Statues of Venus

From Antiquity to the Present

Jan Bažant

Propylaeum
SPECIALIZED INFORMATION SERVICE CLASSICS

STATUES OF VENUS: FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT

Statues of Venus

From Antiquity to the Present

Jan Bažant

Translated by Skyland Václav Kobylak

Propylaeum
SPECIALIZED INFORMATION
SERVICE CLASSICS

With the support of:

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

This book is published under the Creative Commons Attribution License CC BY-SA 4.0. The cover is subject to the Creative Commons License CC BY-ND 4.0.

Propylaeum
SPECIALIZED INFORMATION
SERVICE CLASSICS

Published at Propylaeum,
Heidelberg University Library 2022.

This publication is freely available under https://www.propylaeum.de (Open Access).

URN: urn:nbn:de:bsz:16-propylaeum-ebook-1015-7
DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeum.1015

Text © 2022 Jan Bažant

Cover illustration: Michal Gabriel, The birth of Venus, plaster composite, 2011-2012. Private collection, photo Ondřej Polák.

eISBN 978-3-96929-141-2 (PDF)

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS *vii*
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS *xv*

INTRODUCTION

The Subject, Structure and Methodology of the Book *1*
"Renaissance"and "Renascences" *4*
"Nude"and "Naked" *7*

1. APHRODITE. 8th to 1st Century BC

Veiled *11*
Why Athens? *17*
Unveiled and Resting *23*
The Cnidia *36*
Variations of the Cnidia *50*
Armed *61*

2. VENUS. 4th Century BC to 3rd Century AD

Mother of Aeneas *69*
Romans and Greek Statues of Aphrodite *75*
Promise of Rebirth *87*

3. SURVIVAL. 4th to 14th Century

Demon *95*
Work of Art *97*
Memory of Venus *102*

4. FAILED RETURN. 15th to 16th Century

Collectors of Statues of Venus *109*
Drawings and Prints *120*
Statuettes *129*
Statues *137*
Why Giambologna? *156*
Return of the Demon *166*

5. GUARDIAN AND WHORE. 17th to 19th Century

The Cult and its Dafamation 177
The Absence of Venus 191
The Rise of Prudery 195

6. ICON AND VICTIM. Mid 19th Century to the Present

"Venus of our Time" 207
"Venus in Furs" 215
Icon 224
Victim 229
Return of the Goddess 237

CONCLUSION 245

BIBLIOGRAPHY 251

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Aphrodite and Ares on a chariot. Naxos, Museum. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

2. The Judgement of Paris, detail of Aphrodite. Berlin, Staatliche Museen 2291. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

3. Birth of Aphrodite, the Greek terracotta relief. Reggio Calabria, Museo Nazionale, Reggio Calabria, Pinax type 10/3. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

4. Aphrodite with Eros and a dove. Gela, Museo Archeologico Regionale. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

5. Seated Venus from Rome. Rome, Museo Torlonia 77. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

6. Phidias's workshop, reclining Aphrodite. London, The British Museum 1816,0610.97. Wikimedia Commons, photo Carole Raddato.

7. Aphrodite Brazzà. Berlin, Staatliche Museen SK 1459. Wikimedia Commons, photo Richard Mortel.

8. Aphrodite Corneto. Berlin Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung Berlin Sk 586. Wikimedia Commons, photo Richard Mortel.

9. Venus. Paris, Musée du Louvre MR 298. Wikimedia Commons, photo Marie-Lan Nguyen.

10. Venus. Naples, Archaeological museum 5997. Photo Alinari Nr. 11155 (c. 1900).

11. Venus of Arles. Paris, Musée du Louvre Ma 439. Wikimedia Commons, photo Marie-Lan Nguyen.

12. Colonna Venus. Vatican City, Museo Pio Clementino 812. Wikimedia Commons.

13. Venus Standing. Vatican City, Museo Pio Clementino 4260. Wikimedia Commons.

14. The Kaufmann head. Paris, Musée du Louvre Ma3518. Wikimedia Commons.

15. Esquilin Venus. Rome, Musei Capitolini 1141. Wikimedia Commons, photo Marie-Lan Nguyen.

16. Aphrodite, Pan and Eros. Athens, Archaeological Museum 3335. Wikimedia Commons, photo George E. Koronaios.

17. Venus Medici. Photo, 1870-1890. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-F-F01093-BW. Public domain

18. Capitoline Venus, photo c. 1893 - c. 1903. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-F-2007-358-67. Public domain.

