Appropriations of Antiquity – A Diachronic Comparison of Museums and Scholarship

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Sculpture from ancient Greece and Rome is an emblematic category of high art in the western museum tradition. Accordingly, displays of ancient sculpture in museums form an instructive case study for a wide-reaching, comparative analysis of museological developments from the 18th century and onwards. Isolating a category of exhibited objects like ancient sculptures is fruitful for a comparative approach because it transcends national traditions. It is hard to pinpoint differences in displays of ancient sculptures that can be attributed to, or explained by, national traditions. The appropriation of the classical legacy in various national traditions should not be viewed as an excluding facet of a unique national identity, but is often better understood as an inclusive part of the national identity since it signals that the specific nation belongs within a wide cultural sphere. In contrast, our empirical examples suggest that there are closer similarities between the theoretical developments in academia and museums. In this paper, therefore, we aim to elaborate on the chronological development of sculpture exhibitions and identify the discursive foundations that scholarship and museum exhibitions share. Drawing on this, it can tentatively be concluded the development of displays of ancient sculpture is associated closer to the development in academia than to national museological traditions. From our perspective, museums can be viewed as an integrated part of the institutions of knowledge.

Introduction

Museum displays of ancient sculptures are potentially an instructive case study for a wide-reaching, comparative analysis of museological developments from the 18th century onwards. To focus on one specific category of museum object has its merits since it provides us with an empirical foundation for comparisons between different national traditions and different types of museums. Adopting an explicit historical and comparative approach we aim to relate the paper to the specific questions raised in the call to NaMu IV, in particular, the issue of how museums were and are part of institutions of knowledge. A point of departure for this study is that vestiges of previous, and assumingly obsolete, discourses tend to linger on in museum spaces. In other words, it is possible to detect and identify remnants of earlier discourses in contemporary settings which can be used for diachronic comparisons.

Initially, we would like to make a brief remark concerning national traditions and museums. The very idea of a public museum is intimately connected with the emergence of the modern nation state in the 19th century. Nationalism was one of the foundational ideologies for museums. Associating and relating museums to the structural transformation of the public sphere in 19th century Europe is both fruitful and relevant. The emergence of museums has also been associated with Foucault's epistemic scheme, although the exact place of the museum in this scheme remains open to dispute.[1] One way or another, museums are viewed as institutions participating in the articulation of power schemes and mediation of the notions and ideologies of the nation states.

Certainly, national aspects also influence the displays of ancient sculptures. Antiquity has been cast as an ideal high culture more than once in European/Western history. Although different parts of the classical legacy have been appropriated in different settings, the obsession with antiquity has been propelled by a tendency to portray one's own culture as the teleological inheritor of antiquity. In *universal* museums, antiquity, represented by default by ancient sculptures, has been cast as an origin in a development that ends with, and is fulfilled through, contemporary high art of the particular nation. The universal claims undermine exclusive national appropriations, i.e. *local* claims, of the classical legacy.[2]

Although it is possible to identify features in displays of ancient sculpture that can be attributed to national traditions, national explanations cannot be ascribed with a primary role since there are also patterns of international similarities. This suggests that we need to search for the causes for the development elsewhere. It seems that the development of ancient sculpture displays is associated closer to the development of classical studies. Before we turn to museum exhibitions, we will therefore give a brief outline of the history of research on ancient sculpture.

Ancient sculpture in academia

The establishment of the academic discipline Classics in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century had a major impact on the study of ancient Greece and Rome on an international level.[3] As an emblematic material category from Antiquity, ancient sculpture attained a defining role for the discipline. At the center of this tradition stands the work of the 18th-

1 Bennett 1995, e.g. 45, 47, 96; Bennett 1995, 93, contra Crimp 1987; Preziosi 1989, 69-70, 73-74; Hooper-Greenhill, 1989.

2 See Siapkas and Sjögren 2007.

3 Morris 2000, 37-76.

century-scholar Johann Joachim Winckelmann.[4] He categorized the development of ancient art according to four stylistic phases. Through this taxonomy, he envisioned the rise, peak, and decline of ancient art. Examples of ancient statues were used to illustrate the characteristics of each phase. Of these phases, the *high* and the *beautiful* styles became synonymous with the Greek pursuit for ideal beauty and something that modern art should emulate. Ideal beauty, canalized through the naked body of a few sculptural masterpieces, formed the essence in Winckelmann's aesthetics. As a result of Winckelmann's influence on research, the analytical focus was placed on inherent artistic qualities of sculptures, especially Greek masterpieces from the Classical 5th and 4th centuries BC.

