Antiquity in plaster: production, reception and destruction of plaster copies from the Athenian Agora to Felix Meritis in Amsterdam

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5.
THE EXEMPLARY FUNCTION OF ANTIQUE ARTFORMS DURING 17TH-CENTURY CLASSICISM

He [Sebastien Bourdon] wanted, in order to avoid a plunge into pettiness, and not to take on the studio-manner with which one is frequented, to familiarise himself from early on with the most beautiful antiques, that is by drawing them piece by piece and subsequently in their totality, and make this into a kind of habit, so that he could even draw them from memory.

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1. Antique sculpture as a didactic paradigm in the education of artists

An illustration for the prime role that was attributed to plaster models is the visit of the Italian sculptor, painter and architect Gianlorenzo Bernini to Paris in 1665. 503 At this occasion he advised the board of the École de l'Académie to obtain plaster casts (plâtres) of the most renowned antique works of art. These would serve to educate young students and enhance their conception of the beautiful (idée sur le beau) to which they could adhere for the rest of their lives. In Bernini's opinion drawing after live models would only spoil them. 504 He even advised Louis XIV to import models from Greece. 505 Another example is the painter Sebastien Bourdon who, in a discourse given at the academy in 1670, believed it to be an absolute necessity for students to pair nature to antiquity. To accomplish this it was vital to draw after plaster casts of antique sculpture. 506 By this time drawing after plaster casts had become a common feature at academies, as is evident from an etching of the drawing room of the Academy in Berlin in 1696. In the back we recognise a cast of the Laocoon and other famous sculptures. (ill.1) The beginning of the 17th-century saw a deficiency of painterly talent in France. The very fact that in 1622 Marie de Medici employed Rubens, a Fleming, to decorate the new Luxembourg Palace is a clear indication of this. A French style of painting was developed in Italy by a group of young

502 Résumé (the original manuscript is apparently lost) by Pierre Jean Mariette (1694-1774) read as a discours on 10-5-1752 (tr.: Godin), printed in Watelet, Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture et gravure, 1792, I, 1792. Also quoted in French by Valerius 1992, 186, n.44. The original discours (L'étude de l'Antique) was given by the painter Sebastien Bourdon at the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris on the third of June 1670.

503 Although Bernini’s fame soon dwindled when he was called again to Paris in 1666 for designing additions to the Louvre palace. His visit must have seemed a farce at the time since there was strong opposition in French artistic circles against the completion of the Louvre awarded to a foreigner. Berninis design strongly contrasted with the rest of the palace and was never executed. His open contempt for French art and architecture only reinforced the rejection of contemporary Italian Baroque style but also reasserted faith of the French artists in their own tradition.

504 Chantelou (entry 5-9-1665). On Bernini's visit to the Academy: (..) 'Then, as he was standing in the middle of the hall surrounded by members, he gave it as his opinion that the Academy ought to possess casts of all the notable statues, bas-reliefs, and busts of Antiquity. These would serve to educate young students, they should be taught to draw after these classical models and in that way form a conception of the beautiful that would serve them all their lives. It was fatal to put them to draw from nature at the beginning of their training' (tr.: M. Corbett 1985, 165).

505 Chantelou (entry 11-10-1665): 'He [Bernini] repeated that the King must have models brought from Greece, and that he would put it in his notes for the Academy' (tr.: M. Corbett 1985, 286).

painters like Claude Vignon, Valentin Boulogne and Simon Vouet. They were sent to Rome not only to study the art of the Renaissance, but also Caravaggio and the Bolognese School of the Carracci. This resulted in a variety of styles, from the landscapes of Claude Lorraine (ill.2) to the Classicism of Nicolas Poussin.

The rise of 17th-century Classicism in France was greatly enhanced by the foundation of several academies that were modelled in the Italian way. In fact academies were a major contribution in establishing the Classical tradition as such. Since Francis I, Italian art played an exemplary role in French taste. Like with every rise or shift in art styles this was due to a variety of reasons. What has to be mentioned here is the marriage of Marie de Medici with Henry IV King of France in 1600, which secured strong ties with the Medici family. It were they in particular who were renowned for appointing themselves to patrons of art and were involved in the founding one of the first art-academies. After the assassination of Henry in 1610 the regency was in the hands of Marie, because her son Louis XIII was too young to govern.507 In the context of this ‘Italian connection’ it was not unusual that Cardinal Richelieu founded the Académie Française in 1635. Despite the fact that this institution dealt with literary matters it has to be regarded as the forerunner of the later art-academy.508

By 1670, due to the decline of the political power of Rome and thereupon the decline of patronage, Paris had taken over the role of artistic capital of Europe. Of great importance was the foundation in 1648 of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris. Although its final organisation dates from 1664, when minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert became the main pioneer of a comprehensive academic system. By this time art was included in the encyclopaedia of the academic tradition. The Académie set the standard for the type of art that was considered appropriate for the state. This type of art was Classicism which combined well with the sense of rationalisation and order that dominated French culture at the time. During the absolute rule of Louis XIV art and state were closely intertwined; as a result the Académie became a political instrument. It was clear what the king expected of the Académie. His minister Colbert, who effectively directed the organisation of the arts in France from 1661 until his death in 1683 instructed that, like all other activities, the arts should serve the glory of France. They had to be organised on the same basis as industry and their theory established in a body of dogma.509

The atmosphere at the Académie was competitive; successful students were granted prizes and medals and could expect state commissions. The most prestigious was the Prix de Rome which involved a study tour to Rome; the very centre of antique and Renaissance art. In line with the Italian tradition antique sculpture had an exemplary function in the education of sculptors and painters. The first subject in the curriculum was drawing after plaster casts or copies of renowned sculptures such as the Laocoon, Apollo of Belvedere, Niobe and Venus de'Medici. Prints made of ancient statues also functioned as examples to work from. This initial phase was followed by drawing from live nude models. Due to the morals of the period drawing from the nude was only done by male students since it was considered improper for female

507. It is significant in this context that in 1608 the literary and educator David Rivault dedicated his book titled 'The Art of Embellishment' (L'art d'embellir) to Queen Marie de Medici. In line with the ancient Classical writers this moralistic discourse on several aspects of beauty set Rivault’s reputation in Paris.