19. Venus de Milo. Paris, Louvre Ma 399 (LL 299). Wikimedia Commons, photo Jastrow.

20. Venus of Syracuse. Naples, Museo archeologico 3524. Wikimedia Commons, photo Zdeněk Kratochvil.

21. Venus Anadyomene. Vatican City, Museo Pio Clementino 807. Photo James Anderson (1859), The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles inv.no. 84.XO.251.3.59. Public domain.

22. The crouching Venus Anadyomene. Rhodos, Museum. Wikimedia Commons, photo Jebulon.

23. Venus tying her sandal at the column with Priapus of Pompeii. Naples, Museo archeologico 152798. Wikimedia Commons, photo by Carole Raddato.

24. Venus Callipyge Farnese. Naples, Museo archeologico nazionale 6020. Photo, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam RP-F-00-4476. Public domain.

25. Armed Venus with Amor. Paris, Musée du Louvre MA 370. Wikimedia Commons, photo Dinkum.

26. Gelon, Armed Aphrodite. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 21.1213. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

27. Capuan Venus. Napoli, Museo nazionale 6017. Wikimedia Commons, photo Marie-Lan Nguyen.

28. Aphrodite/ Turan. Orvieto, Museo Civico 1307. Wikimedia Commons, photo Sailko.

29. Colossal head of Venus. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano 8598. Wikimedia Commons, photo Rabax63.

30. Aphrodite in a shrine. Berlin, Staatliche Museen FG 3006. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

31. Aphrodite in a shrine. Paris, Musée du Louvre CA 1832. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

32. Venus of Pompeii (VI.9.6, Casa dei Dioscuri), before 79. After August Mau, *Pompeii, its Life and Art* (New York, 1902), fig. 4.

33. Venus of Pompeii (IX.7.6, Verecunda House), before 79. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

34. Venus / Roma enthroned, mural from the Lateran Palace. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano 124506. Wikimedia Commons, photo ArchaiOptics.

35. Venus Triumphant. Berlin, Münzkabinett 18217149. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

35. Armed Venus, backside of a denarus of Augustus. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

37. Armed Venus with Amors. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung 7965. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

38. Relief reproducing the tympanon of the Temple of Mars Ultor. Cast of a relief in Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome. Wikimedia Commons, photo Christophe Jacquand.

39. Roman Woman as Venus. Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek 711. Wikimedia Commons, photo Carole Raddato.

40. Roman portrait group statue of woman and man as Venus and Mars. Rome, Museo nazionale Romano 108522. Wikimedia Commons, photo Livioandronico2013.

41. Venus on the Roman marble urn. Rome, Musei Capitolini 2101. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

42. Deceased Roman woman. Villa d'Este. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

43. Ulpia Epigone. Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Profano 9856. Photo Jan Bažant.

44. St. Nicholas orders the destruction of the statue of Venus. Sofia, Church of St. Nicholas, Bojana. Drawing Nina Bažantová.

45. Roman woman as Venus (Venus Felix). Vatican City, Il Museo Pio-Clementino 936. Wikimedia Commons, photo Jean-Pol Grandmont.

46. Venus Victrix (Florence, Uffizi 1914 n. 155), after the 17th century restoration by Ercole Ferrata and Giovanni Battista Foggini. Antonio Francesco Gori, *Museum Florentinum*, vol. 3, (Florence, 1734), pl. 31 (engraving by Carlo Bartolomeo Gregori and Marcantonio Corsi after Giovan Domenico Campiglia).

47. Venus Victrix today. Florence, Uffizi 1914 no. 155. Wikimedia Commons, photo Yair Haklai.

48. The Tribuna of the Palazzo Grimani in Venice, a reconstruction of the placement of ancient statues in the 1660s-70s. Wikimedia Commons, photo by Palgri.

49. Mazarin Venus. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum 54.AA.11. Public domain.

50. Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, engraving after the Mazarin Venus. Public domain.