Winckelmann's work had an immediate and long-standing effect on our relation to ancient Greece and Rome since sculpture came to be regarded as the highest form of ancient art.[5] His chronological systematization became a fundamental notion that dictated studies on stylistic developments of sculptures. It put emphasis on a perspective where sculptures were treated as isolated objects of art, decontextualized of their functions in original ancient settings. In such an analytical framework, two major research interests were crystallized; the study of masterpieces with attributions to famous sculptors and the identification of lost Greek statues through Roman copies. The German terms *Meisterforschung* and *Kopienkritik* are often used to denote these traditions that have come to dominate modern research on ancient sculpture. The two tenets amalgamated in the influential study *Meisterwerke der griechischen Plastik* by the German scholar Adolf Furtwängler at the end of the 19th century.[6] The masterpiece discourse is strongly connected with the concept of the individual artistic genius as a formative force for the development of art. Likewise, the search for absent original Greek sculptures can be associated with a modernist praise for authenticity and originality.[7] Thus, these interests are conceptually firmly rooted in art historical research of the 19th century and were part of a more scientific approach that characterized the professionalization of the field. Implicitly, the idealized rather pretentious language of Winckelmann had to be refuted in order to adopt a more positivistic attitude toward the empirical material. In other words, the advance of formal analyses on stylistic elements of sculptures was prompted by a threefold aim; to modify Winckelmann's stylistic scheme, to study the *oeuvre* of individual sculptors, and/or schools, and to reconstruct original Greek masterpieces of the Classical epoch.

The 20th century has seen an endless number of variations on these themes. Introductory monographs on ancient art and sculpture are often organized according to Winckelmann's scheme.[8] Several studies confine the analytical scope to an investigation of stylistic characteristics of a particular chronological phase.[9] In these studies, the role of masterpieces as exemplary statues and stylistic prototypes is emphasized. It encourages a continuous focus on famous Greek sculptors, since analyses like these mostly concern stylistic developments of

4 His publication *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* from 1764 (Winckelmann 2006) is especially important to this tradition.

5 On the idea that a kind of art historical hierarchization was created at this time, see Marchand 1996, 15. Ridgway 1986, 8, is one of many contemporary scholars that continue to emphasize the primacy of sculpture in the study of ancient art. For Winckelmann's immediate impact during the 18th and 19th centuries, see Potts 1994, 18-33, Potts 2006, 29-31, and Marchand 1996, 13-16.

6 Furtwängler 1893.

7 Gazda 2002, 6.

8 For instance, Robertson 1975, and Stewart 1990.

9 The recent most explicit examples are Brunhilde Sismondo Ridgway's many monographs that each treat a specific style in Greek sculpture: the Archaic style, Ridgway 1993; the early 5th century or severe style, Ridgway 1970; the high classical 5th-century style, Ridgway 1981; the later classical style of the 4th century, Ridgway 1997; and finally, the Hellenistic period, Ridgway 1990-2002.

Classical sculpture.[10] The superior position of the Classical style is perpetuated. To concentrate on Classical masterpieces also implies that the use of Roman copies to study Greek masterpieces remains a topical research interest. Recalling ideas formulated in the 19th century, these kinds of studies share a decontextualized view on ancient sculptures as objects of art.

Although the above-described perspectives are still commonly applied in research, a parallel development takes historical and archaeological aspects of ancient sculpture into account. For instance, a trend in the study of Roman copies of Greek statues deals with function in Roman society. In these studies, the primary aim is not to reconstruct the lost Greek masterpiece but rather to understand how Roman culture reformulated Greek artistic traits in response to Roman taste and ideals.[11] Such a perspective complies with a general shift in art history away from formal analysis toward social interpretations of works of art.[12] When sculptures are treated as images of ancient history, there is a greater sensitivity for the exploration of different types of contexts beyond artistic concerns. It also means that archaeological issues become important in order to understand the original contexts of the sculptures. This has since the 1970s been a particular vibrant trend in Roman research, where a major concern is the political propaganda language conveyed through imperial sculpture.[13] Individual sculptures and sculptural assemblages in architectural settings are often interpreted as part of a programmatic display of Roman ideology. With a perspective like this, there is a change of analytical focus from the sculptures and sculptors to producers (patrons, commissioners, and customers) and consumers of images.[14] The historical and functional drive has been greater in the study of Roman than Greek art history. This situation could perhaps be ascribed the persistence of classical aesthetic ideals that still characterize research on Greek sculpture. The inherent artistic and aesthetic qualities of Greek sculpture imply that the sculptures are in themselves valid research subjects.[15]

Antiquity as an Aesthetic Ideal

Private collections were often the nucleus of public museums.[16] In different ways, many private collections became increasingly accessible to the public during the "long" 19th century – i.e. from the French Revolution to World War I. Public museums were often founded in order to house and display the collections. The re-definition of collections from private to

10 Studies concerning the artistry of individual Greek sculptors are continuously being published: Stewart 1977; Kreikenbom 1990; Höcker and Schneider 1993; Beck and Bol 1993; Todisco 1993; Palagia and Pollitt 1996; Corso 2004.