508. Jacques Thuillier (1963) emphasised that at the onset of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1648 it was an avant-garde movement founded for practical and pragmatic reasons. It certainly did not start as an offshoot of royal Absolutism. In 1648 Louis XIV was only 10 years old and the Parliament controlled Paris. On the role of academies in France in relation to Italian traditions see: Yates (1947) 297ff.

student to do so, they had to study from plaster models, copies or drawings and engravings. The ancient proportions were meticulously studied and copied during the first phase; the next step was to apply them to the live models. In addition to this practical instruction, lectures or discourses on art-theory were obligatory part of the curriculum.

There was a shift in the theory of art at the Académie Royale in comparison with earlier Italian art academies (e.g. the Accademia di San Luca in Rome): Italian artists like Bellori and Bernini were not searching for specific models, but more a ‘bridge to perfection’. It was their belief that the study of ancient sculpture would improve nature. In fact the French academians turned the Italian tradition as verbalised by Michelangelo: ‘good judgement and an exact eye are better than a pair of compasses’, around. They were convinced that the secret of perfect beauty that was found in antique sculptures was rooted in their proportions. It was therefore that treatises on module- and proportion theories were discussed and meticulously studied at the academy.

2. Module theories

One of the premises in art theoretical thinking at the time was that the concept of measure and beauty presuppose each other, even to the extend that it became a norm. This was also present in the module theories of sculpture, painting and architecture. Module- and proportion doctrines that were formulated by the Roman architect Vitruvius were adapted during the Renaissance by Alberti, Da Vinci, Dürer, Gauricus and Lomazzo. (ill.3) The most striking visualisation is probably Da Vinci’s depiction of the Vitruvian Man. (ill.4) It may seem an ordinary picture, but its quintessential importance, particularly to Renaissance architects, can hardly be over-estimated. To them it was much more than a convenient rule, for it was the foundation of an entire philosophy. It summarized a philosophy of aesthetics because it linked sensation and order, organic and a geometric basis of beauty. Da Vinci actually visualised a rather obscure passage from Vitruvius’ Architectura. In it Vitruvius states that the proportion of the human body should be mirrored in the proportions of the temples. A well-build man fits with extended hands and feet exactly into the most perfect geometrical figures: circle and square. Artists meticulously studied the proportions of ancient classical statues in their quest for ideal beauty.

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510. During his visit to the Académie in Paris, Gianlorenzo Bernini made a remark about women and drawing: 'Anyway they [women] could never draw as well as men, as it was against propriety for them to draw from the nude; the best advice one could give them was to choose only the best examples to copy', see: Chantelou, entry 11-10-1665 (tr.: Corbett 1985, 285).

511. These discourses were not just lectures given in front of students for their benefit. Instead they formed part of the conférences, discussions among the members of the academy only. Its purpose was to establish 'proper' doctrine. Students were present but not allowed to participate.


513. One could think of the early Renaissance concept of proper measure in conduct (cf. Petrarch) or that of moderation (cf. Bruni) or the Aristotelian principle of mean (cf. Alberti, Castiglione, Bacon, Cardano). For elaboration see: Heller 1981, 246, 305.

514. Also see Panofsky (1955) Meaning in the visual arts, chapter II, titled: 'The history of human proportions as a reflection of the history of styles'.

515. Vitr., De.arch., III, 1.1.

516. We know that in the Hellenistic period the Greeks believed in harmonious numbers which they translated into measurable proportion. This was grafted on the mysticism of numbers taught by Pythagoras which had given it the visible form of geometry. This was also expressed in their painting and sculpture, but precisely how we do not know. The so-called canon of Polycleitus is not recorded. What Pliny and a few other writers of antiquity handed down to us of the ancient rules of proportion is of a most elementary nature.
For practical purposes several drawing books with examples of the ideal proportions of the human body were published. A popular example is Dürer’s *Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion* (1528) which contained many illustrations (ill.3).

This system of rigid module theories was not without critics. Among them was the Dutch painter and writer Karel van Mander in his: *Het schilder-boeck* (1604). Although he emphasised the benefits of drawing after classical statues\(^{517}\), he critized Dürers detailed calculations: (..) ‘*Die te veel meten, vast metende blijven, En ten lesten niet besonders bedrijven*’ (They who take too many measurements, remain measuring and thus achieves nothing outstanding).\(^{518}\) Other scepticism came from Willem Goeree (1682) and Florent Le Comte (1702).\(^{519}\) One has to conclude that Dürer’s anthropomorphic technique was over-developed and did not bear much significance for his own art. The disproportion between theory and practice is evident when one considers the smallest unit of his measuring system, the so-called *Trümmlein* which measured less that one millimetre.\(^{520}\)

However it was these rigid module-theories that were part of the curriculum at the 17\(^{th}\)-century French art-academies. Treatises that were studied for this purpose were: Le Brun's *Livre d'Antiques* (1643-45), Bosse's *Représentation de diverses figures humaines* (1656) and Audran's *Les proportions du corps humain* (1683) (ill.5a+b). For most of the French artists copying ancient art the exact measurements became imperative. But even those who did not adhere to this, like Bourdon, never questioned the paramount importance of antique sculpture as a model to achieve perfection.\(^{521}\) It comes to no surprise that this rigid system of education, which assumed as a premise that the arts could be learnt by applying rational principles, did not produce artists of a great reputation.

All this changed in 1671 when the quarrel between the so-called Ancients and Moderns brought an end to the need to refer continually to that standard of excellence.\(^{522}\) As a result of this quarrel -which continued for more than a century- a series of non-Classical influences were introduced into French art. Genres that previously were at a low plain of the hierarchy of genres as taught at the academy were now upgraded. Landscape, still life, domestic scenes and *fêtes galantes* became popular.

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\(^{517}\) In the second part of *Het schilder-boeck*, which contains a collection of biographies of painters (*Lives*), van Mander states that ancient statues ‘cast a great light upon our art of painting and opened the eyes of its practitioners as to distinguish between ugliness and beauty, and what was the most beautiful in life or in nature regarding the shape of the human body and its members. [The latter ‘Dieren litmaten’ is incorrectly translated by Miedema as various beasts]. see: Van Mander ed. Miedema 1994-99, fol. 234 r 34-37. In the section which describes the life of Cornelis Cornelissen Van Mander states: Meanwhile Cornelis greatly assisted his ambitious nature through drawing an exceptional amount diligently from the life to which end he chose from the best and most beautiful living and breathing antique sculptures (..) for that is the surest and very best study that one can find, at least if one has perfect judgement in distinguishing the most beautiful from the beautiful’ Van Mander ed. Miedema 1994-99, 292 vs.37-42.