51. Pierre Jacques, drawing of the Cesi Venus (Paris, Louvre MA 437). Paris, BnF (CdE), Album de Pierre Jacques, F b, 18 a, fol. 11v (detail). Salomon Reinach, *L'album de Pierre Jacques, sculpteur de Reims, dessiné à Rome de 1572 à 1577*, I-II (Paris, 1902), pl. 11bis.

52. Cesi Venus. Paris, Musée du Louvre MA 437. Wikimedia Commons, photo Darafsh.

53. Chiaramonti Venus. Vatican City, Il Museo Chiaramonti 353. Photo Jan Bažant.

54. Agostino Veneziano, Venus and Amore. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-36.633. Public domain.

55. Crouching Venus. Naples, Museo archeologico 6293. Wikimedia Commons, photo Sailko.

56. Giovanni Battista de'Cavalieri, copper engraving after an ancient statue of Venus (Napoli, Museo archeologico 6293), 1594. Giovanni Battista De'Cavalieri, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae*, 3-4 (Roma 1594), pl. 68.

57. Northern Italian artist, Venus. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 1948.171. Public domain.

58-59. Antico, bronze statuette of Venus. Baltimore, MD, The Walters Art Museum 54.1027. Acquired by Henry Walters, 1931. Public domain.

60. Circle of Jacopo Sansovino, Venus and Amor on a Dolphin. Los Angeles, Getty Museum 87.SB.50. Public domain.

61. Giovanni Francesco Susini, Venus Whipping Amor. New York, The Metropolitan Museum (Bequest of Annie C. Kane, 1926) 26.260.90. Public domain.

62. Sandro Botticelli, Birth of Venus. Florence, Uffizi 878. Wikimedia Commons.

63. Agostino Veneziano after Baccio Bandinelli, Academy of Baccio Bandinelli. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Elisha Whittelsey Collection, Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1949,49.97.144. Public domain.

64. Italian engraver after an engraving by Niccolò della Casa after a drawing by Baccio Bandinelli, Accademy of Baccio Bandinelli. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1983) 1983.1194. Public Domain.

65. Marcantonio Raimondi after Raffaello, Venus with Cupid. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-11.947. Public domain.

66. Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio, after Rosso Fiorentino, Venus and Cupid. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1949) 49.97.231. Public domain.

67. Philippe Thomassin, Armed Venus and Cupid, now in the Louvre (MA 370). Philippe Thomassin, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae liber primus* (Rome, 1610), pl. 4.

68. Philippe Thomassin, Venus Kallipygos, which is now in the Archaeological Museum of Naples (6020), engraving, 1610. Thomassin, *Antiquarum statuarum*, pl. 11.

69. Philippe Thomassin, Venus with a small dolphin (lost), engraving, 1610. Thomassin, *Antiquarum statuarum*, pl. 27.

70. Philippe Thomassin, Venus with a large dolphin (lost), engraving, 1610. Thomassin, *Antiquarum statuarum*, pl. 33.

71. Fontana Pretoria from the south-east. J. I. Hittorff, and L. Zanth, *Architecture moderne de la Sicile, ou Recueil des plus beaux monumens religieux, et des édifices publics et particuliers les plus remarquables de la Sicile* (Paris, 1835), pl. 52.

72. Francesco Camilliani, Venus with a Dolphin. Wikimedia Commons, photo Effems.

73. Anonymous, Venus with Cupid, Jupiter and Mercury, engraving after the lost sculpture by van Tetrode. Amstredam, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-47.332. Public domain.

74. Anonymous, Venus, Faun and Amor, engraving after the lost sculpture by van Tetrode (published by Petrus Overraat). Amstredam, Rijksmuseum RP-P-1909-1334. Public domain.

75. Benedikt Wurzelbauer, Nicolaus Pfaff, copy of a sculpture with Venus and Cupid in the Waldstein Garden in Prague. Original Prague, National Gallery P 4606. Photo Jan Bažant.

76. Successor to Giambologna, Venus and Cupid. Washington, NG 1991.242.1. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington. Open Access.

77. Giambologna, Venus di Groticella. Florence, Grotticella in Grotta Grande, Giardino Boboli. Wikimedia Commons, photo Sailko.

78. Gaetano Vascelini, engraving after Giambologna's Venus di Groticella, inscription "Feminina in atto di uscir dal bagno." F. M. Soldini, *Il reale giardino di Boboli nella sua pianta e nelle sue statue* (Firenze: 1789), pl. VIII.