11 E.g. Zanker 1974; Vermeule 1977; Gazda 2002; Perry 2005.

12 This shift is often referred to as "new art history" and had a wider impact in the 1980s, Rees and Borzello 1986; Harris 2001.

13 Two leading authorities, Zanker 1988 and Hölscher 2003, have had a great impact on recent studies on Roman art.

14 For instance, such a theme as the role of patrons in the shaping of sculptures and their display implicitly means an emphasis on sociological aspects of the material (for example Tanner 2000 on portraits and patronage in the Late Roman Republic). Another aspect concerns the response of the viewer, which is in the case of portraits investigated by Gregory 1994 and Dillon 2000.

15 As an example, recent studies, e.g. Boardman and Finn 1985, Neils 2001, and Symeonoglou 2004, on an exemplary piece of classical sculpture like the Parthenon frieze are to a high degree governed by an aesthetic outlook.

16 A few examples: the Royal collections in France formed the nucleus for the Louvre (McClellan 1994), the Sloane collection was the foundation for the British Museum in 1753 (Jenkins 1992, 16), the Bavarian royal collection for the Glyptothek in München (Hamdorf 1992). Pomian 1990, 42, mentions for instance the Papal donation which opened as the Museo Capitoline in 1734, and the donation in 1743 of the Medici collection to Tuscany. See, Bjurström 1993, for the Swedish development.

public property did however not result in a complete rupture with previous notions and discourses. From 16th century Renaissance Italy until the coalescence of archaeology as a systematic and scientific field practice in the second half of the 19th century ancient sculptures were retrieved as isolated objects. That is, excavation practices were rudimentary with a focus on specific architectural structures and/or the retrieval of unique and eye-catching objects. Minor or no consideration was given to stratigraphic archaeological contexts. Aesthetic evaluations of the retrieved objects were determinative for the further fate of the ancient sculptures. Sculptures considered as worthy representatives of the aesthetic norms of high classical art found eventually their way to collections and museums. The rudimentary practices of field archaeology contributed to a discourse which placed the aesthetic qualities first. Mediations of the classical legacy in museums during the 19th century were characterized by the attention they placed on the aesthetic dimensions. The exhibited objects were conceptualized and presented as the aesthetic ideals which the visitors should venerate in order to be imbued with moral values.

Private collecting emerged as a widespread activity of the European nobility in 16th century Renaissance Italy. Ancient sculptures were one of many categories of objects that were collected. Although ancient sculptures were considered as a prestigious category, we should keep in mind that in the larger picture sculptures were of a secondary importance in the collecting discourse of early modern Europe.[17] The cabinets of curiosities reflected a world-view which perceived the world as infinitely diverse. A reality without regular laws can only be represented by rare, unusual, and exotic objects. The conceptualisation of ancient sculptures as unique objects influenced the arrangement of them. In these displays, ancient sculptures were contrasted and related to other objects perceived as unique. Chronology and cultural origins were not classificatory notions. It was rather aesthetic dimensions, and particularly the represented motif/person, that functioned as the criteria for the display. The fragmentary state of the ancient sculptures was, furthermore, a crucial notion in the aesthetic scheme of the Renaissance. The display of the *Belvedere Torso* in the Vatican Museums is perhaps the best example of the presence of Renaissance aesthetics in contemporary milieus.[18]

The aesthetic regime during the Baroque can in some respects be viewed as a continuation of earlier Renaissance concerns since the aesthetic qualities of the ancient sculptures continued to be the primary aspect. A fundamental difference was, however, that the fragments were held in high esteem during the Renaissance, whereas, in contrast, fragmentary sculptures were restored during the Baroque. Many of these reconstructions come through as peculiar in our eyes, not necessarily because they are wrong in some sense, but because they indicate that ancient sculptures were regarded as part of lavish ornamental schemes. A present-day example of a museum setting which mirrors the aesthetic schemes of the Baroque is the Palazzo Nuovo in the Capitoline Museums in Rome. The architectural ornamentation in the Cabinet of Venus and the Great Hall, the separation of busts representing real persons in the Hall of the Emperors and the Hall of the Philosophers from mythological gods and heroes, are some of the features that indicate this (fig. 1).[19] Another example is the *Salle du Manège* in the Louvre in which several ancient sculptures restored in accordance with Baroque

17 See Barkan 1999; Pomian 1990; Vickers 1985; Haskell and Penny 1981.

18 Barkan 1999, 189. The *Belvedere Torso* has been displayed in different settings throughout the centuries. The present-day arrangement dates to 1973, Spinola 1996, 8. Also Pietrangeli 1993, for the history of the Vatican Museums more generally. Barkan 1999, 119-207, explores the discursive appreciation of fragmentary ancient sculptures.