\(^{518}\) Mander *Grondt*, 1604, cap.3 vs.9-10.


\(^{520}\) Panofsky 1921, 217.

\(^{521}\) Valerius 1992, 112.

\(^{522}\) See Helsdingen 1971, 67: Criticism on the antique. An evolution in regard to copying was the new idea about the concept of *imitation* (p.14ff).
3. Academies of art and styles in Italy

The Classical revival in the 17th-century was strongly stimulated by the preceding efforts of the Italian painter Annibale Carracci (1560-1609) and his students. In about 1582 he founded a school of art in Bologna, the so-called Accademia degli Incamminati (that is, those who had set out on the road, i.e. to good art). In the course of the 16th-century art academies began to play a significant role in the education of artists in Italy. Before discussing the influence of Carracci it is useful, as a background, to review the role that (art) academies played in the revival of Classicism.

A predecessor of the academy were the artists clubs or societies in Rome at the beginning of the 16th-century. The time was spent by listening to music, reciting poetry and studying literature. This in contrast to drawing, painting, or sculpting that were more workshop activities. We learn of the existence of these societies through Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) who described one of them in his autobiography:

(…) ‘A society that included the best painters and sculptors and goldsmiths that there were in Rome (…) We used to meet together very often, at least twice a week’. 525

Art historians differ in how to define an academy of this period. Was it a new kind of setting in which visual art was taught analytically and programmatically (disegno) or was it just a well-organised studio or workshop?

The Italian Renaissance saw the evolution of several academies of different disciplines that were to educate humanistic experts. It was they who had to interpret the deep meaning of ancient texts and monuments. Moreover they had the role of advisor for contemporary poets and artists on the choice of images with their concealed meanings, to be adopted in their art. At the early academies the organisation is informal yet unified often no more than the casual meetings of a group of friends with common interests. How one should imagine such early art academies is illustrated by an engraving from 1531 by Agostino Veneziano (ill.6). Depicted is the studio, or accademia -the word is introduced for one of the first times in an inscription at the bottom- of the painter Bandinelli where artists and students study by drawing after small scale (plaster?) replica's of antique statues. Academies in this early period were not organised institutions with a clear master versus pupil relationship. The engraving confirms this; everyone depicted seems self-absorbed and studying by himself.

An important change seems to take place in the years between 1530 and 1540. It was then that the academy became an official institution with rules and curriculum (e.g. Rozzi, Siena 1531) and soon evolved into a governmental institution (Fiorentina, Florence 1541) In a later stage specialisation seems to set in, and different academies are assigned to different subjects. The concept of the academy therefore evolved in Italy. Here, in the second third of the 15th century, under the influence of Greek scholars, the ancient Classical (Platonic) term Academy

522. Greenhalgh 1978, 149. The academy of the Caracci was a private institution, in contrast to the Accademia del Disegno in Florence. It was, however, inspired by this Florentine tradition.
524. Goldstein 1996, 10. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) seemed to associate the drawing practises of a workshop with ‘schools’ namely the practise of copying.
526. Yates 1947, 131. Also see: Pevsner (1940, esp. chapter 1 & 2) for an elaborated background history of art-academies.
527. On the evolution of the academy as a concept in the 16th century, see: Pevsner 1940, 25ff.
528. Yates 1947, 94.
was revitalised by Italian humanists.\footnote{ Academy was the ancient name of a district in the north-west of Athens in the 4th-century B.C. It consisted of a temple complex and a park. It was here that Plato taught his pupils. In the course of time Plato's followers, who lived in a community, were called Academy too. Gradually the term was applied to the school of Plato in a wider sense. Although it has to be noted that in Renaissance usage the term is ambiguous and need not to refer to an institution. Carl Goldstein (1996, 14) emphasised that it had at least six more meanings than the one mentioned above. 1. The school of thought associated with Plato. 2. A private humanist school. 3. A classicising substitute for the medieval university; more loosely. 4. Any regular gathering of literary men. 5. A house, villa, or chamber used for literary or philosophical studies; metonymically. 6. The Platonic corpus.} Prolific was the \textit{Accademia Fiorentina}, established in 1541 in Florence under the protection of the grand duke of Tuscany Cosimo I de'Medici. It was mainly a philological circle and the meetings were both private and public. This is evident from the fact that from 1553 paid lecturers gave courses on Dante and Petrarch. An additional new task was to cultivate the Italian as opposed to the Latin language.\footnote{Greenhalgh 1978, 174; Carl Goldstein (1965, 231) pointed out that in line with the preceding Italian art academies, that the 1648 petition for the establishment of a French Academy of Painting and Sculpture makes a distinction between the 'noble' and 'mechanical' arts and a programme of art education necessary for the first is described. His 1996 book on more didactic aspects of academies is an important addition to Pevsner’s study of 1940.}

