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

Godin, F.T.J.

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PLASTER COLLECTIONS IN DEFIANCE OF MODERNISM

(..) for the extensive, constantly growing and for study purposes most significant plaster collection, which very appropriately is regarded as the center of all the collections, the entire first floor [of the Neues Museum in Berlin] has been reserved.

August Stüler 795

1. Plaster cast production during the 19th-century

Because of the demand for plaster casts the 19th-century saw the rise of several plaster firms all over Europe. Some were supported by the state like in Berlin or Paris, but others evolved from private initiatives. In England one could find the gallery of plaster casts in Covent Garden which opened in 1864. It was run by the London based firm of Domenico Brucciani. On display were casts of Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance, as well as of Greek and Roman ornament and sculpture. (ill.1a+b) Entry was free of charge, and the didactic function for both the student and amateur was widely recognized at the time. 797 Of course the aim of setting up such a gallery was primarily commercial; this resulted in some cast busts and figures being adapted as holdings for gas lights. 798 Brucciani not only offered casts of entire sculptures but also of details of for instance head or shoulders. His company also sold ‘machine reproductions’ which were made up of small scale models. Purchases could be ordered from a Catalogue of Plastercasts (1914) that was richly illustrated with photographs (ill.2). The casts were intended fore schools and approved by the Board of Education in their regulations for Art Examinations. In 1922 Brucciani’s business was taken over by the Board of Education and by 1939 it had been absorbed into the Victoria and Albert Museum.

In 1819 the Berliner Gipsformerei was founded in Berlin on orders of the Prussian King. It was first led by the then renowned sculptor Christian Daniel Rauch, the casting was done in the basement of the Altes Museum, and later at the Königliches Gußhaus on the Münzstraße. The plaster collection was put on display in the Rotunda of the Altes Museum, this early collection of casts was made up of nearly a thousand pieces. A contemporary guide presented by Carl Friedrichs served as a basic textbook for all students of ancient classical art. By 1885 the collection had more than doubled and included casts of the finds at Olympia where excavations were carried out between 1875 and 1881 under the leadership of Ernst Curtius. The objects that were cast in plaster varied from the small Venus of Willendorf to the column of Marc Anthony which measures 42 metres in height. By 1891 the casting workshop was moved to a new building in the Sophie-Charlotten-Straße, where plasters are still manufactured and sold today. The present catalogue lists over 7000 negative moulds. 799

795. Quote from the design plans that the architect August Stüler drew up in 1850 for the construction of the Neues Museum in Berlin.
796. For instance in the Netherlands there was the Museum van Kunstnijverheid (Museum of arts and crafts) which was founded by a private foundation in Haarlem in 1871. Attached to this museum was a Vormerij, a plaster casting workshop. For elaboration see: Pijzel-Dommisse 2008, 99-110.
797. The Art-Journal of 1864 called it a ‘capital refresher to the memory of the scattered sculptures of the continent, and a useful preparatory school to those who purpose to see them’.
798. The gallery of Bruciani got no government support although he was the official formatore of the British Museum.
Even larger was the the cast department of the Louvre. (ill.3a, b, c) or the privately owned casting firm of August Gerber in Cologne (ill.4a+b) called Kunstanstalt August Gerber Köln am Rhein, here there were over 3000 plaster casts for sale, of which one third was taken from antique sculpture. When preferred the plaster copies were patinated, which, according to the catalogue, added 20-35% to the price of a plain white plaster copy. Gerber not only produced plaster copies of sculpture but also copies of other art objects like majolica with an imitation of the glaze, or ivory objects and relic shrines with enamel and precious stones, all imitations. Whether it was proper to patinate plasters was a subject of discussion. The German art historian, archaeologist and collector Botho Gräf (1857-1917) was of the opinion that this addition detracted from the importance of a straight honest white plaster cast and dismissed patinated plasters as trifles that did not belong in a museum. The importance of the cast reproductions supplied by Bruciani or Gerber for archaeologists should not be underestimated. For it enabled them to compare statues in different collections and reassemble pieces that were separated and put on display at different locations.

Despite the drastically declining interest in plaster there were some initiatives in the Netherlands that promoted the value and importance of plaster collections especially in a didactical context of schools and museums. What has to be mentioned here is the Museum van Reproducties van Beeldhouwkunst (Museum of reproductions of sculpture) of the The Hague Academy of Fine Arts. (ill.5a, b) This combination of school and museum under one roof was based on the English concept for art schools, the so-called ‘South Kensington System’. The Gipsmuseum, as it was called in short, was founded in 1920 on the personal initiative of Constant Willem Lunsingh Scheurleer, a banker, antique collector and honorary scholar. The Academy already possessed the rudiments of a plaster collection for educational purposes since its establishment in 1682. When Scheurleer became a member of the Academy’s Board of Directors, he established a committee to fill in the gaps in the existing collection of plaster casts. After several substantial purchases from different museums and schools that wanted to dispose their plaster collections, the Gipsmuseum provided a survey of various historical styles of sculpture which helped students to gain an overall historical insight. But already by the time the museum had just opened, critical reactions were heard on the function and purpose of plaster casts, also from official sources.

A few years earlier the Dutch Union of Archaeologists (Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond) stated in a report to museum officials: ‘It is only permissible to exhibit reproductions when the originals are missing’. Despite the general depreciation of plaster casts at the time, it is beyond doubt that a cast collection offered the visitor or student a valuable framework of stylistic reference, which Scheurleer was aware of as no other. In 1927

802. Gräf 1908, 64.
803. The history of this plaster collection has been thoroughly analysed by Herbert van Rheeden (2001)
804. Through his upbringing Scheurleer had a love for classical sculpture, from a young age he had a passion for plaster collections ever since his father took him to the Dresden Museum and its Cast Gallery. He owned a remarkable collection of antiquities, which were put on display in his spacious house on the Carnegieelaan in The Hague.
805. In the Official Account of the Committee for he Reorganization of Museums (1921) it was stated that: ‘Plaster clearly destroys rather than improves taste’ (tr. Herbert van Rheeden), see: van Rheeden 2001, 220, also see: van Rheeden 2004, n.29 p.109.
807. Oddly enough Scheurleer detested the traditional use of plaster casts in drawing classes, see: Van Rheeden 2001, 220.
plasters from the dismantled plaster collection of the Rijksmuseum and pieces (reliefs) from the Rijksacademie were added. In an inventory report drawn up by Scheurleer in 1934 the plaster collection contained some 5890 objects.808 Due to financial crisis of 1929 in New York and mingling of interests of the Scheurleer Bank, the Academy was thrown into financial crisis, which ended Scheurleer’s regime in 1932. The final demise came in 1957 when the Cast Gallery was closed on the order of the director of the Academy J.J. Beljon, the exhibition rooms and basement were cleared, some plasters were being stored in the attics of an abandoned school and in 1964 followed the final destruction. A newspaper article of the time read: ‘loads of plaster sculptures were carried off and dumped on the inner courtyard of the academy building, they were smashed with sledge-hammers, and the wreckage was carried away’.809 Modernism superseded the 19th-century heritage of which Scheurleer in many ways was a representative. In retrospect it is generally acknowledged that the destruction of this plaster collection was a capital historical blunder. Fortunately some hundred important pieces were rescued and ended up in the plaster collection of the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam.810 A modest attempt to correct this error was the reopening in 2001 by Queen Beatrix of the restored Academy building on the Prinsessegracht in The Hague. One room has been set aside for the display of some large plaster casts, the humble remains of the once very substantial collection.

Another example of a great 19th-century plaster collection in the Netherlands that was already mentioned could be found in the then newly build Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. (ill.6a) By the end of the century a collection of plasters was brought together by the architect. P.J.H. Cuypers (1827-1921), who envisaged his museum as a Gesamtkunstwerk. This also incorporated a plaster collection which was assembled under his supervision. The collection had to serve the same purpose as the museum that was: to stimulate the appreciation of art and improve the quality of Dutch art production. As was customary in most European museums, plasters were put on display along with genuine artworks. It was therefore not uncommon in 1900 to find a display cabinet with plasters placed next to The Night Watch of Rembrandt. In its heyday the plaster collection was made up of over 2000 pieces including quite substantial seized pieces like the gothic church portals of the Sint-Servaes in Maastricht. Due to the early 20th-century aversion against plaster casts they were removed from the exhibition rooms.811 By the 1920’s most of the plasters were put in storage, and in 1950 they were even wilfully smashed into pieces or sold off as old rubbish. (ill.6b)

2. Art styles: Romantic Classicism

Around 1790 fundamental attitudes to the arts had undergone profound changes. Words like imagination, genius, originality, revolution, reaction and romantic would take on a new

808. Report drawn up by C.W. Lunsingh Scheurleer and J.D. Haijer dated 16th of August 1934; Haags Gemeentearchief invnr. 888. For an inventory of the plaster collection, see: invnr. 866, 860.


810. For elaboration see: Cok-Escher 1984, 1985; Scheurleer 1995,
meaning. Art historically no general name period has been attributed to the art of the 19th-century and for lack of a better name it is usually described as such. An additional difficulty is that this style period does not coincide with the calendar period, for it covers the period from around 1780 to 1885 / 1890. In general it is subdivided into three art styles that succeed one another. They are characterized as (Neo) classicism, Romanticism and Realism. Although they are distinct in expression there is also overlap and cross-over influence.  