19 Albertoni and al. 2006, 18, explicitly states: "The Capitoline Museum represents a remarkable testimony of eighteenth century museum display whose original context has remained intact." Clark 1966-67, spec. 141.

Figure 1. Capitoline Museums, Palazzo Nuovo, Cabinet of Venus.

Photo: The Authors.

aesthetics are displayed, and the previous private provenience is carefully mentioned. The *Death of Seneca* (aka the *Louvre Fisherman*) is perhaps the most well known example. Sculpture galleries are yet another kind of display which is indicative of Renaissance and Baroque aesthetic schemes. The display of ancient sculptures in galleries highlights the aesthetic values of the ancient sculptures. The arrangement of the sculptures is often thematic,

and they are often reduced to an integral part of an ornamental scheme. The sculpture gallery, built between 1817 and 1822, in the Braccio Nuovo in the Vatican Museums is a case in point. The Braccio Nuovo gallery has served as an inspiration for many other exhibitions. The aesthetic scheme with characteristic features such as reliefs and busts above and between the sculpture niches has not been altered since it was opened (fig. 2).[20] In addition to the elaborate architectural ornamentation, also the thematic ordering of the sculptures testifies to the preservation of a 19th century aesthetic scheme.

Figure 2. Vatican Museums, Braccio Nuovo.

Photo: The Authors.

Academies emerged a little earlier than the public museum and had a profound influence on the development of museums. The education of artists in academies was conducted through repetitive and endless hours of "copying" masterpieces, most often ancient sculptures. With the emergence of museums, artistic education had a new venue for their education. Practicing artists was a common sight in the galleries and spaces where ancient sculptures were displayed. This practice provides us also with a partial explanation for the widespread practice to display plaster casts of famous sculptures during the long 19th century.[21] Displays of plaster casts are one of the strongest signs that aesthetic concerns determine the perceptions of ancient sculptures. Plaster casts were an indispensable part of the 19th century classical discourse. Agreements regulating archaeological excavations included occasionally also regulations about the possibilities to make plaster casts of the finds. The German excavations in Olympia from 1875 negotiated a right to make plaster casts of every find within five years

20 Pietrangeli 1993; De Angelis 1994, spec. 240-251. Compare fig. 2 with Potts 1980, 273, fig. 16.

21 Fitzpatrick Nichols 2006, 116-119. See also Gazi 1998; Wallach 1998.

of the retrieval.[22] Another testimony of the importance of plaster casts during the 19th century is the "Paris 1867 Convention for Promoting Universally Reproductions of Works of Art for the Benefit of Museums of All Countries". This international convention was signed by the heads of states of 15 European countries.[23]

The Neoclassical discourse, which permeated much of 19th century Europe and the aesthetic appreciation of the classical legacy, influenced also museums. The increasing attention paid to the history of museums makes it possible to establish some of the hallmarks of the 19th century aesthetic display of ancient sculptures. The origins and developments of such influential museums as the Louvre, the British Museum, and others, have received considerable attention by now.[24] Although aspects of the display techniques, for instance the placement of the objects, coloring on walls and ceilings, and lightning, may pass unnoticed, they are nevertheless indicative of the prevailing discourses and ideologies in the museums.[25]

The lightning of the museums spaces is a determining aspect which influences the appreciation of the museum objects. The lightning arrangement in several museums was discussed during the 19th century. Two main options were discussed. One was top-lighted spaces, using large windows high up on walls or skylights, which gave an evenly distributed lightning of the objects. The even light did not cast any sharp shadows on the objects. This facilitated a close scrutiny of the entire object from all possible angles, and was considered as a scientific or archaeological arrangement. The second scheme, conceptualized as antithetical to the first, was side lightning. Large windows in one or several walls result in bright exhibitions spaces but they also create sharp shadows on the objects. The distinct and sharp contrasts on the exhibited objects were perceived as aesthetic. This lightning arrangement was more suitable for artistic practices since it created a more dramatic environment for the ancient sculptures.[26] The large windows, facing an inner courtyard, in the Glyptothek in München is one of the best examples of aesthetic lightning arrangements that we have been able to identify (see below for references). Considering the more explicit educational aims of plaster cast collections and museums it should not come as a surprise that plaster cast museums also have aesthetic lightning arrangements. The Akademisches Kunstmuseum: Antikensammlung der Universität Bonn, founded 1819, is a telling example (fig. 3).[27]

The coloring and ornamentation of the walls and the ceilings in the museums space is another technique that influences our museum experience. From the mid-19th century onwards, museums tended to have elaborate ornamentations on the ceilings, and wall-colors that stood in sharp contrast to the exhibited objects. A preferred color was deep red. The red color was perceived as aesthetic since it enhanced the contrast between the marble-white sculptures and the background. Another argument used in favor of an aesthetic scheme in displays of ancient sculptures was that this setting veiled dust, dirt, and stains on the marble-white sculptures. The contrast between the object and the surrounding setting was desired since it facilitated aesthetic appreciation of the objects. Color schemes and architectural ornamentation, like lightning arrangements, in museum spaces were conceptualized along the lines of a division between the aesthetic and the scientific.[28] Examples of aesthetic color