The second half of the 16th-century saw the evolution of the art academy as an independent institution. One of the purposes was to promote painting and sculpture as liberal arts, leaving the mechanical arts to the Guilds.\footnote{Giorgio Vasari’s scheme for the \textit{Accademia del Disegno} of 1563 in Florence promoted this view. Artists should not be in a dependent position like common craftsman. Membership of a grand ducal academy would demonstrate that the social rank of an artist was just as high of a scientist or another scholar. See: Pevsner 1940, 54.} All in an effort to upgrade the social position of painters, sculptors and architects.\footnote{The code of rules of Vasari’s \textit{Accademia del Disegno}, is reprinted as an appendix in Pevsner, 1940, 296-304. Also see: Kempers 1992, Part IV, 3. Here he elaborates on the role of Vasari’s and his efforts to increase the status of artists as a professional group.} These ‘modern’ art academies were founded under the patronage of nobility and clergy (ill.7). For example grand duke Cosimo I de'Medici established an art academy in Florence at about 1563 (\textit{Accademia del Disegno}). It was the first that had a distinct curriculum for the education of artists under the direction of Giorgio Vasari.\footnote{Carl Goldstein (1996, 14) pointed out that \textit{disegno} usually rendered in English as ‘drawing’ has a broader, more abstract connotation. It involved all the visual arts: painting, sculpture, and architecture. Giorgio Vasari (1568, 1:168) stated that \textit{disegno} is an apparent expression and declaration of the \textit{concetto} [or judgement] that is held in the mind.} Another was founded in Rome in 1593 (\textit{Accademia di San Luca}) on the initiative of Cardinal Federico Borromeo, later on it was under the patronage of the popes. At the academy of art in Rome drawing (\textit{disegno}) was an important subject on the curriculum.\footnote{Nudity in art was not always without moral scruples. In a letter to the \textit{Accademia del Disegno} dated 22 August 1582, the Florentine sculptor Ammanati accused himself of indecency, because he had modelled so many nudes.} It mainly focused on the human anatomy, first drawing from plaster casts after the antique and subsequently the whole body of a life model.\footnote{Pevsner 1940, 74, n.1.} Beside the official art academies like the one in Rome and Florence, there also existed smaller private academies called \textit{Accademia del Nudo} of which many are known. Here artists were able to draw from life models.\footnote{Pevsner 1940, 14.}
4. Discussions on style: the Classical tradition and Classicism

Giovanni Bellori (1615-1696), the learned antiquarian who was the universally acclaimed promoter of the classical cause, complained that:

‘The antique lost all authority, as did Raphael, and because it was so easy to obtain models and paint heads from nature, these painters abandoned the use of histories which are proper to painters (...) some artists began to look enthusiastically for filth and deformity. If they have to paint armour, they choose the rustiest’.537

Bellori clearly opposed the style or painters who followed Caravaggio (1573-1610) whose naturalistic art was criticised for lacking invention or selection, intellect or decorum.538 Bellori sided with the school of the Carracci whom he saw as the rescuers of true art.

The style that Annibale Carracci, his brother Agostino and their cousin Lodovico had developed by the end of the 16th-century was based on the High Renaissance while renouncing the prevailing contemporary Mannerist way of painting (ill.8). Their eclectic tenets also assimilated stylistic elements of contemporary painters like Primaticcio and Parmigianino. Despite the fact that Mannerism had continued elements of the High Renaissance it lacked the naturalistic simplicity of the former Renaissance style. The depiction of human figures was characterised by complex bodily contortions and, moreover, the subject matter was often obscure and embedded in intricate psychological backgrounds (ill.9). Carracci’s academy avoided theory and the usual program of instruction. According to Carracci, art had to return to nature, students had to draw after life and provide recreations in the style of the classics (i.e. artists of Antiquity as well as Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian and Correggio). One could say that Annibale Carracci’s efforts revitalised the tradition of Antiquity and the High Renaissance style at one and the same time.539

Since the 14th-century the respect and admiration for the achievements of Graeco-Roman Antiquity was universal. An illustration of this is the custom, since the Renaissance, of artists to have their portrait painted with memorabilia from classical Antiquity, often copies or casts of antique sculpture. During the Italian Renaissance a classical tradition was established in the arts for which the imitation of the antique was essential. It is important however to realise that imitation was not just 'copying'; the variety of the ancient sources were transformed and interpreted, not merely copied.540

During the height of the reign of Louis XIV (1660-1685) France had not only become the most powerful military nation of Europe, but also had taken the lead in most fields of European civilisation. It began to exceed Italy in literature as well as in architecture and painting. Classicism became the standard of excellence by the middle of the 17th-century at the (art) academies in Paris. But despite the fact that Classicism and rationalism were the great inventions of the age, French culture at the time was far from uniform.541 For example in painting we see a range from the pure Classicism of Nicolas Poussin to the naturalism of Louis Le Nain (ill.10+11).

540. E.g. when the painter Rubens was in Rome during the first decade of the 17th century, he made more than a hundred drawings after antique sculptures. Although he thought that the knowledge of (ancient) sculpture was conditional for the perfection of a work of art and commands the imitatio statuarum, his drawings were by no means exact copies but interpretations.
Germany and the Low-Countries were not as strongly affected by the classical tradition. There are several reasons for this. The most important one is that during the Reformation in the North, thought (Logos) – a humanistic principle – rather than form determined the mode of the period here.\textsuperscript{542} Although this does not mean that there were no artists in these regions who worked in a Classicist style. There were several 17\textsuperscript{th}-century Dutch artists who came under the Italian influence. A number of them visited Italy and worked there. One can think of those who painted in the caravagggesque style, the so-called Utrecht ‘Caravaggists’: notably Honthorst and Terbrugghen or Italianate landscape painters like Poelenburgh and Breenbergh. Religious history painting became popular, mythological painting not, for the latter there was only a small market that was made up of aristocrats and those of the upper classes. But after 1610, as a reaction on the mannerist- and later on the caravaggesque style, there was a small group of Dutch painters who worked in a purely Classicist style.\textsuperscript{543}

Stylistically the period of 17\textsuperscript{th}-century France is generally referred to as the Age of Classicism, while in Italy and parts of the North as the Age of Baroque. The baroque style was far from uniform; this was due to the different interpretations of the Italian Renaissance and the manner in which it had spread over Europe during the 16th century. The Baroque style, as developed in Rome, is essentially Catholic, which was by itself a reason that it was not easily accepted in the Protestant countries of the North. Here they developed their own national interpretation of the Renaissance manner.

Classicism as it emerged in 17\textsuperscript{th}-century Franc reflects stylistic elements of the Graeco-Roman world, but also of the Italian High Renaissance and of the Italian Baroque.\textsuperscript{544} The lack of sympathy for the high Baroque style by the French is illustrated by the indifference for the Rubens paintings in the Luxembourg Palace that lasted until the end of the 17\textsuperscript{th}-century.\textsuperscript{545} This attitude also tied in with their ‘separatist’ version of Catholicism\textsuperscript{546}, and the strongly developing Classicism.\textsuperscript{547}

The stylistic implications of Classicism's involvement with the art of Antiquity were extensive. A general characteristic is that Classicism aims to elevate reality to a higher plane; it is always concerned with the ideal, as well in form as in content. The depiction of the ideal entails certain formal as well as intellectual qualities. The subject matter had to be plain and clear and the style transparent and harmonious.