Neo-classicism started by the mid-18th-century as an academic or archaeological Classicism in reaction to Rococo and pre-romanticism. This Neo-classicism evolved into Romantic Classicism. Classicism not only defined the imperial style of Napoleon Bonaparte, but also embodied the official style of the established art academies. Antiquity was the paradigm of high culture. The name Romanticism stems from the history of literature although its meaning is manifold. In general subjectivism is a main characteristic, stylistically it has different expressions; some art has been described as Romantic Classicism. During the first half of the 19th-century Romanticism became the prevailing art style, but by the 1850s Realism which opposed idealism got the upper hand. Another complicating factor that to a large extend fragments the previous unity of one art-style is the polarity of avant-garde and official art. The latter embraced political motives which did not always lead to great achievements. There also grew a distinction between high art and low art. But the tendency of some art historians to discard the low, popular, commercial and applied arts in favor of high art would be a wrong approach for understanding the art history of the 19th-century.  

Classical norms remained theoretically in force until the end of the 18th-century. Both art and scholarship were deeply historicist in the 19th-century. The styles of the past were a means for the modern artist to find his own individuality: the paradox that this embodies was a nagging source of worry to many critics of art and architecture at the time’. Overall there was a prevailing dualism that influenced attitudes during the entire 19th-century. Most striking is the tendency of optimistic renewal, rediscoveries and revivals that were multiple, complex and sometimes contradictory.  

By the early years of the 19th-century Neo-classicism lost its monopoly. The Romantics did not propose a new set of norms, but wanted to abolish them; they proposed an artistic freedom inspired by the political ideals of the recent French Revolution. Yet at the same time there was also a reaction of conservatism, of holding on to the old and familiar. This becomes very apparent in the design of a then new institution, the (art) museum. Since they were regarded as temples of learning, national pride, and conservation, the actual design of these buildings was often executed in the Classical revival style. It is also in this context that the creation of plaster collections of renowned pieces of sculpture, mostly of Classical Antiquity have to be perceived.

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812. Some art historians like Hugh Honour (1979) even went as far as to regard the first two stylistic distinctions as figments of our [modern, Godin] logical modes of thought. He regarded it as much more useful to look at the cultural realities beneath the art historical labeling and thereby exposing inner tensions.  

813. The term ‘Neo-classicism’ or even ‘Classicism’ was not used in the late 18th-century. Critics, theorists and the artists themselves called it simply the ‘true style’. For elaboration see Honour 1975, 17ff.  

3. Historical awareness and romantic nostalgia

Historical sciences and a methodical approach to historical research familiar to present methods gained more and more importance in the course of the 19th-century.815 This modern attitude was by itself motivated by a romantic attitude, what has been described as: ‘the obsessive urge for authentic self-expression and a Faustian need to penetrate into the heart of the innermost mystery of the All and Whole’. It included a romantic dichotomy of the unique versus the universal and the concrete versus the ideal, that was sublimated in the idolatry of history.816 Certain scientific research was even promoted by artists and subject for close examination. History was, in a different way then before, regarded as a means to escape daily routine. It was invoked by a quest for authenticity, a desire for a former order and security that had gone bye. In this context the art historian Jürgen Schultze (1970) suggested a link between Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ‘back to nature’ via the classicist’s dream of Antiquity, the Medieval fantasies of the Romantics to the Tahiti of Paul Gauguin.817

Perhaps one of the most striking characteristics of the 19th-century is the notion of what is called the spirit of the age, what the Germans call Zeitgeist. It is broadly defined as ‘the spirit characteristic of an age or generation’ and implies an interrelationship between the most heterogeneous aspects, an inspiring principle that permeates all phenomena of an era. The concept first appeared in Germany around 1800. It was then that the poet and historian Ernst Moritz Arndt published a historical analysis of his time in his Geist der Zeit. In 1825 the English critic and essayist William Hazlitt published a book on literary criticism under he title The Spirit of the Age.818 Such a notion indicates, among others, a drastic change in the awareness of time.

Art too lost its old position in a new society; most significant were the changes in the social status of the artist and the manner by which art was perceived. Freed from subservience to nobility, the artist of the 19th-century sold his work on an open market, what caused fierce competition and the need for new interpretations of ideas on originality, creativity and genius. Inevitably it made artists more autonomous than ever before. What also played a role in this process was the dissolution of the guild system. Man became, in theory at least, free to choose his occupation. It occurred first in Revolutionary France where any corporation was regarded as a restriction of the freedom of the individual.819

The exhibition and the museum became the new places where one was confronted with art. But this did not prevent the fact that a rift occurred between art and the public which more or less forced artists into isolation. Or, as Linda Nochlin (1971) put it: ‘A growing conflict, which can be traced back to the genesis of the Romantic movement, was that of the sensitive artist and the unappreciative public, between poet and philistine, between aristocratic dandy or proletarian Bohemian and the juste milieu bourgeois’.820 As society became more and more bourgeois the artist turned against his public with an almost aggressive antipathy towards established values. As a result of this a strong opposition had developed between avant-garde and official art by the mid-19th-century. On the one hand there was the salon, the place of exhibition where artists were scrutinized by official juries according to traditional codes and convictions. On the other hand non-official exhibition rooms cropped up where avant-garde painters displayed their art. From the early 19th-century

816. Talmon 1967, 162.
818. Hazlitt promoted the notion that this Spirit of the Age could be emanated through artists. He called Wordsworth’s genius ‘a pure emanation of the Spirit of the Age’, see Hazlitt 1947, 117.
819. Talmon 1967, 22.
onward there is critique on the art-trade, on fashion-trends, commercialism and the
deterioration of art criticism. All this denotes a change of views and positions, new attitudes
and ideas.

During the early part of the 19th-century the awareness of modernism penetrated all
realms of art. Artists looked for new ways and contemporary means to express the spirit of the
time. This quest for Zeitgeist or contemporary style is related with a criticism of culture,
social disintegration and intellectual anarchy. Artists therefore no longer conformed to one
general style. The previous existing social intellectual unity was lost in a period of chaos and
conflicting views and principles. Religion, philosophy and art; art and labor, thinking and
doing were no longer in harmony with each other. This ideological fragmentation also lead to
aesthetic fragmentation. In art we notice a tendency to specialization, because the artist had
to cultivate the special talent that he was endowed with. The latter was also promoted because
art had become dependent on the forces of the open market. Over-production of artworks lead
to fierce rivalry among artists. It is therefore small wonder that by the end of the 19th-century
there was a longing for unity and synthesis in the realm of aesthetic thought.

All these developments put a great strain on artists and soon it became clear that the
newly acclaimed freedom of the artist turned out to be an illusion. There was a general feeling
among artists that they were enslaved by an anonymous public821, and as an individual the
artist became more and more an outcast, which in return stimulated the view of the artist as
a bohemian.

Despite all these changes which took some length of time to become effective we also
notice a tendency towards conservatism. This was to a great extend stimulated by the anti
traditional character of the French Revolution.822 Although the ideals of the French
Revolution and the Enlightenment certainly did not evolve from Christianity, the Christian
faith continued to maintain the status quo. Influential Protestant denominations like
Methodism and the Evangelical movement stimulated conservatism in more ways than just by
emphasizing discipline in personal conduct and dwelling upon the unimportance of things of
this world. It has been argued that it offered an outlet, elsewhere provided by the politics of
conspiracy and riot, to the craving for self expression, and a framework for the need of men to
associate in wider fellowship or closely-knit small groups.823 Moreover the romantic revival
showed strong tendencies towards Roman Catholicism. A striking example in an art historical
context is the group of German painters in Rome known as The Nazarenes that was founded
in 1809, with Friedrich Overbeck as a leading figure. These young Roman Catholic artists
opposed Neo-classicism and sought inspiration in the Late Medieval period and the Early
Renaissance. They rejected the rigid curriculum of the academy and proposed a more intimate
teaching situation that existed in the medieval workshop. It is for these reasons that they
worked and lived together in a semi monastic existence.

In contrary of the spirit of change and despite the fact that Neo-classicism was
abandoned by the first decades of the 19th-century, ‘official art’ continued to be inspired by
classical aesthetic values.824 At art academies artists still received a formal education where
studying plaster casts of Classical sculpture was more important that ever before.
Traditionally the most promising students were granted a scholarship in Rome where they
were able to study the antiquities and High Renaissance paintings. It was just one of the ways

822. This was pointed out by the German sociologist Karl Mannheim in his article Das konservative
Denken (1927).
823. Talmon 1967, 29.
824. ‘Official art’ refers to art paid for by governments, encouraged and commissioned by ruling
powers who had political motives. The general view that this led to inferior art is disputed, see: Rosen
& Zerner 1984, 205.
by which Classical Antiquity maintained influential.

4. Photography: a new means of reproduction

By the end of 1839 or the beginning of 1840 the first photo portraits were made. From the very beginning it was a subject of dispute; no artistic medium was so controversial, it was perceived as an object either of wonder or contempt and often both at once. Its apparent realism coincided with romantic ideals and concepts. The immediate transmutation of reality into art without the intervention of an interpreter, a code, or a tradition seemed to realize one of the romantic dreams. Yet the objective photographic vision depended paradoxically on means that stressed the subjective elements of perception. The latter is a fulfillment of the romantic perception of the subjective idea of the outside world.