22 Connor 1998, 190.
23 Fitzpatrick Nichols 2006, 117-118.
24 E.g. McClellan 1994; Jenkins 1992.
25 See Newhouse 2005 for an intriguing elaboration on the complex effects of display techniques.
26 Jenkins 1992, 41-42. The debate between J.M. von Wagner and Leo Klenze concerning the lightning in the Glyptothek in München is famous, see Potts 1980, 269-275.
27 Ehrhardt 1982.
28 Jenkins 1992, 44-48.

scheme with red wall colors are found in the *Pompejanum* in Aschaffenburg.[29] In other museums, this kind of setting has been confined to one or a few rooms, for instance room 21 (housing the famous *Jockey of Artemision*) in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. The Palazzo Nuovo (mentioned above) and the 19th century arrangements in the Glyptothek (see below) are other examples.

Figure 3. Akademisches Kunstmuseum: Antikensammlung der Universität Bonn.

Photo: The Authors.

Furthermore, although an origin of the idea of a chronological arrangement of the objects can be traced back to the early years of the Louvre this was not an arrangement of ancient sculptures adopted immediately. The re-arrangement of aesthetic displays into scientific displays, in effect chronologically based taxonomies, was in many cases a slow process. For instance, in the British Museum voices were raised favoring a scientific display already in the early 19th century, but this had only been realized partly when the museum was dismantled during World War II.[30] The prevailing arrangement of ancient sculptures during the 19th century was thematic. Sculptures of gods were grouped together, minor deities and heroes were a second category, and lastly portraits of humans as a third. The present-day arrangement in the Palazzo Nuovo exemplifies thematic arrangements (see above).

The end of the long 19th century marks a shift in the aesthetics of museum displays of ancient objects. With the advent of modernism, i.e. the art historical term and not modernity in a wider historical sense denoting a period from the Renaissance onwards, the classical legacy was not viewed as the undisputed artistic ideal anymore. The dethronement of the

29 Helmberger and Wünsche 2006. See in particular the figures on p. 54 and 57.

30 Jenkins 1992, 57.

aesthetic ideals of Neoclassicism was articulated in various ways. The number of art students in the hallways of museums spending hours in front of ancient sculptures decreased considerably during the 20th century. Artistic training did not consist of endless hours of copying of ancient masterpieces anymore. Another contributing factor to the demise of the plaster casts was the emergence and widespread use of photography. Photographic archives of art works, and the "slide show"-lectures, emerged as fundamental educational techniques for art historians.[31] They facilitated easy access to reproductions of art works; a role which earlier had been played by plaster casts. Plaster casts were removed from the exhibition spaces in the early 20th century. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, removed their plaster casts from the display when they moved into a new building in 1909.[32] Ironically, the British Museum opened up their plaster cast display the same year. It proved to be short-lived and was dismantled in 1935.[33] The removal of plaster casts was not restricted to a few museums. Art school students were ceremonially smashing plaster casts during the 1920s and 1930s in the US.[34]

Archaeological concerns became more important and determinative for the display of ancient sculptures during the 20th century. In addition to the questioning of the universally valid aesthetic dimensions of the ancient sculptures, the gradual coalescence of archaeology as an academic discipline during the late 19th century contributed to the development of a different, but still, aesthetic display and appreciation of ancient sculptures. In the new aesthetic regime the distinction between authentic and copy emerged as a fundamental concern.[35] Copies and plaster casts, however skilful, were not interesting as museum objects any more. This signals a historization of ancient sculptures since their origins became a crucial notion. Their aesthetic qualities were not viewed as universal aesthetic ideals that artists should emulate. However, ancient sculptures continued to be studied as art objects by the scholarly community. Scholarly elaborations concerning ancient sculptures evolved around stylistic issues and other traditional art historical concerns. Identification of masterpieces, attributions of sculptures to individual sculptors or schools, and the discourse of *Kopienkritik*, has dominated scholarly elaborations on ancient sculptures during the 20th century (see above).