79. Giambologna, Venus / bathing woman. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 82.SA.37. Public domain.

80. Daniel Hopfer, Venus and Cupid. Private collection. Wikimedia Commons, photo Nick Michael.

81. Albrecht Dürer, Laziness. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fletcher Fund, 1919) 19.73.87. Public domain.

82. Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert, frontispiece by Maarten van Heemskerck, Allegory of drunkenness and sexual promiscuity with Venus. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-P-BI-6568. Public domain.

83. Christoph Schwartz, engraving of Jan Sadeler I, Critique of Sexuality with Venus statue. Wellcome Collection, ICV no. 51428. Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 international (CC BY 4.0).

84. Christoph Murer, *Fidei exploratio* (Test of Faith). Wellcome Library no. 26678i. London, Wellcome Collection. Cite author-Non-useful 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0).

85. Hans Bock the Elder, Dance around the statue of Venus. Frankfurt, Städel Museum 2244. Public domain.

86. Jacques Jonghelinck, Venus. Madrid, Palacio Real D36. © Patrimonio nacional. Gestion fotografica no. 2020/131.

87. Daniel Mytens, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel. London, National Gallery NPG 5292. Wikimedia Commons.

88. Isaac de Caus, Venus and Cupid on a fountain in Wilton House Park. Cambridge, Trinity College, Isaac de Caus, *Hortus Penbrochianus. Le jardin de Vuilton* (London, 1640), 13. Courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.

89. Isaac de Caus, Venus pulling a thorn from her heel on a fountain in Wilton House Park. Cambridge, Trinity College. Caus, *Hortus Penbrochianus*, 11. Courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.

90. Isaac de Caus, Venus seated and drying herself on a fountain in Wilton House Park. Cambridge, Trinity College. Caus, *Hortus Penbrochianus*, 12. Courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.

91. Isaac de Caus, Venus and the Dolphin on a fountain in Wilton House Park. Cambridge, Trinity College. Caus, *Hortus Penbrochianus*, 26 (detail). Courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.

92. Isaac de Caus, Venus on a shell with Cupid in the Wilton House Park. Cambridge, Trinity College. Caus, *Hortus Penbrochianus*, 23 (detail). Courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.

93. Johann Zoffany, Tribune in the Uffizi. Windsor, Royal Collection RCIN 406983. Wikimedia Commons.

94. Conrad Martin Metz, Wilton house, in Wiltshire, the seat of the Earl of Pembroke. *Picturesque views of the principal seats of the nobility and gentry in England and Wales* (London, 1787). London, Victoria and Albert Museum (given by Dr. G. B. Gardner) E.1068-1945.

95. Cary Creed, Venus Column in Wilton Park. Cary Creed, *The Marble Antiquities, The Right Honble. the Earl of Pembrokes, at Wilton* (London, 1731), pl. 66.

96. John Donowell, Temple of Venus and Venus's Parlour, West Wycombe Park, Buckinghamshire. Wikimedia Commons, photo London Road.

97. George Knapton. Sir Francis Dashwood. By permission of the Society of Dilettanti. Courtesy of the Photographic Survey, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

98. Medici Venus. Photo ca. 1875 - ca. 1900. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-F-00-3913. Public domain.

99. Jean-Baptiste Pigalle, Venus. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst (Bode Museum) 2836. Marble copy in Sanssouci Park, Potsdam. Wikimedia Commons, photo Steffen_Heilfort.

100. Johan Tobias Sergel, Venus Callipyge. Stockhom, Nationalmuseum NMSk 360. Wikimedia Commons, photo Rainer Halama.

101. Johan Tobias Sergel, Venus Anadyomene. Stockhom, Nationalmuseum NMSk 694. Wikimedia Commons, photo Rainer Halama.

102. Antonio Canova, Pauline Borghese as Venus. Rome, Villa Borghese LIV. Wikimedia Commons.

103. Antonio Canova, Venus Italica. Venice, Museo Correr. Wikimedia Commons, photo Jean-Pierre Dalbéra, public domain.

104. Thorvaldsen, Venus. Munich, Neue Pinakothek L1852. Wikimedia Commons, photo Rufus46, public domain.

105. John Gibson, The Tinted Venus. Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery 7808. Wikimedia Commons, photo ketrin1407.