It was obvious that this medium offered new possibilities for capturing specific moments of reality. Probably in a much more accurate way then a draughtsman or an art painter ever could. For a long time photography was regarded primarily as a 'mechanical' and 'reproducible' technique. It was all too easily forgotten that the procedure involved in using a camera -first taking the photograph and later processing the exposed plate- could be a very complicated operation indeed. Each photograph was printed individually, by hand, and its creation involved just as much or just as little artistic aspiration and inspiration as that of any other work of art. Nevertheless it had grave consequences for the way in which reality was perceived. An artist was perfectly capable to depict an historic event, a long tradition in art testifies to this. With the invention of photography however a change set in that made the distinction between fact and vision very explicit. Yet there is another aspect which emphasizes this dualism between fact and vision. When portrait photography was first introduced there were many complaints about the actual resemblance of the photo portraits to the photographed person. This phenomenon is well known and documented on many occasions. The reason is that a painted portrait of a person is an interpretation of the artist, in a way he paints life how he understands it, it is his truth. One could argue that in this context a photograph is less 'real' because it cuts out just one specific moment, like a page torn from a book that is supposed to represent the book as a whole. What is at stake here is the distinction between interpreted truth and objective truth. It is obvious that in our present culture the visual arts (primarily painting and sculpture) lack a visual language that is generally understood by everyone. The artist uses forms of expression and motives that are only accessible for a small group of art lovers. It has been suggested that photography and the way it functions in our culture took over the role that popular art or folk art had in primitive cultures. Moreover there is a direct link between the success of photography and the emergence of abstract art, for it offered the graphic artists more leeway for experimentation and allowed them to embark on an artistic evolution of their own.

828. A striking example that illustrates this is an etching by Francisco de Goya. After he had made the series of etchings on the horrors of war during the invasion of Spain by the troops of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1808, he wrote under one of them ‘Yo lo vi’ (I have seen it). But this did not imply that he witnessed this actual event in reality, because here ‘seeing’ has the old meaning of inner seeing, or a vision. For elaboration see: Locher 1973, 134.
Gradually it became clear that photography was taking over the documentary task which had previously been the domain of graphic art, whilst the graphic arts came to be regarded as an artistic medium. Before the invention of photography anyone searching for a good reproduction purchased an engraving or an etching in a print shop. But from the middle of the 1850s onward museums started to assemble books with photographic reproductions of the works of art in their collections. This was soon followed by countless photographic reproductions put on sale by publishers and print dealers, generally mounted on cardboard. They were available loose or in installments -complete with binder- and were collected in portfolios with captions. In 1854, the Paris firm of Bisson Frères photographed the complete prints of Albrecht Dürer. During the same period the London art dealer Colnaghi published Fenton’s photographs of drawings from the collection of the British Museum. Alois Lochner published his *Copies Photographiques* in 1855, which contained reproductions of fifty of the rarest and costliest prints from the royal Bavarian print collection in Munich. As a result the insight of the evolution of different art-styles was greatly enhanced; moreover it stimulated the comparative study of sculpture and art as a whole. Thus photography played an essential role in the evolution of the history of art as an academic discipline.

5. Tourism: a new travelling vogue and continuation of classicist interests

In defiance of the revolutionary developments in art in the course of the 19th-century, where new attitudes and styles did away with the old paradigm of ancient Classical art and culture, there were still ways by which Classical values and ideals were continued. One of them is the tradition of the Grand Tour that was maintained throughout the 19th-century. Italy was still its final destination with Rome as its highlight, for the ancient city had not lost its power to impress. Several accounts of different travelers confirm this.

When Charles Dickens visited Rome in 1844 he was struck by the ‘awful beauty’ of the Colosseum, ‘the ghost of old Rome’, as called it (ill.7a,b). When wandering out upon the Appian Way he observed:

‘Broken aqueducts, left in the most picturesque and beautiful clusters of arches; broken temples; broken tombs. A desert of decay, somber and desolate beyond all expression; and with a history in every stone that strews the ground’.  

When visiting the ancient monuments in the 1840s the American novelist Catherine Sedgwick stated:

‘Here you first fully realize that you are in Rome (...) ancient Rome; that you are treading the ground Caesar, Cicero, and Brutus trod’. 

Although quite often one felt caught between the double nature of the place, on the one hand there was the lure of a country with the remnants of a great ancient civilisation which appealed greatly to the scholar or the visionary, on the other there was the daily reality of people living in often degrading circumstances, as Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt from Naples in 1818:

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832. For further reading see: Boom & Rooseboom 1996, 85ff.
833. Dickens s.a. 113.
834. As quoted by Withe 1997, 89.
There are two Italy’s (..) one composed of the green earth and transparent sea, and the mighty ruins of ancient times, the aerial mountains, and the warm and radiant atmosphere which is interfused through all things. The other consists of the Italians and the present day, their works and ways. The one is the most sublime and lovely contemplation that can be conceived by the imagination of a man; the other is the most degraded, disgusting and odious’.  

One of the most cultivated of all 19th-century travellers to Italy is Jacob Burckhardt. He spent the greater part of the years 1853–1854 there in order to collect the materials for his *Cicerone*, a travel guide to appreciating Italian art. In it he expresses great admiration for ancient Classical art. In regard to sculpture he suggests a thorough preparation by studying the art history of antiquity. This in order to facilitate the discovery and benefit joy of the treasures which were stored up in all the galleries of Italy. What made a great impression on him was the *Venus Medici* in the Uffizi in Florence, for he proclaimed that:

> [with this statue] ‘art has achieved the greatest sublimity in her power (..) this is one of the greatest joys which Italy can offer the visitor’.

He also praises the interior decoration of the Pantheon in Rome: ‘a masterly creation with a mysterious charm’, and attributed a ‘majestic quality’ to the huge central hall of the Baths of Diocletian.  

Other, more adventurous travelers with passionate archaeological interests extended their journey to Greece, like C.R Cockerell (ill.8) or Lord Byron. On Christmas Eve 1809 Byron and his travel companion spent the night in poor conditions, but in sublime contrast they had their first vision of Athens on Christmas Day (ill.9). ‘The plain of Athens’, Byron wrote later, ‘Pentelicus, Hymentus, the Aegean, and the Acropolis, burst upon the eye at once’. At Cape Sounion he visited the site of the ruined Temple of Poseidon; here he carved his name of an already much-inscribed fallen pillar (now re-erected). His admiration for his ‘dearly beloved Greece’ is expressed in *Don Juan*:

> The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
> Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
> Where grew the arts of war and peace,
> Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!
> Eternal summer gilds them yet,
> But all, except their sun, is set.

A more cynical comment is heard in a travel account of William Thackery who visited Athens on a journey to Cairo in 1845.

> The truth is, then, that Athens is a disappointment; and I am angry that it should be so. To a skilled antiquarian, or an enthusiastic Greek scholar, the feelings created by a sight of the place of course will be different; but you who would be inspired by it must undergo a long preparation of reading and possess, too, a particular feeling; both of which, I suspect, are uncommon in our busy commercial newspaper-reading country.

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837. The British architect Charles Robert Cockerell (1788-1863) undertook a journey to Greece between 1810 and 1817.  
Men only say they are enthusiastic about the Greek and Roman authors and history, because it is considered proper and respectable.\footnote{839}

What simplified travel to a remarkable degree was the construction of the railroad network that covered much of northern Europe by the mid century. It opened the possibility of leisure travel for people of more modest means.\footnote{840} The previous limitations that made going on tour only accessible for a select few was now a matter of the past, for the railroad diminished traveling costs dramatically. The first signs of this revolution were already apparent by the 1840s, when railroad construction in Britain, northern Europe, and the United States was well under way. It also contributed to the popularisation of art. What first was the elitish pleasure of the connoisseur had now become commonly accessible for the masses, a sense of intimacy was lost, the beholder of art had become a consumer.

The Napoleonic wars had barred British travelers from entering the Continent. But after Napoleon’s defeat in 1815 a new wave of what can be described as ‘post war tourism’ set in. An estimated 2000 English tourists visited Rome in 1818.\footnote{841} By the early 1830s some 5000 English tourists visited Rome at Christmas, the most popular season. Although the itinerary was more congruent with romantic sensibilities rather than the classicist/masculine agenda of the ‘old’ Grand Tour. Tourists were no longer predominantly wealthy young men, but also people of merely upper-middle-class means. Moreover, for the first time women began traveling in large numbers. A trip to Italy with a spinster aunt as a chaperon became also part of an upper-class lady’s education. Travelers tried to recreate the old Grand Tour, following the well-worn routes to Paris and Italy. The Classical monuments remained part of the standard itinerary, but were often overshadowed by Renaissance and modern painting, as well as by the increasingly popular masterpieces of Gothic architecture.