The acute concern with authenticity and a turn towards a more scientific conceptualization of ancient sculptures influenced museum displays. Red, and other dark, wall colors and elaborate ornamentations of the interior spaces were abandoned in favor of more neutral bright colors and ornamentations were dismantled or kept to a minimum. White, in different shades, emerged as the new preferred color in the interior of museums. Lightning arrangements were also re-organized. Aesthetic lightning, which cast sharp shadows on the exhibited sculptures, was replaced by scientific lightning, which gave an even flow of light with minimal shadows on each sculpture. Generally, the new aesthetic regime can be characterized as minimalistic, since the main concern seems to be to present the sculptures as clean and neutral as possible. The common denominator in these displays is the enhancement of the objects, and their intrinsic aesthetic qualities. Compared to Neoclassical tastes where an aesthetic effect was achieved through contrasts the aim now was to eliminate as much as possible of anything that could disturb the visual field of the visitor. Yet another change was that thematic taxonomies, organized according to represented motifs, were re-arranged to displays founded on the notions of chronology and/or cultural provenience. In effect, these

31 Nelson 2000; Preziosi 1989, 72-73.
32 Whitehill 1970, 172-217, spec. 199 and 202; Fitzpatrick Nichols 2006, 119.
33 Jenkins 1992, 214-215.
34 Lowenthal 1985, 380.
35 Beard 2000, 161.

displays contributed to a historicizing of the ancient sculptures since they emphasized the ancient origin and not universal aesthetic values.

The re-organization of the display of the ancient sculptures in the Glyptothek in München in the 1960s is one telling example of the implementation of the new aesthetic regime. The most renowned pieces in the Glyptothek, the pedimental sculptures from the Temple of Aphaia, Aegina, were restored by the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen between 1816 and 1818 according to the aesthetic tastes of the time. When the Glyptothek opened to the public in 1830, these restored sculptures were an integrated part of the *Gesamtkunstverk* ("total work of art") which the elaborate interior space of the Glyptothek formed.[36] The aesthetic regime of the Neoclassicism did not exclude chronological considerations altogether. The general order of the ancient sculptures in the 1830 display was founded on the stylistic taxonomy of Winckelmann.[37] Furthermore, the architectural sculpture from the temple of Aphaia was also presented in a way were the original architectural context was considered, which still is the case. The changing aesthetic regimes have not affected the architectural contextualization of these sculptures but rather the attitude towards the restorations and the degree of ornamentation in the museum spaces. The criticism of the 1830-arrangement that Furtwängler, the Glyptothek's director, expressed in 1901 concerned the incorrectness of Thorvaldsen's restoration in the light of the new archaeological finds. The realization of a minimalistic modern display of the Aphaia sculptures, where the acute concern of the authenticity precluded the incorporation of restorations and plaster casts, was delayed until the 1960s when Thorvaldsen's restoration were removed for the re-opening of the Glyptothek in 1972 (fig. 4).[38]

Figure 4. The Aphaia sculptures, Glyptothek, München.

Photo: The Authors. **Permission:** *Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München.*

36 Diebold 1995, 60.

37 Potts 1980, 262-267.

38 Diebold 1995, 60. See also Knell and Kruft 1972, Maass 1984. Compare fig. 4 with Gropplero di Troppenburg 1980, 200, fig. 3, and 201, fig. 4.

Another telling example is the changing display of the Elgin marbles in the British Museum. Being the yardstick for the British Museum, it is not surprising that the display of the Elgin marbles was re-arranged several times during the 19th century. These arrangements evolved around the central issue of whether these sculptures should be presented as art or as archaeological parts of an architectural whole. Displays of them as art objects, meant that the arrangement did not regard the relative architectural relation between each piece as primary. In contrast, displays of them as architectural elements meant that the relative position of each object was dictated by the original architectural placement. Interestingly, the arguments to display the Elgin marbles according to architectural contextualization favored also the display of plaster casts of the missing parts.[39] Both these positions, however, were embedded within a wider Neoclassical aesthetic regime, which means that the exhibition space was crowded with objects. The change towards a minimalistic modern display for the Elgin marbles was discussed from 1928, and accepted in 1934. It was realized in 1962.[40]

This is perhaps the place for a remark about the slow pace of change. The shift in taste and attitude towards the classical legacy and ancient sculptures occurred during the first decades of the 20th century. It reached wider proportions in the 1920s and 1930s. In many cases, however a minimalist modern display aesthetic was not realized in museums until the 1960s.[41] There are certainly both external and internal reasons for this slow development, not the least World War II, suffice perhaps to conclude that this testifies to the slow pace of change that we find in museums.

Contextualizing Antiquity in Museums

Appropriating material culture in academics for archaeological ends often means taking various contexts into consideration. Context has been regarded as the *tour de force* that brought material culture out of antiquarianism, or art history, and into archaeology.[42] It does not entirely comply with the idea of the museum and its architectural realization since objects on display have been torn out of their original setting both in time and space. Thus, the moment ancient sculptures are put on display in museums they obtain new cultural and ideological signification that mainly emphasize intrinsic artistic values associated with the aesthetic appraisal of sculpture as objects of high art. It may be one reason why archaeology and history rarely appear as overarching perspectives in museums but rather as fragmentary glimpses. In many exhibitions, the production processes of sculptures (i.e. the actual craftsmanship), which can be viewed as an archaeological concern, is only mentioned briefly.

