Perge in Pamphylia. This is the end of the contest, not Myron’s Marsyas approaching Athena’s flutes, nor the horrible post-Pergamene denouement, the crouching Scythian about to flay the hapless Satyr while Apollo looks on. Here Apollo’s daughter as Umpire suggests

that “a family who flays together stays together”. The knife and wet stone were stacked against Marsyas. A coin of Apamea in Phrygia under Septimius Severus (193 to 211) gives us yet another, painterly or relief version of the myth, Athena blowing on the double-flutes and observing her reflection in the stream (the pre-shield version of the myth) while Marsyas peeks out from behind the rocks serving as a seat for the goddess. (See Gorny & Mosch, Auction 121, March 10, 2003, 72, no.319 now in the Frank L. Kovacs Collection.)

No.55, Attic not Ionic Column Base, in Perperino, has an extra moulding which could be the start of the shaft (John Herrmann’s observations). The second Base disappeared as a gift with the potted plant which stood on top. They are very Roman. No.57, Corinthian Capital, is also notably Roman. John Herrmann comments further: “the fold channels are not quite as vigorously parallel as in a Flavian date, therefore perhaps suggesting the time of Hadrian”.

A brace of random comments from such a thorough, omniscient catalogue almost does a disservice to the marble statuary, ideal heads, cinerary urns, and the one, fragmentary but fascinating, marine-theme sarcophagus at Holkham (No.52). Lists of replicas can be lengthened, divided, or even shrunk. Arguments about shadowy sculptors, followers of Pheidias for example, will always go on. But, as regards to the catalogue here, to paraphrase Sir John Beazley, you might do some details differently but you could not do them better.

Elizabeth Angelicoussis dedicates her Parnassian book D.M.S./P.H.v.B. The Baltic nobleman, Peter Heinrich von Blankenhagen, taught the brightest and the best at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. He followed Karl Lehmann there and stood alongside other giants from Germany and beyond, Otto Brendel at Columbia and my teacher George Hanfmann at Harvard. In 2003, Sacha Gratton and Florence Wolsky have helped me with this review.

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