It is important to realize that most travelers before the middle of the 18th-century, and in the later decades as well, were interested primarily in the human world. That is the artistic and historical monuments of earlier times, as well as the politics and society of other nations, were the usual subjects of observation. But at the beginning of the 19th-century a change in attitude takes place towards the way by which nature was appreciated that affected travel to a great extend. This was due to changes in the aesthetic, religious, and intellectual realm that began in the late 17th and early eighteenth centuries and that culminated around the end of the 18th-century. It led to changes in the way man perceived his position in the world. To put it simply, in early modern Europe man regarded himself as the center of the world and nature as something to be shaped or exploited for his purposes. Gradually this attitude changed toward one that valued the natural world and found beauty in it. But this had not always been the case. Before the middle of the 18th-century only few people found beauty in wilderness settings; land untouched by the hand of man seemed forbidding and even sometimes dangerous. Vast open spaces, dense forests, or rocky terrain were likely to be criticized as monotonous and unpleasant. Mountains and oceans, far from being objects of beauty but inspired feelings of trepidation among travelers. When Joseph Addison toured the Continent between 1699 and 1703 he wrote that the Alps ‘fill the mind with an agreeable kind of

\footnote{839}{o.c. 237.}
\footnote{840}{The only obstacle was the fact that schedules and fares were complex because of the large number of competing railway companies. The very idea of travel for pleasure for the working and middle class was made accessible by Thomas Cook by the middle of the century. George Pullman’s ‘hotel’ cars (train car’s that were a combination of sleeping/dining car) made travelling a very luxurious thing. By 1880 a service was established from Paris to Constantinople known as the Orient Express which linked Turkey to Europe. For elaboration see: Withey 1997, 135ff./176ff.}
\footnote{841}{A small number by modern standards, but enough to make their presence felt in a city that was then much smaller than it is today, see: Withey 1997, 59.}
Horror’. Or in 1790, when Wordsworth undertook a walking tour through Europe and crossed the Alps, most of his friends thought the very idea of such a tour ‘mad and unpractical’, although he himself described the high Alps as the ‘most sublime and beautiful part of Switzerland’. But it is for sure that he and his companion encountered few other tourists while hiking on the high mountain paths. How much this all changed becomes clear when three decades later Wordsworth returned to the Alps to retrace his 1790 journey, this time with his sister, wife, and three friends. By then touring the high Alps had become almost a commonplace. They walked over the Simplon Pass in the company of several others, on an excellent paved road, newly constructed by Napoleon; they encountered other foot travelers in village inns, and even ran into people they knew from England in obscure corners of Switzerland.842 The dread and trepidation had made room for a true appreciation of nature. Crossing the Alps became an experience to be savored rather than dreaded, as was the case with earlier travelers.

Valuable information on 19th-century tourism is found in travel diaries that reveal a new continental traveling vogue. Mary Shelley states in her Travel Writings that was written during the 1840s:

‘Traveling is occupation as well as amusement, and I firmly believe that renewed health will be the result of frequent change of place. Besides what can be so delightful as the perpetual novelty (..) the exhaustless current of new ideas suggested by traveling’. 843

Anna Jameson wrote a travel diary (fictitious, but nevertheless significant) that was published in 1826. In it she describes a scene in the public gardens of Venice:

‘We found a solitary gentleman, who was sauntering up and down with his hands in his pockets, and a look at once stupid and disconsolate. Sometimes he paused, looked vacantly over the waters, whistled, yawned, and turned away to resume his solemn walk. On a trifling remark addressed to him by one of our party, he entered into conversation, with all the eagerness of a man, whose tongue had long been kept in most unnatural bondage. He congratulated himself on having met with some one who would speak English; adding contemptuously, that ‘he understood none of the outlandish tongues the people spoke hereabouts:’ he inquired what was to be seen here, for he had been four days in Venice, he had spent every day precisely in the same manner; viz. walking up and down the public gardens. We told him Venice was famous for fine buildings and pictures; he knew nothing of *them* things. And that it contained also, ‘some fine statues and antiques’ – he cared nothing about them neither – he should set off for Florence the next morning, and begged to know what was to be seen there? Mr. R- told him, with enthusiasm, ‘the most splendid gallery of pictures and statues in the world!’ He looked very blank and disappointed. ‘Nothing else?’ then he should certainly not waste his time at Florence, he should go direct to Rome; he had put down the name of that town in his pocket-book, for he understood it was a very convenient place’. 844

842. Withey 1997, 44.
843. Mary Shelley, *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844), edited by Jeanne Moskal (1996), 76, 157. Mary Shelley was a writer and the wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley, she travelled the continent on several occasions the first in 1814. Her *Handbook for Travellers* (1836) was well read.
844. Anna Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826). Quoted in Foss 1989, 236. Although the book is fictitious, it was written out of first hand experience. Jameson wrote the text when she was travelling in Europe with the family to whom she was governess.
The English writer George Gissing was visiting the Ionian Sea in Greece towards the end of his life in 1901. From his diary entry it is clear that for him the love and appreciation of ancient Classical culture was very much alive, he stated:

‘Every man has his intellectual desire; mine is to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood. The names of Greece and Italy draw me as no others; they make me young again, and restore the keen impressions of that time when every new page of Greek or Latin was a new perception of things beautiful. The world of the Greeks and Romans is my land of romance; a quotation in either language thrills me strangely, and there are passages of Greek and Latin verse which I cannot read without a dimming of the eyes, which I cannot repeat aloud because my voice fails me. In Magna Graecia the waters of two fountains mingle and flow together; how exquisite will be the draught!’ 845

From literary sources it is obvious that the new attitude towards nature and travel for leisure coexisted with the traditional admiration for antiquity that was expressed by visits to the ancient monuments, pieces of sculpture, and other material cultural remnants in Italy and Greece. Despite modernism travel contributed greatly to the continuation of Classical values and ideals. At the same time the very opportunity for more people to travel had a limiting effect on the role that copies played in earlier periods. For one was able to get directly acquainted with artworks in their original context by an eye-witness experience.

6. Museums

The 19th-century has been called the museum age. 846 The rise of nationalism resulted in a growing awareness and identity in the countries of Europe which spurred on the creation of national museums that were set up as study centres of indigenous culture we can think of the Národní muzeum in Prague that was founded in 1818 as a reaction to German nationalism in Austria. Or the Norsk Folke Museum near Oslo founded in 1894 as a result of struggles against Sweden which lead to Norwegian independence in 1905. 847 Next to this several ethnographic museums were created, which were a direct by-product of colonial activities. 848 Governments allocated funds to purchased important private art collections to secure them for the nation in service to the public interest.

During the first half of the century the museum took the form of a temple; the exterior architecture was usually Classical in shape adopting the Greek revival style. This was no coincidence for a museum was looked upon as a temple which preserved the material remnants of human history, the origin of which was being pushed back further and farther into past millennia. It was also a great period for archaeological museums, not only for scientific reasons. A new more scientific archaeology was established, notwithstanding the fact that this was inspired by a nostalgic attitude towards antiquity. King Ludwig I of Bavaria (ruled from 1825-1848) is a representative of this attitude. As a crown prince he already had a

846. For instance by Bazin 1967, 193.
847. In fact this was one of Europe’s first open air museums, it was a display of re-erected traditional Norwegian wooden buildings from the Middle Ages onwards. Its aim is to advance Norwegians cultural history also through related artefacts.
848. The term is sometimes confusing. In France ethnologie was used for popular European culture, ethnographie for foreign popular cultures.
fascination for antiquities and archaeology, at some point he is supposed to have stated ‘I will not rest until Munich resembles Athens’.

In Germany and France academic discussions took place on what the function and purpose of a museum should be. Some, like Wilhelm von Humboldt, believed a museum should limit itself only to art, that is: the masterpieces of antiquity and of great European schools. Others like Leopold von Ledebur defended the universality of the museum that in his eyes should present the culture and history of all people of all time.\(^{849}\) All over Europe new museums were created, the Classical shape of their austere façades indicated the cultural paradigm of Classical culture. Despite the nostalgia for Classical antiquity there emerged also other tendencies. In Germany under the influence of Romanticism, the northern primitives grew in esteem and this passion for the Middle Ages stimulated the completion of the Cologne Cathedral in 1842.

The creation in 1793 by the revolutionary government of the ‘museum of the Republic’ in Paris at the former Louvre palace marks a change in tradition. The very idea of a public art museum ‘open to all’, free of charge was revolutionary and drew many visitors. The former royal collection was appropriated and augmented by Napoleon Bonaparte with paintings and other artworks from conquered territories. Shortly after the opening the new museum had to be closed due to the dilapidated state the building was in. It was reopened on Bastille Day, the 14\(^{th}\) of July 1801, and now labeled the *Museé Napoléon*, a name that stuck. After Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, most of the confiscated works of art were returned to their home cities. Travelers who were acquainted with the *Museé Napoléon* before its demise regretted the loss of Italian masterpieces and other renowned works of art, but the original collection was magnificent enough in itself. Napoleon extended the notion of art as a public trust, not only by reopening the Louvre but also by creating museums in some of the major cities under his rule, including Milan, Bologna, Venice, and several provincial cities in France. He installed his brother Louis as king of Holland, who established a museum in Amsterdam (the later *Rijksmuseum*), while in 1809 King Joseph of Spain, another Bonaparte brother, intended a national gallery in Madrid (not realized until 1819 as the *Museum of Painting and Sculpture*).