Throughout the 20th century, formal stylistic descriptions of sculptures have dictated arrangements in museums, indicating the late introduction of archaeological perspectives connected with contexts in sculpture studies. The increasing focus on historical, social, and religious contexts of ancient sculpture in recent research has started to have an impact on contemporary museum exhibitions. For instance, the trend to treat Roman copies of famous

39 Ironically, a similar idea is intended for the display in the new Acropolis Museum in Athens. In order to make an architectural contextualization as accurate as possible, representations/copies of the missing parts of the Parthenon will be displayed. The dichotomy between authentic and copy will be a guiding principle since the copies will be displayed in a gloomy way obscuring a clear view of them and reminding the visitor of their captivated state in foreign museums, according to the museum's director D. Pantermalis, Kontrarou-Rassia 2007.

40 Jenkins 1992, 225-228. See Jenkins, 1992, 222-228, figs. 83-89, for the exhibitions of the Elgin marbles.

41 The shift towards a minimalistic display aesthetics is by no means confined to ancient sculptures Maleuvre 1999, 92, 288 n. 84, mentions that this scheme was realized in its full extent in the Louvre and that it has prevailed from the 1930s onwards. This shift was also identified by Bazin 1967.

42 Crowther 1989, 40.

Greek statues in their Roman cultural and social setting is reflected in a recently re-opened museum in Rome with a renowned collection of ancient sculpture. In Palazzo dei Conservatori of the Capitoline Museums statues are presented in their capacity as decorations in affluent *hortii*, large residential gardens that in ancient times occupied the hills of Rome (fig. 5). Sculptures are displayed in front of matte-black metal panels in consecutive small galleries representing individual *horti*. The panels form an evocative contrast to the white marble of the sculpture, emphasizing aesthetic aspects, but also recalling slate walls that were observed while excavating the underground gallery in one of the *horti*.[43] The exhibition appeals to archaeological and historical perspectives. It is organized after archaeological find contexts and the information texts discuss the various families that owned the *hortii*.

Figure 5. Capitoline Museums, Palazzo dei Conservatori.

Photo: The Authors.

The relation between ancient sculpture and the Roman villa environment is taken one step further in the Getty Villa in Los Angeles. In an attempt to architecturally reconstruct the *Villa dei Papiri* outside Herculaneum the museum has created an impression of how a wealthy Roman villa owner may have decorated his residence. The museum's collection of antiquities, including sculpture, is displayed in an environment that seeks to emulate various decorative schemes from Roman interiors.[44] Thus, visitors to the museum are supposed to obtain a sense of how arts may have functioned in the setting of a Roman villa. This feeling can in particularly be conceived on the ground floor with the garden areas, where copies of bronze statues from the *Villa dei Papiri* have been placed at presumed original locations (fig. 6, next

43 Fentress 2007.

44 The present exhibition opened in January 2006 after extensive rebuilding of the villa.

page). In terms of display techniques, it forms a conspicuous contrast to the exhibition of the original bronzes from the villa on the second floor of the National Archaeological Museum in Naples.

Figure 6. Inner Peristyle at the Getty Villa in Malibu.

Photo: Julius Shulman and Juergen Nogai. © 2006 J. Paul Getty Trust.

Devoid of their original contexts and functions, the original bronzes are displayed as individual pieces of art in two large rooms with anonymous white walls and marble floors, far from the appearance of the original environment of the sculptures. This exhibition rather

conforms to the desolate, assumed neutral, aesthetics that developed in 20th century-displays of art.[45]

The recent trend to view Roman sculpture as instruments of Imperial political propaganda has to a certain degree influenced installations in museums. There are still a fair amount of exhibitions that emphasize stylistic developments of Imperial portraiture. One example is the organization of the archaeological site museum on the Palatine Hill of Rome that re-opened in 1997, where portraits are used to illustrate the stylistic development of Roman art from Augustus to the fourth century AD. Even though the museum is located in the middle of the ancient palaces of Roman emperors there are no references to this context in the exhibition. In other words, context and function of the sculptures beyond art is subdued. But we also have more recent examples where political aspects of Roman sculpture are indeed taken into account. On the ground floor in Palazzo Massimo of the National Museum in Rome a full-size statue of a veiled Augustus as *Pontifex Maximus* (highest priest position in Rome) is presented as an example of official Roman Imperial propaganda. The entire exhibition room (no. V), with this statue from Via Labicana in Rome, an altar from Ostia and a frieze from the *Basilica Aemilia* in Rome, shows how the Imperial family through iconography consolidated its claim to power by making references to Rome's legendary past.[46]