\textsuperscript{542} As pointed out by Heinz Ladendorf 1953, 35. It is no coincidence that the philosophy of Aristotle was a mandatory subject taught at the northern Dutch universities of the 17\textsuperscript{th}-century. There is another related development in 17\textsuperscript{th} century Dutch art. The art historian Rudy Fuchs (1978, 62 ) pointed out that the decline of history painting in this period was, among other reasons, also due to: ‘A distrust of too fanciful an imagination, and a desire to stay close to home, to stick to what one could actually see and know’.

\textsuperscript{543}. For elaboration see Blankert (etc.) 1999, 13-33.

\textsuperscript{544} Michael Greenhalgh (1978, 174) applied the term 'chastened Baroque'. Later he used the term ‘modified Baroque’ (Greenhalgh 1990, 20).

\textsuperscript{545} Greenhalgh 1978, 161.

\textsuperscript{546} The absolutism of Louis XIV, who also wanted to rule the church, gave rise to some long lasting conflicts with the authority of the pope. At the Assemblée du Clergé in 1681 public and theological Gallicism was established. This declared the absolute independence of the king from the pope in temporary matters and the subordination of the pope to the church.

\textsuperscript{547} Greenhalgh, 1990, 20.
5. Copies and casts in 17th-century collections: the artist as restorer

When we direct our attention to the realm of collecting during this period it becomes clear that collectors of Classical ancient sculpture were hampered in their passion by the fact that most pieces were tied up in, by then, established Italian collections, like those of the Borghese, Farnese, Ludovisi and Giustiani. But antique statues were still substantially less expensive than modern contemporary sculpture. Research on the collection of Cardinal Scipione Borghese in Rome revealed that the price would rarely exceed a hundred scudi. While only the marble material needed for a top piece of a contemporary sculptor like Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* would cost that much. Apart from the fact that it was difficult to obtain ancient originals, collecting small-scale replicas also had practical reasons, for it did away with the need for very large exhibition rooms.

Collecting originals or full-scale models was mainly a royal enterprise. In most cases collectors had to be satisfied with casts and copies in various materials, such as marble, bronze, lead, terracotta or plaster, of which a multitude were made. They often functioned as substitutes for the unobtainable pieces in order to supplement a collection (ill.12-14). For the small-scale marble copy of the *Spinario*, Scipione Borghese had to pay the exceptionally high price of three hundred scudi. (ill.15) By the end of the century prices had gone up considerably. When most of the Ludovisi collection came up for sale in 1670 a statue like the so-called *Paeus and Arria* was valued at ninety thousand scudi.

Charles I of England began his endeavours to collect ancient sculptures by 1629. It was around this time that a former secret agent in Rome managed to obtain moulds of Scipione Borghese's *Gladiator* for him. By this time the best statues could only be obtained in casts and copies. Charles went to great length to obtain moulds of the most renowned classical sculptures. When he was beheaded in 1649 his bronze copies were among the most valued items in the royal collection!

Another collector of antique sculpture was King Philip IV of Spain. In 1650 he had the court painter Velázquez travel to Italy in 1650 to obtain bronze copies and plaster casts to decorate his palace Alcazar. The plaster copies greatly outnumbered the bronze copies, the former were lost in a fire that destroyed the palace in 1734.

Despite the rigid academic theory of proportion and the practise of making exact copies of antique sculptures some artists applied a more liberal interpretation. Such was the case with Antoine Coysevox *Crouching Venus* made to adorn the *Parterre Nord* at the gardens of the Versailles palace in 1686 (ill.16a+b). This did not detract from the fact that it was much admired in its time. Because Coysevox never travelled outside France he never saw the antique originals. It explains why his version deviates from the originals that were known at the time, since there were several Roman versions made in antiquity that ended up in different European collections (17a+b). It is likely that Coysevox used an engraving to work from, for instance one by Raimondi or Maerten van Heemskerck. Others like Jacques Buirette (1631-1699) omitted elements, like in his small-scale bronze copy of the *Nile* (ill.18, 19a+b). When pieces of sculpture were copied in plaster and especially full size statues, details were often lost or slightly altered due to the technical process of assembling the moulds that were used for

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548 Kalveram 1995, 22; For a review see: Godin 1999, 271.
549 Dozens of reproductions which depict 17th century art collections (many including copies of classical sculptures) can be found in the book of Speth-Holterhof (1957).
551 For the Ludovisi sale catalogue, see: Bruand 1959, 83. Also see: Haskell & Penny 1982, 28.
casting. With plaster statues one has to be particularly vigilant because it was not uncommon to make copies from copies which caused loss of detail or slight variations. Because a piece of Classical ancient sculpture was rarely retrieved in an undamaged state there was a strong demand for restoration workers. Sculptors specialised in the trade of restoring ancient sculpture. Although the fragmented state of most of the ancient sculptures also resulted into reconstructions.

A good example is the marble statue now known as the Venus of Arles. When it was first discovered in 1651 at the Roman theatre at the French town of Arles, the head and body were separated and the arms were missing (ill.20a). When Louis XIV obtained the statue to decorate the mirror hall of Versailles, the royal sculptor François Girardon was commissioned to make the sculpture more definitely a Venus. He therefore added some attributes: an arm with an apple in the right hand, as won in the Judgement of Paris, and a left arm with a mirror in the hand. He also supplemented the broken ribbons in the hair of Venus. This is still the present the state in which the statue can be admired at the Louvre Museum in Paris (ill.20b). For a long time it was generally assumed that technical perfection rather than archaeological correctness was the criterion. But artists often had a wide knowledge of Classical sculpture and were very capable to carry out these restorations.554

6. The artist as collector and copyist: Rubens and Rembrandt

Traditionally encyclopaedic collections were subdivided in two categories: naturalia and artificialia. The latter contained paintings, medals or gemstones, but also copies of Classical sculpture, preferably marble, but more commonly casts in plaster, terracotta, led, or in some cases in wax. It was an expression of knowledge correlated with method and an intellectual delight in classification and order.