These developments instigated Frederick William III to create an art museum in Berlin that would equal the one in Paris. Between 1824 and 1828 a Neo-classical building was erected by the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel (ill.10). Its exterior at the South side was made up of a peristyle with an Ionic order while on the interior rooms radiated off a rotunda inspired by the Pantheon. The museum was named the *Gemäldegalerie* and organized according to the principles of Wilhelm von Humboldt.\(^{850}\) It housed an *antiquarium*, plus medieval and Renaissance art treasures with 378 paintings, a print room and an ethnographical section. It is known today as the *Altes Museum* which opened in 1830. The core of the collection was formed from the art treasures belonging to Friedrich Wilhelm (1620-1688) and Frederick the Great (1712-1786). After the collection was founded in 1830 the gallery's first director, Gustav Friedrich Waagen, steadily built up the collection using systematic, scientific methods unique in Europe at the time. The collection includes many masterpieces from European painting.

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\(^{849}\) For elaboration see Bazin 1967, 197. For elaboration see: Flack, M. in: Bergvelt/ Meijers (etc.) 2008, passim; Flack, M. in: Bergvelt 1993, 409ff.

\(^{850}\) In a report to the king on the organisation of the museum von Humboldt stated: *Sehr viele Gallerien, ja vielleicht alle bekannten, lassen sich nur als Aggregate betrachten, welche nach und nach ohne bestimmten Plan zusammentreissen sind. Die hiesige Königliche Gallerie zeichnet sich im Gegenteil dadurch aus, daß sie sich systematisch über alle Perioden der Malerei ausdehnt, und die Geschichte der Kunst sich in ihr von ihren Anfängen an verfolgen läßt* (quote in Klessmann 1971, 40).
In London, the origins of the National Gallery go back to 1824 when the House of Commons paid the banker John Julius Angerstein £57,000 for thirty-eight paintings that were selected from his collection. These works of art formed the core of the national collection of European painting and were at first put on display in Angerstein’s house. England was almost the last to establish a ‘national’ museum; the Vienna Gallery (Albertina) had opened in 1781, Paris in 1793, Amsterdam in 1808, Madrid in 1819 and Berlin in 1823. Under pressure of public criticism a new building known as The National Gallery was opened in 1838 at Trafalgar Square in London (ill.11). Its design was from the architect William Wilkins who gave the building its neo-Palladian Classical façade executed in white Portland stone. In 1876 extensions to the building were added by the architect E.M. Barry. It was then that a new wing was added including the impressive dome that is still there today. The whole concept was shaped by new social ideals for The National Gallery was explicitly established for the enjoyment and benefit of all classes of society. Admission was free and even the location was carefully chosen keeping in mind easy access for all, the rich could reach it in their carriages from the west of London and the poor on foot from the East End.

Of particular archaeological interest is the British Museum which was founded by an Act of Parliament in 1753. It was then that funds were granted to purchase the art collection of Sir Hans Sloane, to this were added the natural history collection, antiquities and manuscripts. In 1757 the Royal Library was incorporated. In 1881 the natural history collection was taken out and put in custody of the Natural History Museum in South Kensington. The museum was housed in Montagu House that stood in front of the present building. In 1823 a new building called the British Museum was finished by Robert Smirke; it was designed in the Greek revival style (ill.12). The exterior, executed in Portland stone, with the striking south façade is built as an Ionic temple with two wings. The courtyard is surrounded on three sides by a colonnade of gigantic columns which are echoed by the pilasters against the walls behind. At the center is a protruding entrance portico with double columns crowned by a pediment with allegorical sculptures. The Ionic columns are closely based on those of the temple of Athena Polias at Priene. Until 1810 the public was only admitted on written application, it was only in 1879 that it was publicly opened every day of the week. By gift, bequest, and purchase the museum grew rapidly, and in the early 19th-century new buildings had to be added to accommodate the Egyptian sculptures, the Townley Marbles, and the Elgin Marbles. The center of the building consists of the British Library Reading Room, a huge circular hall that contains millions of items, from books to newspapers, from maps to catalogues and periodicals.

The British Museum became Europe’s finest museum of Greek art as it continued to expand in this area throughout the century as a result of successful excavations by English archaeologists in the Middle East. It houses some of the finest pieces of Classical sculpture. Some were part of the collection of Hans Sloane, but also Greek vases from the Hamilton collection and an unrivalled collection of statues -mostly Roman- from the collection of Charles Townley. As early as 1815 Greek sculptures from the Temple of Apollo at Bassae were acquired. One year later the renowned sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens were added known as the ‘Elgin Marbles’ named after the collection that was formed by the Earl of Elgin during his stay in Greece. In 1843 important sculptures from the Harpy Tomb and the Nereid Monument at Xanthus were added, and the sculptures from the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus in 1846. The museum attracted large crowds; in 1843 a census showed that half a million people had visited the collections.

851. For elaboration see Bergvelt 2007 passim
The second half of the century saw the rise of museums of modern art. Started in France thanks to the institution of the Salon. Munich’s *Neue Pinakothek* was founded in 1853, Berlin’s *Nationalgalerie* in 1876, London’s *National Gallery of British art*, now the *Tate Gallery*, opened in 1897. These institutions were a monument to a new, patriotic consciousness.

7. The first steps towards modern archaeology

A general definition of archaeology would be: ‘The scientific study of the physical evidence of past human societies through excavation and survey, which not only attempts to discover and describe past cultures, but also to formulate explanations for the developments of cultures’.

But what of its origins? The word archaeology was used in the English language since the beginning of the 17th-century in reference to early and ancient history. But soon its meaning was broadened and included the study of antique monuments and still later to designate the scientific study of past human life and human activities. The evolution of archaeology is closely related to excavations. For centuries archaeological diggings were nothing more than treasure hunts by and for elite rulers. But this changed with the reopening of the site at Herculaneum in Italy. The original excavations during the first decades of the 18th-century have to be regarded as treasure hunting. But this changed in 1738 when Charles of Bourbon King of the Two Sicily’s, hired the antiquarian Marcello Venuti to re-open the shafts at Herculaneum. Venuti had a scientific approach; he supervised the excavations, translated the inscriptions and proved that the site was indeed Herculaneum. This event had a historic significance and marked the birth of modern archaeology. Although in the beginning the digging was conducted in a rather haphazard way (ill.13), but when in April 1755 the young Scottish architect Robert Adam during his extensive Grand Tour through Italy visited the site, work had progressed on a large scale. He stated:

(…) ‘I viewed with great pleasure and much astonishment the many curious things that have been dug out, consisting of statues, busts, fresco paintings, books, bread, fruits, all sorts of instruments from a mattock to the most curious chirurgical probe (…) We traversed an amphitheatre with the light of torches and pursued the tracks of palaces, their porticoes and different doors, division walls and mosaic pavements. (…) Upon the whole this subterranean town, once filled with temples, columns, palaces and other ornaments of good taste is now exactly like a coal-mine worked by galley slaves’.

Around the same time excavations had begun at Pompeii (ill.14) and no Grand Tour was complete without a visit to both sites and to other collections in Naples. The excavations had a profound effect upon taste; some called it a second wave of the Renaissance. It had for instance an unmistakable influence on the interior decorations of the brothers Adam and on the decorative pottery of Josiah Wedgwood. By the end of the 18th-century the antiquities from Herculaneum and Pompeii were moved to a university building in Naples which was remodeled as a museum in 1777. A ceremonial procession of statues was envisaged (ill.15a+b).

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852. Basin 1967, 216
853. As quoted in Hibbert 1987, 190. For elaboration see: Parslow 1995 passim.
But there is another root from which archaeology as a scientific discipline originated that should also be mentioned here. It leads us to an important 19th-century institution: the museum. In the course of the 19th-century the museums of Europe were beginning to be inundated with relics from all over the world. In most cases they were the proceeds of amateur excavations carried out by treasure hunters from the wealthiest families in Europe who traveled to exotic places to obtain all sorts of treasures. The artifacts they brought home finally ended up in museums. The fact that many museums were overrun with artifacts created the need for a classification system to display the artifacts in a correct chronological arrangement. Because at first archaeological and ethnological museums were designated a scientific role that was not mainly directed to the general public, they were a very fertile breeding ground for scholarly theories.

A pioneer who developed a more detailed archaeological method based on scientific principles was Christian Thomsen (1788-1865). Thomsen was the curator of the Nationalmuseet of Denmark in Copenhagen; it was he, building on ideas that the historian Videl Simonson proposed in 1813, who developed an archaeological classification system. It involved a Three Age System: Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age. This theory was to some degree assisted by the work of the geologist Charles Lyell and the biologist Charles Darwin. Thomson’s terms were accepted throughout Europe and resulted in a revolution in scientific thinking. Evolution replaced the tyrannical doctrines of the Judeo-Christian church. Despite of this controversy Thomsen’s theory was a great contribution to archaeology as a science.