The most consistent realization of an archaeological display of ancient sculpture can be found in the recently re-opened exhibition of the archaeological museum in Thessaloniki.[47] The extensively refurbished museum differs from the old exhibition, where materials including sculptures were arranged according to chronological criteria, i.e. the organization followed some kind of traditional art historical development. The museum now aims at transmitting the history and lives of the people living in the region Macedonia and the city of Thessaloniki from prehistoric to late antique times. In this way, the museum connects to the present-day inhabitants of this region and city. The exhibition as a whole is organized thematically with emphasis on people rather than on the objects. Themes like public life (administration, laws, and institutions), social classes, economy and communication, family and private life, burial customs, and myths and worship evolve around peoples' activities in the area of ancient Thessaloniki. As one material category among many, sculpture is used to illustrate different aspects within these themes. How and where sculptures are arranged in the exhibition rooms determines to a great extent what messages they carry. Sculpture rarely appears as a separately displayed museum category and is instead integrated with other ancient artifacts. In this way the artistic qualities of the sculpture never becomes the primary focus of the presentation. It is here sufficient to mention a few examples. In the section concerning private life marble female heads are used to exemplify changing hairstyles. A tombstone depicting a man holding a kithara is displayed as an illustration of the ancient practice of music in a section about the arts. Family-related tombstones represent ancient family structures, rather than private art. A version of the so-called *Venus Genetrix* is not displayed as a singular masterpiece. Instead, it is shown as one of several sculptures that adorned the *Sarapeion*, a Roman sanctuary where different gods were worshipped.[48] This

45 Interestingly, in its 1860s-display the museum setting of the original bronzes from *Villa dei Papiri* emulated a Pompeian-style decor, thus creating a sense of the Roman villa-environment of the statues. The 1973-refurbishment of the exhibition was called a "recontextualisation" of the statues. However, the contextualization included only a large-scale reproduction of the 18th century-excavator Karl Weber's plan with find locations of the statues. As a whole the current set-up conveys a decontextualized appreciation of the statues as objects of art, Newhouse 2005, 98, see also figs. 88-89 on pp. 100-101.

46 La Regina 2005, 15-18.

47 The description of the exhibition is based on a visit to the museum on 12/11-2006. The new exhibition was inaugurated in September 2006.

48 A photograph of this exhibition is published in Siapkas and Sjögren 2007, 158.

sculpture represents the worship to Aphrodite at the sanctuary rather than a Roman copy of a famous classical statue. Here we have an attempt of recreating the sculpture's function in its original religious context.

The exhibition in Thessaloniki is an exception that proves the rule. In most contemporary museum displays of ancient sculpture the most obvious contextualization is the diachronic art historical trajectory that has been defining for sculpture studies since the 19th century. When contexts associated with archaeological perspectives are present in exhibitions they often appear as shorthand additional information that may pass unnoticed to most museum visitors. Once again, it exemplifies the inertia that has characterized the development of studies and displays of ancient sculpture.

Conclusion

By way of concluding, then, a diachronic comparison of displays of ancient sculptures in museums from different states suggests that the development of museums is more international than we might suspect. The perception of the classical legacy as a universal exemplary ideal dictated the museum displays in the 19th century. The Neoclassical appreciation of ancient art, coupled with un-developed field techniques in archaeology of that time, resulted in displays emphasizing aesthetic aspects of the classical legacy. Lightning casting distinct shadows, wall colors creating visual contrast to the ancient sculptures, plaster casts ensuring familiarity with compulsory masterpieces, are some of the characteristic features of 19th century sculpture displays. The modernistic turn in the early 20th century, with the aesthetic dethronement of the classical legacy, resulted in an aesthetic regime which is characterized by displays governed by the concern not to overload the exhibition space. Visual disturbances where kept to a minimum in these displays. Another telling feature is the contrasting attitudes to plaster casts. Whereas they were an integrated part of 19th century classical discourse, they were dismissed during the 20th century. In a discourse acutely concerned with the notion of authenticity, plaster casts lost their purpose.

Aesthetic concerns governed the display of ancient sculptures also after the museological shift in the early 20th century. However, in contrast to the previous aesthetic regime, ancient sculptures were increasingly displayed according to art historical, formalistic, schemes of development. The aesthetic qualities of ancient sculptures were historicized. The turn towards minimalistic exhibitions with the enhanced focus on the intrinsic qualities of the objects can be associated with the development in classical studies. The theoretical foundation of classics in the early 20th century was positivism. That is, scholarship concerned with the material record from antiquity primarily dealt with the description of the objects and securing the identity and origins of the retrieved objects. The physical isolation of the exhibited sculptures mirrors the isolated conceptual treatment of the objects in classical studies. In many respects, this remains the dominating regime in current exhibitions of ancient sculpture. Lately, research emphasizing archaeological and historical contexts, in particular the role of sculpture in Roman society, has started to find its way into museums. The fact that these kinds of contextualizations are only visible on a small scale, usually not implemented to the full in exhibitions, reveals the longevity of traditional perspectives on ancient sculpture.

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Illustrations

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