Artists constituted a substantial group of collectors of antique sculpture. In general they collected small-scale models, but also cast plaster fragments, both real size and small scale. There were casts or copies made from classical sculpture, but also anatomical casts taken from life were quite common. A comparison between two great artists: Rubens and Rembrandt, who also happened to be important collectors, will bring this tradition into closer perspective.

Pieter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) was not only an important artist-collector but also an antiquarian who was very much interested in Classical antiquity. In his monumental house in Antwerp he set up an impressive collection with hundreds of works of art. The collection was

553. Cok-Escher 1985, 14-19. Plaster casts the Venus of Arles are present in several Dutch plaster collections, like those of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leyden and the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam.

554. For elaboration see: Katrin Kalveram (1995) in her study on the collection of Cardinal Scipione Borghese. She pointed out that great collectors like the Medici, Ludovisi and Borghese only trusted the best artists to the restoration of their antiquities. Established sculptors like Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Nicolas Cordier had a wide knowledge of ancient sculpture owing to the fact that the restoration of ancient sculpture was one of the most frequent assignments in Rome during this period. Moreover several artists were also antiquity dealers which gave them an extensive knowledge of Classical sculpture (p.97). An example is the sculptor’s family Della Porta, of which many members were antiquity dealers and restorers of ancient sculpture. Giovanni Battista Della Porta (1542-1597) is known to have been employed by Cardinal Farnese who owned a large collection of antique sculpture. It is also documented that Giovanni restored a Tiberius for Ippolito d'Este in 1567 (Thieme & Becker 1933, 280ff).

555. Inventories of 17th-century artists confirm this. Bredius 1915-1921 mentions several plaster statue collections owned by painters, for example Cornelis Dusart (I, 36-49), Jan Bassé (I, 129-131, 139-146), Bartholomeus van der Helst (II, 407), Jacob de Wit (III, 747), Barent van Someren (III, 797-799), Michiel van Musscher (III, 991), Cornelis van Haarlem (VII, 84-85).
organised, although on a much grander scale than other contemporary collections, in accordance to the tradition of a *konstkamer* (an amateur art gallery or cabinet) of which many existed at the time. Rubens's collection contained some hundred original Classical statues (supplemented with casts in plaster), hundreds of the finest pictures, exquisitely carved gems (supplemented with casts in led), ivory sculptures, and vases of crystal, agate and jasper. To exhibit the sculptures, coins and medallions Rubens had a special gallery built. In 1672 the learned antiquarian Giovanni Bellori wrote that Rubens: (...)‘Built a circular room in his house at Antwerp with one oculus in the top in imitation of the Rotunda of Rome for the perfection of the equal light. Here he located his precious museum’. (ill.21a+b)

Rubens attached great important to prestige, social status and political matters, his collection had to consolidate this. The Rubenses were a prosperous bourgeois family of high social standing whose origins in Antwerp can be traced to the 14th-century. There can be little doubt therefore that Rubens adhered to the concept that a collection expressed nobility. Significant in this context is a remark of the French art-theoretician and painter Roger de Piles in 1681 by which he associated Rubens with the idea of collecting as an aristocratic pastime. As a diplomat, Rubens came into contact with high-ranking officials and aristocrats, many called on his house as guests. Among them were Sigismund, prince and future king of Poland, the Archduchess Isabella, the Marquis Ambrogio Spinola and Marie de’ Medici. There are accounts of visitors who describe the artist’s house as decorated all over with pictures, sketches, and plaster casts of antiquities.

It is confirmed by statements of the visitors of his house, that Rubens supplemented his statue collection with plaster casts. It is recorded that in 1640 Rubens acquired *modelli* and casts of *putti* that were sent by François Duquesnoy. We know that collectors made plaster, led, or wax copies of original antique marble pieces from fellow collectors. In 1622, Rubens made a *cera*, a wax impression, of a bust of Demosthenes (now identified as Anakreon) for his friend the humanist and antiquary Nicolas Peiresc. Of the same bust also plaster copies were made, one is kept along with another 17th-century plaster bust of Septimius Severus in the Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp. Balthasar Moretus decorated his library with several plaster busts of famous men, in line with the ancient tradition. In general plaster casts or small copies in different materials formed an integrated part of a collection, as can be seen on the many Flemish genre paintings of (imaginary) cabinets and galleries. Although inventories rarely mention plaster statues, in some cases we find proof of their existence. As was the case with the inventory of Erasmus Quellinus drawn up after his death in Antwerp in 1678. Some thirty-six plaster models

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556. See: Denucé (1932). Here we find a record of 129 inventories of smaller an larger examples of such collections. For the distinction between *Cabinet* and *Gallery* which were both en vogue in the 17th century, see: Bazin 1967, 133.


558. Piles, de 1681, 14 (as quoted in Muller 1989, 56).

559. Mols, F., ‘Rubeana’, manuscripts in the Bibliothèque royale Albert I, Brussels B.R. 5726 folio 13 (as quoted by Muller 1989, 71) emphasised the paramount importance of Rubens’s collection for Antwerp. It was Rubens after all, who assembled the first significant collection of ancient sculpture and Italian painting in that city. That collections were highly regarded is evident from the many paintings representing an imaginary amateur cabinet or gallery which were very much in vogue in affluent Antwerp. Furthermore it reflects the role that collections played in the learning process of scholars and artists.


561. For research especially on the Demosthenes bust see: Scheller 1978.

562. See plates in Denucé 1932. Also see many reproductions in: Speth-Holterhoff 1957.
or copies were recorded here. Unfortunately the information about the plaster casts or copies of antique sculpture that Rubens must have owned is very scarce. Except for the document which states that he acquired models and casts from Duquesnoy, plus the remarks regarding plaster casts seen by visitors of his house, very little is known about them. The only thing that survived are some plaster heads which are 17th-century creations after antique examples. They functioned as objects of interior decoration in the house. Like the bust of Hercules which was fitted over a doorway, or the bust of Niobe and Cicero which were placed in the two niches on the front of the garden portico.