8. Growing knowledge of Classical sculpture and ancient history

By the end of the 18th-century another shift occurred in the way Classical ancient sculpture was appreciated. Under the influence of Johann Joachim Winckelmann there was a growing wareness among antiquarians regarding the Greek roots of the most admired antique sculptures -most of them were Roman copies of Greek originals-. This familiarization with Greek history is reflected in the titles that were attributed to antique sculptures. For instance Cleopatra now became a nymph (and later Ariadne), Papirius became Orestes, Cincinnatus became Jason etc. Although it is usually hard to tell what is meant by Greek as distinct from Roman in eighteenth-century criticism. For Maffei (1704), who like most earlier antiquarians took his view from Pliny himself, mostly it was simply a matter of the costume or the lack of it. The publication in 1787 of Edward Gibbon’s History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire greatly enhanced a more comprehensive understanding of Roman history. It has been called an ancient history of Europe and European civilization, and there are good grounds for this, because the modern nations of Europe were descended from the Western Roman Empire. Due to the state of scholarship of the time Gibbon’s sources were predominantly literary and not archaeological. Nevertheless his History was not only a classic of ancient history; but also a classic of late 18th-century English literature that holds a

854. For instance, when the young Cambridge student John Morritt was in Athens in 1795 he confessed in a letter to his sister Anne that he did not always offer money for his acquisitions in a country which he described as ‘a perfect gallery of marbles’, stealing them as often as he could: ‘It is very pleasant to walk the streets. Over almost every door is an antique statue or basso-rilievo (..) Some we steal, some we buy, and our court is much adorned with them’ (entry January 18 to 22,1795), see Morritt edition 1914, 179.
prominent position among the great literature of the Enlightenment. Not only does it excel in scholarship but also in literary grace of style for which reason it is still read today.\footnote{A recent edition was published in 1983 by the Folio Society in London.}

Gibbon’s great example was the Roman historian Tacitus (\textit{The Histories, The Annals}). Like Tacitus he tended to idealize the virtues of the Roman Republic, but Gibbon is less relentlessly pessimistic than Tacitus, this is due to his Enlightenment background. Gibbon’s modern mentors were the Enlightenment philosophers Bayle and Montesquieu; they taught him a sceptical approach to history, the empirical method which denied the possibility of absolute truth. Also the careful weighing of historical evidence and not allowing them to be perverted in the interest of religion or of national or human vanity. As a result of this Gibbon’s work reflects an anti-Christian position which aroused the fury of his Christian contemporaries. Although he recognizes the influence of other cults that diminished the faith of the people in the official (pagan) religion, he regards Christianity to a large degree responsible for the downfall of the Roman Empire.\footnote{What distinguished Christianity from the foreign cults was its claim that it alone held the key to ‘Truth’ and to Heaven, and that all its competition were vicious and damned. Next to this came the Christian belief in the imminent end of this world and a strong belief in the ‘next world’. This other worldly attitude proved to be disastrous to the Roman Empire during the barbarian invasions. Instead of bearing arms to serve the state and the public good, it diverted men from useful employment and encouraged them to concentrate on heavenly and private salvation. For elaboration see: Ho 1994.}

In the decades following the publication of Gibbon’s \textit{Decline}, Roman history enjoyed somewhat of a revolution. It was the Classical scholar and historian Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903) who stood at the forefront of this development. For his contemporaries Mommsen’s reputation grew to almost mythical proportions. For it was he who first effectively combined the mastery of tradition of literary history with the archaeological skills of a great epigraphist in his magnum opus \textit{Römische Geschichte} (1854-55, 1885). It spanned the Roman republic from its origins to 46 B.C. (dictatorship of Caesar). It involved the recreation of Roman society largely based on his study of ancient coins, inscriptions, and literature. Mommsen has therefore been called the greatest Classical historian of the 19th-century, for he was not only a brilliant scholar but also a vivid and powerful writer. Mommsen’s mastery of language was no doubt due to his background in Law and philology. He was also the model for the politically active teacher / intellectual -he was a member of the Prussian Parliament-, he also left his mark on someone like the sociologist Max Weber. Mommsen was a follower of the great historian Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776-1831), who introduced rigorous criticism of sources into historiography, although his methods of research and presentation differed and he went considerably beyond his predecessors in demythologizing Roman history. This resulted in a modern style which was not to every one’s taste. Mommsen’s historical work was interrupted by his work on inscriptions\footnote{Mommsen was the scientific editor and organiser of the momentous \textit{Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum} (the corpus of inscriptions on stone and wood) published by the Berlin Academy from 1863 onwards.}, unfortunately the \textit{Roemische Geschichte} was therefore never completed.

As one of the results of this growing historical awareness and archaeological interest, restorations of antique sculptures fell out of favor. During previous centuries this had been a prestigious task that was allocated to leading sculptors. By 1890 the Dresden Museum removed all the restorations from the ancient statues in the collection. Peculiar enough it took until 1960 that the Vatican Museum had all the restorations of the famous Laocoon statue removed.\footnote{For elaboration see: Seymour 1989, 417-422.}
9. The dispersal of great collections with antiquities

After the Allies dismantled the Musée Napoléon in Paris in 1815, many works of art that were amassed as loot of war were to be handed over to their rightful owners. But for several reasons not all the works of art were returned, some former owners found the expense of transport to prohibitive and contented themselves with just some unique pieces and had the rest sold. Numerous Italian pictures remained in France as a token of appreciation of the pope for the restored authority of the Bourbons, since they opposed the anti-clericalism of the Revolution and the Caesarism of Napoleon.

Likewise certain pieces of sculpture were ceded to the Musée Napoléon, though it is not quite clear on what grounds. This also meant that not all antiquities were returned to their former collections. It provided Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria the opportunity to acquire antique sculpture that was put on sale in Paris. As a promoter of Romantic Classicism, Ludwig already owned an extensive collection of antiquities. All these were exhibited in a museum in Munich which was called the Glyptothek, which opened in 1830; the architect was Leo von Klenze (ill.16). With the Glyptothek, Klenze created a worthy setting for these exceptional works. The building has a portico of Ionic Columns and comprises four wings with a central open courtyard that serves to light the interior, as the exterior wall has no windows, being decorated instead with statues in niches. In effect it made Munich the centre for the appreciation of Classical values that Ludwig promoted.

The first half of the 19th-century was a favourable period for collectors, true amateurs or dilettanti with good taste and a keen eye to set up substantial collections for comparatively little money. An example is John Soane, who displayed his collection of art and antiquities in his house in London that he had specially designed for this purpose. It was built between 1792 and 1824 and functioned as a museum (ill.17a). During his life Soane, who was a prestigious neo-classical architect, collected a wide array of objects: books, architectural drawings and models as well as a large selection of fragments and casts from Greek and Roman Antiquity, but also plaster casts of demolished contemporary buildings. Soane displayed the objects of his collection with no regard for their chronology or authenticity. The heart of his museum was at the back of his house and known as "the Dome". Here one finds a riot of Classical sculpture: cinerary urns, busts, capitals, friezes: line the wall from floor to ceiling. (ill.17b+c) Authenticity is not the main goal here, for plaster casts are displayed next to original objects in marble. In general he did not buy pieces for their individual value, what he was interested in was the overall effect that he could create by displaying objects together in an almost caleidoscopic mosaic which evokes a nostalgic experience of history.

The obsessive interest that began in the late 18th-century to collect anything related to antiquity which has been described as ‘anticomania’ was continued until well into the 19th-century.

10. Plaster collections at art academies, universities and museums

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860. Such was the case with the Albani family in Rome, only the Antinous Bas-Relief was returned.
861. The building was largely destroyed in the war although the sculpture collection was preserved, the Glyptothek was reopened in 1972.
862. These words did not have the superficial negative connotation that was later attributed to it.
In the course of the 19th-century plaster casts developed into a symbol of civilization; they were much appreciated and collected by museums, art academies and university institutes. The practice of setting up a plaster collection of antique sculptures to educate young artists is, as we have already seen, a tradition that dates back to the Renaissance period. Of great influence was the Classicistic art style that was promoted by King Louis of France, which was maintained by Napoleon Bonaparte, moreover it had great impact on the educational system. The official art academies in the 19th-century held the belief that the visual arts had reached unsurpassable peaks of excellence in Classical antiquity; it was therefore a powerful paradigm for students of art. The old concept of the academy, revived by the humanists of the Renaissance, made that students were no longer educated by the guilds in a master’s workshop, but at an art-academy. The academic doctrine, influenced by platonic ideals, promoted the belief in the existence of absolute and perfect beauty. This was of course an abstraction, but it could be attained in art. The norm for perfect beauty was more and more determined by a derivative, namely Classical sculpture. This explains the belief, during the 18th- and 19th-century, in the didactic value of drawing after plaster casts of renowned ancient Classical statues at art academies and drawing societies. In general one could say that during the first half of the 19th-century drawing after plaster was a preparation for historical painting.863 The plasters were often exhibited in a aesthetic way, at several art academies and universities large plaster halls were built that functioned as museums. (ill.18) They therefore had a greater purpose than purely study objects for students but also spread the knowledge of ancient Classical sculpture among a wider circle of scholars and art lovers. A striking remark comes from the German archaeologist Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker. In 1827 he made a comment on the plaster collection of the Akademisches Kunstmuseum in Bonn that reflects common opinion. He praised the long established didactical tradition where plaster casts played an important role in the proper evaluation of art:

[plaster casts cultivate a] ‘pure taste for all works of art, including the applied and decorative arts’.864

During the first half of the 19th-century plaster collections became an international phenomenon, they were found in all major European cities, from Berlin to Paris and from Edinburgh to London. Not only were plaster collections set up by art academies or universities but also incorporated into museum collections where they were displayed along with genuine works of art.865 As of old they were concerned almost exclusively with Classical sculpture. However, the growing interest in medieval architecture and sculpture led to casts being made of well-known national monuments, particularly in France and Germany. It is clear that imitation or mimesis as a concept was not something to be looked down upon, rather something to be aspired. The plaster cast was as it were transparent, the material was amorphous and therefore presented a direct access to the essence of an artwork, so it was thought.