In Holland a small group of collectors started encyclopaedic collections. To obtain ancient sculpture for this purpose in a city like Amsterdam was no easy matter. Original ancient statues, like marble busts of emperors or philosophers, were hard to come by, but plaster copies could be obtained without much difficulty. A set of eleven Roman emperors in plaster could be bought for fifteen guilders a piece; a copy in marble cost about seven guilders. Though sometimes more substantial amounts were paid. At an auction in 1650 the Amsterdam merchant Jean Deutz bought several copies of ancient statues, the most expensive was an Apollo of 365 guilders. At the time plaster statues could be purchased at several shops in Amsterdam. Such shops (winckels) should be envisioned as annexes of sculptor’s studio’s.

Artists were encouraged to collect plaster copies. In his Schilderboeck (1604), van Mander stated that artists could profit greatly of yet fraeys van plaister ghegoten (the handsome things cast from plaster). This pleysterwerck (plaster work) included copies of ancient sculpture as well as anatomical casts and casts taken from life. A peculiar example is the Still life with Venusbust by the Classicist painter Caesar van Everdingen. The bust is clearly a plaster cast taken from the top part of the Venus de’Medici. The very fact that nothing was done by the artist to obscure this demonstrates how much plaster statues were appreciated in those days.

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) was not only a renowned artist but also a well-known collector in his time. Beside valuable artworks, mostly paintings, drawings and engravings, his collection also contained exotic and other precious objects that appealed to his taste. Among the latter were Roman medals, original ancient Classical sculptures and casts in plaster, helmets, cuirasses, musical instruments, materials, furs, porcelain from the East Indies, Japanese helmets.

563 Denué 1932, 272ff. Although it has to be noted that in all the other inventories no plaster models or statues are recorded. The reason for this remains unclear.
564 Research of their original location in the house was carried out by Jeffrey Muller 1989.
565 For a list of some twenty 17th-century collectors in Holland who owned an encyclopaedic collection, see: Van der Veen, J. in: Van den Boogert 1999, Appendix 1. Much information is also found in an exhibition catalogue on Dutch art- and curio collections in the 16th-, 17th- and early 18th-centuries, see: Van Gelder, R. in: Bergvelt 1993, 123-124.
566 Van der Veen, J. & Van Gelder, R. in: Van den Boogert 1999, 51. For comparison some 17th-century prices of other luxury and non-luxury goods: At an auction in Amsterdam in 1681 a painting of a ‘naval battle’ and a ‘man with child and bird’ both with gilded frame (the latter increased the value) were sold for respectively twenty and twenty-five guilders. Although small paintings could be obtained for less. An engraving could be bought for just a few stuivers. In the second half of the century a Venetian-style mirror cost three guilders, a simple table one guilder, a simple bed fifteen to twenty guilders (Schama 1987, 315ff).
567 From the few remarks made by Van Mander on such shops (winckels) it is clear that they have to be regarded as the location were sales took place, see: Van Mander, Lives, fol. 248 - 22. He also mentions the fact that the painter Karel van Yper had a shop where he showed his paintings to clients, see: Lives, fol. 249 v 37-40.
568 Van Mander, Grondt, fol.9-12.(tr. Godin)
569 Although debated there did exist a small group of Dutch classicist painters which is often forgotten. For discussion see: Blankert 1999, 12-34.
and many other treasures and curios. The collection was not encyclopaedic in the traditional sense of the word. What is somewhat peculiar is that there is no evidence that he had the intention of opening up his collection to interested art lovers or foreign visitors of standing, as was customary, in order to gain more status or fame.

In Rembrandt’s days a new approach to learning evolved, such as freedom of thought (Descartes, Spinoza) and factual knowledge (Leeuwenhoek). In this respect Rembrandt was a child of his time. The most striking trait of his character was his individualism, which is reflected in his lack of interest to comply with socially accepted norms. Although at the beginning of his career Rembrandt seems to have conformed to general rules of conduct. During his years in Leiden he was visited by important art lovers and was in contact with the poet and diplomat Constantijn Huygens, who introduced him to court circles in The Hague. In a self-portrait from 1632 we see him dressed in contemporary fashion that also expresses a conformation to social codes. But his attitude changed after the sixteen-forties, for his behaviour grew more and more bohemian and did not shun from conflicts with dignitaries in Amsterdam. The Italian art historian and biographer. Filippo Baldinucci wrote that while at work he would not receive anyone, not even the greatest monarch of the world, and that they had to wait until he was finished. Travellers that took an interest in art- and naturalia collections who visited Amsterdam between 1630 and 1670, seldom visited Rembrandt’s collection. An exception is Cosimo de Medici, who visited Rembrandt in 1667.

Rembrandt set aside a special room where he kept his collection, it was called the Kunst caemer (art cabinet) in his house at the S.Anthoni es Breestraat in Amsterdam. The collection primarily served a practical purpose, as a source of study material for himself and his pupils; moreover it also served as an economical investment for trading purposes. Although Rembrandt never involved himself much with classical antiquity and it played only a minor role in his art, his collection did include plaster casts taken from antique sculptures. The plaster statues were, along with other curiosities, displayed on richels (ledges) along the walls. A recent reconstruction in the still existing, and recently restored, house shows what it might have looked like (ill.25). The inventory, which was made up after the bankruptcy of the artist, mentions twenty-three busts of Roman emperors, a few empresses and philosophers, and even a

570. Later research (Van der Veen, J. / Van Gelder, R. / De Heer, E. in: Van den Boogert 1999, 8, 82) contested the view of Robert Scheller (1969) who believed that Rembrandt’s collection was encyclopaedic in character. It is obvious that he had an inquisitive mind, but there are questions to what extend Rembrandt had a truly universal interest (curiositas). Judging from the inventory there were several categories lacking that traditionally belonged in such a type of collection, most conspicuous is the fact that he had no library, although he owned a small number of books.

571. It is obvious that Rembrandt had a wide knowledge and was famous as an artist which gave him a social status. However he was not a gentleman-virtuoso (Van der Veen, J. / Van Gelder, R. in: Boogert 1999, 85 ff.). His lifestyle, which lacked the effort to conform to the prevailing social codes of the time, indicates that he was either not willing, or not able to become just. It seems that Rembrandt collected purely for his individual pleasure. It has to be noted that from a psychological point of view no artist, particularly someone as gifted as Rembrandt, needs or seeks fulfillment in what he collects since that fulfillment is implicit in his own creations. In this sense an artist differs from other habitual collectors, see: Muensterberger 1994, 211.

572. Baldinucci 1728, §9: Quando opera va non avrebbe data udienza al primo monarca del mondo, a cui sarebbe bisogno il tornare, e ritornare, finchè l’avessi trovato fuori di quella facenda (as quoted in Hofstede de Groot 1906, no.360).

573. By this time some collectors traveled all over Europe in search for new acquisitions.

574. Classical subject matter only played a minor role in Rembrand’s art. Gary Schwartz (1984, 119) pointed out that of his three hundred eighty etchings only four of them deal with mythological subjects. Between 1655-1665 he painted seven antique gods and heroes. From a previous period some eleven paintings with subjects of Classical antiquity are known.
Laocoon. The only painting by Rembrandt that depicts one of the busts is depicted is Aristotle with the bust of Homer. There exists a drawing of a bust of the Roman Emperor Galba; the latter was a copy in marble. It is obvious that Rembrandt collected plaster copies taken from Classical sculpture not only for study purposes, but also for their aesthetic appeal.

Classicism never became the leading trend in the 17th century Northern countries and the tradition among artists to collect plaster casts of Classical sculpture was not as popular as it was in other European countries. In this regard Rembrandt was certainly no exception. That such plasters existed becomes clear from the numerous paintings and engravings of painters studios, imaginary or not, on which they are depicted.

7. Sketchbooks, travel guides and engravings

The accessibility of 17th century collections, which included antique sculptures, is often overrated. Although the private collections of the 15th- and early 16th-centuries were open to visitors; this was not the case in Versailles or Sanssouci. Even artists who worked for the court had difficulties in getting access to the artworks, as was also the case in the Vatican during the late 16th century.

When in the 17th-century an artist wanted to study ancient art he was heavily dependent on drawings in sketchbooks, prints and copies or casts. Since the early 16th-century artists had come to Rome to draw the antiquities. This was motivated not only by study interests but also by the hope to find employ in the circles of artist that existed in Rome at the time. Many artists but especially the Flemish travelled to Rome. It was Karel van Mander who had praised Rome as the ‘The capitol of all Pictura schools’. Examples of 16th century Dutch sketchbooks are those of Jan Gossaert van Mabuse, Maerten van Heemskerck and Hendrick Goltzius, who drew many collections with ancient sculpture and the way they were exhibited, or the sketchbook of the Italian architect and sculptor Giovanni Antonio Dosio. These sketchbooks were not always made for the artists personal use but also with the intention to be published in the form of engravings. But not all of them enjoyed popularity through the medium of engravings. Such was the case with Maerten van Heemskerck’s Roman sketchbook or Jan Gossaerts album. But even when sketchbooks were not multiplied this way it must be assumed that there was a general knowledge of these works among later artists.

It was not until the end of the 17th century that the great Roman collections became more accessible. These were privileged guests but also gentleman travellers, predecessors of those who

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575. This was either a small scale copy, or the head of Laocoon. The entire group would have been to big for the room in his house at the Breestraat. After Rembrandt’s bankruptcy all the plaster casts of Classical sculptures were sold and ended up in the Electoral Palace in Heidelberg, see: Schmidt-Degener 1915, 17. To my knowledge no further research has been done on the history of these plasters. For a transcription in English of the 1656 inventory of Rembrandt’s estate see: Clark 1966, 193ff.; Van der Veen, J, in: Boogert 1999, 147-152.

576. Aristotle (Logos!) was the official philosopher of Dutch Calvinism. This has to be viewed in the context of Rembrandt’s attitude towards Classicism. Kenneth Clark (1966, 12ff.) explained this in his interpretation of The Rape of Ganymede. He regarded this painting as: ‘a protest not only against antique art, but against antique morality (,_) and a Protestant-Christian revulsion against the sexual practices of paganism’.

577. As Hans Ladendorf 1953, 52, pointed out.

578. For elaboration see: Devisser 1995, esp. 32ff.

579. Van Mander 1604, fol.6v. strophe 16.


undertook a *Grand Tour*. But also clients\textsuperscript{582} and foreign artists, including an increasing number from Protestant countries.

By the end of the 16th century, it was still tradition to make a pilgrimage along the seven main churches in Rome. But it became increasingly more popular to include a visit to the antiquities, first and foremost to view the ancient sculptures. The latter might have contributed to the fact that at this moment Rome experienced a tourist boom.

The growing interest in Antiquity gave rise to special travel guides, which gave practical directions on how to find the main sights in the easiest way, since time was often limited. In most cases these guides or *recueils* (albums) were not illustrated. This caused Antonio Lafreri in 1540 to publish his *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, it contained copper engravings of both ancient and modern sights in Rome.\textsuperscript{583} In addition to this it was also possible to obtain single prints and drawings in his *bottega* (shop). This enabled the customer to assemble his own individual binding of pictures. It made the travel guide a priced souvenir to take home.\textsuperscript{584} Since 1560 more series came on the market some with 60 or 80 prints, for instance by the Parisian artist Étienne Dupérac who was based in Rome as early as 1559. Popular was also Giovanni Battista da Cavalieri's *Antiquarum statuarum Urbis Romae* (several editions from 1561 until 1594).\textsuperscript{585} He mainly made engravings of statues in private collections such as the Cesi, Farnese, Ferrara-Este, and Capranica.\textsuperscript{586} At the occasion of the Holy Year in 1575 another guidebook of Rome was published by the canon Pier Francesco Zino under the title *L'anno Santo*. It included a reprint of Andrea Palladio’s popular *L'Antità di Roma*, the guide was actually a bulky handbook.

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\textsuperscript{582} E.g. the great collection of the Ludovisi did not remain intact (in contrary to that of the Borghese) due to the reckless spendthrift of the great-nephew of Cardinal Ludovisi. In 1670 a 'sale catalogue' was drawn up, a well known sculpture like the *Dying Gladiator* was valued at seventy thousand *scudi*. (see: Haskell & Penny 1982, 329ff).

\textsuperscript{583} See: Hülsen 1921, 121-170, and Lowry 1952, 46-50.

\textsuperscript{584} Valerius 1992, 98ff.

\textsuperscript{585} Valerius 1992, 99.

\textsuperscript{586} For details see: Valerius 1992, 99.