By 1834, a significant collection of French medieval and Renaissance casts was to be found at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris though the national collection of casts as the Trocadero was not established until 1879. A peculiar example that illustrates how highly plasters were valued is that in 1819 the Louvre Museum almost swapped an original metope.

863. For elaboration see: van Rheeden, 2004, 81.
865. Although this was also subject of discussion.
of the Parthenon from its collection with a complete set of plaster casts of the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum in London!  

In Germany plasters of several early 16th-century works of sculpture were added to collections of Classical casts as early as 1823; while in the 1830’s the antiquarian Hans von Auëfess assembled casts of German medieval sculpture that in 1852 became the basis of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg. The general aim was to illustrate outstanding national achievements in architecture and sculpture.

German universities also set up extensive plaster collections. The ambition to collect plasters even overshadowed the interest for original pieces. Such plaster collections sometimes grew to very extensive proportions. An example is the one that Christian Gottlob Heyne started in 1767 at the University of Göttingen. The creation of this plaster collection coincided with the beginning of Classical archaeology as an academic discipline at this institute. Heyne, who was a professor of philology and director of the library at the university, encountered a lot of difficulties in assembling the plaster collection. Like so many other collectors, he was dependent on the supply of dealers and often the quality of the casts left a lot to be desired. The early collection was very modest, consisting of merely small scale copies of poor quality plus some cast heads. The small copies were not really suitable for educational purposes and soon got discarded from the collection. In these early years the collection was far removed from the main goal, which sought to give a complete survey of the different periods of ancient Classical sculpture. Heyne remained active in obtaining plasters for the collection, his last purchase was recorded in 1802, the total number of plaster statues had by then grown to sixty. Moreover five dactylothees with impressions of gems and cameos were added. By 1812 the plaster collection was exhibited in the library, which at this point in time was housed in a converted church (ill.19). For educational purposes this was not the most suitable location. In 1823 therefore a lecture room and antiquity hall were set up in the apse and basement of the church where most of the plasters were then displayed. In 1830 important pieces were added, among them casts from the Parthenon known as the Elgin Marbles. Through time the collection continued to grow; by 1898 it consisted of 754 pieces which included several important examples from Classical Greek sculpture. Such as the relief plates from the Nereid monument at Xantos, the Kore from the Erechteion at the Acropolis in Athens and the frieze of the altar at Pergamon. During the first half of the 20th century, the collection was extended to 1100 pieces. The 1960’s marked the beginning of a plan to restore and clean the entire collection, while the purchase additional pieces continued. Between 1983 and 1987 very expensive casts were added like the statue of the poet Menander. The original head and torso got separated and are now kept in museums in Venice and Naples, but when the plaster casts were united the statue could be seen in its former glory (ill.20a, b). In 2001 the collection in Göttingen consisted of 1700 pieces in total which makes it to one of the most important plaster collections in the world (ill.21a, b). Of special importance for research and study purposes is the collection of plaster busts of Greek portrait statues that was set up by Klaus Fittschen in the 1980s (ill.21c).

When the Prussian architect August Stüler designed the Neues Museum in Berlin in 1850, he had high ideals (ill.22a+b). For it was his intension that the building should be a focal point and accommodate the highest mental interests of the population, the likes of which

866. Ladendorf 1953, n.1, 72.
868. Cain 1995, 208, esp. n.54.
869. Fittschen 1990, 10.
870. Since 2001 the whole collection of plasters is virtually available on the internet as part of a project for a virtual museum of antiquities (VIAMUS) see: <http://viamus.uni-goettingen.de/>.
871. Destroyed during World War II, but currently being rebuilt.
no other capital would likely be able to exhibit. Because ancient Classical culture represented
such values he made the plaster casts collection which represented the highlights of ancient
sculpture the focal point of the building. (**ill.22c, d, e):

(….) ‘for the extended constantly growing and for study purposes most important plaster
collection, which very appropriately is regarded as the center of all the collections, the
entire first floor has been reserved’.\(^{872}\)

The same criteria were applied for the new display of the famous Mengs plaster collection in
Dresden in 1857. Because the entire ground floor of the *Semper Gallerie* was likewise
reserved for this purpose. It was praised at the time as a national achievement on which
Saxony could be proud.\(^{873}\) Due to the bombardment of Dresden in February 1945, part of the
*Albertinum*, where the plaster statues were on display since 1889, was heavily damaged. It
destroyed not only a substantial part of the plaster statues but also the moulds (**ill.23**).

Another example of an important 19th-century plaster collection is found at the
*Victoria and Albert Museum* in London.\(^{874}\) The collection was seen from its inception as
international in scope; the origins date back to the 1830’s when a simple series of plaster casts
were displayed for the *School of Design in Ornamental art* that was also located in London.
Sir Henry Cole (1808-1882) and Prince Albert played a decisive role in setting up and
extending the plaster collection. Its realization has a close connection to the *Great Exhibition*
that was held in London in 1851, of which the Prince consort and Cole were the main
instigators.\(^{875}\) The exhibition proved to be an overwhelming success since it drew six million
visitors from all over Europe and made a then unheard profit of £186.000. It was this profit
that helped to finance Cole’s and the Prince’s dream of a permanent museum. It was named *The Museum of Manufactures* and it was founded on three Victorian cultural ideas: to
influence and improve design standards; to make works of art available to the working public;
and to make the museum a center for education. It was first located at Marlborough House
(1852), but reopened as the *South Kensington Museum* in 1857 (**ill.24a**). The intention was that
'the country would have at a comparatively small cost what has long been desired, a national
museum of architecture and architectural decoration which could scarcely fail to be of the
greatest service in an educational point of view, whether as affecting the progress of art in its
noblest works or the improvement of tastes in the application of art to the production of our
manufacturers.'\(^{876}\)

In July 1873 the *Architectural Courts* were opened to the public (**ill.24b**). By then the
most impressive casts were already part of the collection. These two gigantic rooms filed with
plaster casts were the brain child of Cole, who also was the museum’s first director. The
formation of this plaster collection took great effort. In 1864 he drew up plans for an
international exchange of copies in a document entitled ‘Convention for promoting
universally Reproductions of Works of Art’. Its aim was to obtain from different European
governments lists of major works of art in their possession. He was assisted in this endeavour

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\(^{872}\) Translation Godin. The original text reads: (…) *für die ausgedehnte, in stetem Wachstum begriffene
und zum Studium so höchst wichtige Gipssammlung, welche mit Recht als der Mittelpunkt aller
Sammlungen angesehen wird, ist das ganze mittlere Geschoß bestimmt.* Quoted from Himmelmann
1976, 138; also see Platz-Horster 1979, 273, 277-281.

\(^{873}\) Heres 1989, 537.

\(^{874}\) There are similar examples like the plaster collection in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. For
elaboration see the excellent study with extensive bibliography by Donna Kurtz of 2000.

\(^{875}\) An engraving of the ‘Italian Courts’ at the great exhibition in the Crystal Palace, where the plaster
statues were on display, is reproduced in: Kurtz 2000, ill. 109.

\(^{876}\) Ibidem.
by the British Foreign Office. The Paris International Exhibition of 1867 was the perfect opportunity to convince European rulers present there to sign up for this convention. Cole managed to get the cooperation of fifteen countries. Among those who signed up were: the Crown Prince of Prussia; the Prince of Saxony; the Czarewitch of Russia; the Prince Napoleon (a nephew of Napoleon III) of France; and Prince Humbert of Italy. Cole’s activities resulted in an enormous collection of plaster casts, mostly statues and ornaments from the medieval and Renaissance periods.

With the opening of the Architectural Courts designed by General Henry Scott, the collection could at last be shown in its full glory. The white plaster contrasted very favorably against the painted green and red walls. The decoration of the courts was completed by a series of blinds, intended to be replaced by stained glass showing famous artists. The early arrangement of the plaster collection had two divisions; casts of Northern European and Spanish sculpture and Trajan’s column in the east court, and casts of Italian monuments in the west. Next to this other types of reproductions, like photographs and copy drawings, formed a substantial and highly regarded part of the Museum’s early collections. Trajan’s Column overshadows all the other pieces. Its width is almost four meters in diameter and because of its original height of thirty-eight meters it is displayed in two halves placed next to each other (ill.24c,d). It is a peculiar fact that due to air pollution the original is in a much poorer state than this 19th-century cast. Another monumental cast is the Puerta de la Gloria from the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral, against the north wall of the West Court (ill.24e). It was obtained by the museum in 1873. The production of such a huge cast represents a formidable technical achievement and should not be underestimated. The work was executed by the established firm Brucciani which was situated at Covent Garden in London. A whole team of experienced plaster workers travelled to Spain and it took months to prepare the moulds from which the casts were made. When the firm collapsed in 1922 the museum took it over and continued to supply casts to art schools until the early 1950’s.

Before the collection of casts was established the museum owned a collection of plaster casts of architectural ornaments. As early as 1851 an assemblage of 487 of such fragments were purchased. They served mainly a didactic purpose and were intended for the use of the Schools of Design. By the turn of the century they were displayed alongside with photographs showing the buildings from which the details were taken (ill.25).

There are more casts in the collection are in a better state than the original, or of whom the original is lost. This is the case with the cast of the tympanum of the Cathedral of Hildesheim, or the cast of the Lübeck relief of Christ Washing the Apostles’ Feet of which the original is destroyed (ill.26).

Even in the 1870’s the collection was apparently one of the largest and most comprehensive assembly of casts taken from post-Classical European sculpture and served as a model for others as widespread as Edinburgh and Pittsburgh. For example Musée St.Germain in Paris, or the entrance hall of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts where several casts of sculpture were put on display.877 In the first half of the 20th century the collection was extended with the best pieces from the Crystal Palace cast collection, that is, the ones that survived the fire of 1936. The present collection contains more than two thousand plasters.878

What contributed to a large extend to the popularity of plaster statues, especially those taken from sculptures from Classical antiquity, was the fact was that high schools (Gymnasiums) more and more incorporated them in their curriculum. Plaster statues had become widely available because special plaster workshops turned out casts on an industrial

877 A nineteenth-century photograph is published in Baker 1997, 42, Fig.14. The mixed display of original works of art and plaster copies in museums was not considered inappropriate.
878 A complete official catalogue has not been published of yet but is being prepared by the Museum.
scale. Not only did the plaster casts find their way to art academies, artists’ studios and private homes of scholars, but also to the homes of a wider public who had an interest in antiquity. In effect they were turned into objects of interior decoration. Because of all this plaster casts became symbols of good taste and civilisation and popular among a wider public.

Apart from aesthetic appreciation they had scientific value and importance, for they were considered to be an indispensable means for archaeological research. Plaster casts grew into outstanding didactical instruments, and were attributed a central place in public art collections, it was not uncommon to display them alongside with original artworks. Soon they were not merely a selection of examples of renowned Classical sculpture but also represented a wider view on art and cultural history. What could never be established in reality now became true in a musée imaginaire of plaster casts. Such collections were held in high esteem, also among scholars.

11. Depreciation and reassessment

Soon after the turn of the 19th-century more critical comments were heard in regard to the meaning and purpose of plaster collections. Especially archaeologists who at first had been keen on plaster casts of antique sculpture as an additional source for their research now got more focussed on photographs. But soon the shortcomings of this medium were realised, especially in the case of detailed photographs which can be extremely subjective indeed. This subjectivity is confirmed by the very fact that it is possible to date photographs on stylistic grounds. Photography can distort the sense of proportion, because of arbitrary perspective and light; small objects can all of a sudden appear as huge. Yet seize is an essential factor in the evaluation of sculpture because it was the very sense of proportion that was valued greatly in Antiquity. Discrepancies in proportion when comparing different pieces of sculpture can therefore easily lead to erroneous assumptions and conclusions.

Critics saw in white plaster casts only dull mechanical products of reproduction. This had to do with concepts of reality and originality. By the end of the 19th-century, copying had become a mechanical task, due to improved pointing machines. This work that was previously done by artists was now performed by mechanical carving machines. Plaster casts were therefore no longer automatically regarded as a reflection of pure form which had a claim on real beauty: in fact pure form had become dead form. Since the 1920’s there was a growing body of opinion that suggested that plaster collections should be stored away or destroyed all together. In Germany the Second World War was the final verdict of many great plaster collections, since they were the last to be put in safe storage. As a result the great collections in Munich, Würzburg and Leipzig were destroyed. Later, during the 1960’s, plaster statues were regarded as symbols of an outmoded stale artistic and cultural ideal. It led to a large scale destruction of plaster collections at art academies.

Yet, a change of attitude emerges towards the end of the 20th-century for several reasons. There is a reassessment regarding the importance of plaster casts for archaeology, conservation of monuments, and for museums. Plaster statues are again valued as an additional means in scientific research, for their plastic qualities to capture surface details objectively. There is the recognition that they are an indispensable means to determine

880. See the doctrine on proportion and decorum by the Roman architect Vitruvius.
881. Some art historians, like Carl Justi (1832-1912), professor at the University of Bonn and Berlin, rejected photographic reproductions of any sort. He believed that machine-made images corrupted the eye and, despite their apparent fidelity, distorted the original.
882. Haskell & Penny 1982, 123
iconographical problems and themes. It is by their merit that it is possible to interpret problems and questions through a direct visual analysis.

Especially in Germany the new appreciation for plaster statues is very apparent. In 2000 the Akademisches Kunstmuseum Bonn renovated its hundred year old exhibition rooms with plaster statues on display into their former glory.\textsuperscript{883} (ill.27) In 2002 the Archaeological Institute of the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen started a project for a Virtual Museum of Antique Sculptures. The collection contains more than 1700 plaster casts of sculptures that were taken from sculptures spread over 140 museums all over the world. By means of a computerized tour that involves 3D-scan technology, internet visitors are able to view the plaster sculptures three dimensionally.\textsuperscript{884} In 2008 the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leyden started a project to restore its plaster statues publicly in one of the exhibition rooms of the museum, and displayed the restored plasters in a small exhibition.\textsuperscript{885}

But appealing as these casts of renowned antique sculptures are, and despite their significance for scientific research, they have stopped to be the pinnacles of taste and quality that they once were for artists, art lovers, collectors and theorists. These plasters have become an art object in their own right, as a testimony of an era.

There is a significant importance that can be attributed to plaster collections of renowned ancient works of sculpture in our present day and age. One of the questions that come to mind when one considers this issue involves the purpose of such collections. There are things that can be learned from a plaster cast that are not revealed by other modern means of reproduction. Because of their plastic qualities they capture surface details objectively. They are also an indispensable means to determine iconographical problems and themes.

On the practical side casts provide specific opportunities for scientific research. In some cases fragments of one particular sculpture got separated and ended up in different locations. Plastercasts are important tools to reconstruct works of art, they render the possibility of reuniting the sculpture and restore its former glory. In some cases statues were intended as a whole group and for one reason or another got separated. Such groups can be reunified as plaster casts.

Antique marble statues were always painted in bright colors (ill.28); plaster casts provide the opportunity to experiment with different colors and patterns without the risk of damaging the original.\textsuperscript{886} Many original sculptures are incorporated in an architectural setting, which makes it difficult to study them in detail. A plaster cast taken from such a piece of sculpture provides the means to examine it from several angles with different incidence of light. Plaster casts are three-dimensional and reveal details that are not exposed by photographs or other 2-D media. Moreover photographs as well as a drawing always remain a subjective impression of a given moment in time. The very fact that photographs can stylistically dated illustrate this.\textsuperscript{887} The value of a plaster cast increases through time when the original has suffered from the over-zealous attentions of later restorers or when it is damaged or severely deteriorated through air pollution. Some original pieces of sculpture were lost in

\textsuperscript{883}. Bauer 2000, 635-638. The plaster collection was started in 1819 and is now one of the largest in Germany with 300 statues and 200 reliefs.

\textsuperscript{884}. See: \textit{http://www.viamus.de/} The side offers an interactive tour by the areas of the Göttinger plaster cast collection, InterNet teaching programs for pupils and students as well as a data base with pictures and scientific data to almost 2000 plaster castings.

\textsuperscript{885}. Evidence of this new appreciation of plaster casts are an international conference organised by the university of Oxford in 2007 and a symposium organized in 2008 by the Art Academy in Maastricht (for Maastricht, see: De Weerd 2008).

\textsuperscript{886}. See: Brinkmann & Wünsche 2004; Brinkmann & Brijder 2006. And a century before the experiments in Dresden, see Knoll 1995.

\textsuperscript{887}. For elaboration see: Himmelmann 1989, 86ff.
the course of time, or destroyed, for example through war activities. If a plaster cast was made it is an extremely valuable piece of information, e.g. Parthenon!

New reproduction techniques decrease the importance of plaster as a material for copying sculpture. It is nowadays possible to make copies from polyester resin that, mixed with marble powder or color pigments, create a replica that to the naked eye can hardly be distinguished from the original.\textsuperscript{888}

To define the aesthetic value of a plaster cast remains a precarious matter. On the one hand there is the pretence of the reproduced original and on the other hand the fact remains that plaster is a cheap neutral material that can easily be applied the same way as clay, cement or polyester resin. However, it is also a fact that a sculptor who makes a bronze statue applies moulds to create the final result. Here too the question presents itself of what has to be regarded as the original; is it the finished bronze or the model from which the bronze is cast?

Finally plaster statues played an important role in the very origins of Art History as an academic discipline. It is because of the evolution of copy practices that an intellectual hypothetical genealogy of Art History was made possible. It enhanced the insight in the evolution of different styles and stimulated the comparative study of sculpture and of art as a whole. Not only all as forerunners of modern means of reproduction like photography, video, digital images and internet, plaster casts played an essential role, but also in actual scientific research plaster casts have made a definite come back.

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\textsuperscript{888} Brinkmann & Wünsche 2004; Brinkmann & Brijder 200, passim.