106. William England, The Tinted Venus by J. Gibson, photograph. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 2005.100.1066.1-.86. Public domain.

107. Georges Clère, Rustic Aphrodite. Paris, Louvre, south facade of the Cour Carrée. Wikimedia Commons, photo Jastrow.

108. Scene of Pierre Louys' play "Aphrodite." *Le Mirroir*, 22 March 1914.

109. Auguste Rodin, Aphrodite. Paris, Musée Rodin. Wikimedia Commons, photo Jean-Pierre Dalbéra.

110. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Venus Triumphant. Cagnes-sur-Mer, Musée Renoir. Wikimedia Commons, photo MOSSOT.

111. Aristide Maillol, Vénus au collier. Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon 1935-1. Public domain.

112. Gerhard Marcks, Thüringer Venus. Bremen, Gerhard-Marcks-Haus 016/17. VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021. Photo courtesy of the museum.

113. Arturo Martini, Venus of the Ports. Treviso, Museo Civico "Luigi Bailo."
https://www.villaggioglobaleinternational.it/sala_stampa/altadef.asp?id=166

114. Outraged Citizens/ Empörte Bürger. Stuttgart, Landesmedienzentrum Baden-Württemberg. Wikimedia Commons.

115. Honoré Daumier, lithograph. *Le Charivari*, January 21, 1850. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1980.1114.5. Public domain.

116. Thomas Theodor Heine, Before the Medici Venus. *Simplicissimus,* 4, 1899 (36), 292.

117. Linley Sambourne, The Model "British Matron." *Punch*, 24 October 1885, 195.

118. Franz Jüttner, Caricature on Lex Heinz with Venus de Medici. *Lustige Blätter: schönstes buntes Witzblatt Deutschlands* 12, 1900 (12), 2.

119. Ferdinand von Reznicek, Caricature on Lex Heinz. *Der wahre Jacob*, 17, 1900 (358), 3221.

120. Ferdinand von Reznicek, Caricature of Lex Heinz with Venus de Milo. *Simplicissimus*, 4, 1900 (49), 396.

121. Caricature on Lex Heinz. *Der wahre Jacob*, 17, 1900 (355), 3185.

122. German postcard. Circa 1900.

123. German postcard. Circa 1900.

124. Medici Venus. Firenze, Uffizi 224. Drawig Nina Bažantová.

125. Capitoline Venus. Rome, Musei Capitolini 409 . Drawig Nina Bažantová.

126. Venus de Milo. Paris, Musée du Louvre Ma 399. Drawig Nina Bažantová.

127. Rene Magritte, Shackles of Copper. Flickr, photo Phil Richards (Chatsworth House, Bakewell, Derbyshire, Exhibition Christies 2011).

128. Roland d'Ursel, René Magritte in his Brussels apartment. René Magritte, *Manifestes et autres écrits* (Bruxelles, 1972), dustjacket.

130. Man Ray, Venus restaurée. Los Angeles, The Getty Museum 86.XM.626.23.

131. Salvador Dali, Venus de Milo with Drawers. Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago 2005. 424. Flickr, photo Quinn Dombrowski.

132. Michelangelo Pistoletto, Venus of the Rags (Venere degli stracci). Washington DC, Hirshhorn Museum, 2013. Flickr, photo Xuan Che.

133. William Turnbull, Aphrodite. Chatsworth House, Derbyshire. Wikimedia Commons, photo Leigh Barlow, public domain

134. Jim Dine, Looking Toward the. Flickr, photo John Wisniewski.

135. Jim Dine, Cleveland Venus. Cleveland, Carl B. Stokes Court House. Wikimedia Commons, photo Warren LeMay.

136. Michal Gabriel, The birth of Venus, plaster composite, 2011-2012. Private collection, photo Ondřej Polák.

137. William Hogarth, Statue of Venus as the Embodiment of Beauty, engraving. William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty. Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (London, 1753), pl. 1. Boston Public Library. Digital Commonwealth.

138. Abraham Bosse, A Sculptor Presenting his Statue of Venus and Cupid. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 2012.136.18. Bequest of Phyllis Massar, 2011. Public domain.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is my pleasant obligation to thank all of those who have played a part in the creation of this book, primarily my wife Nina, whose drawings are only a visible part of her whole contribution to each page of the publication. The photographs that illustrate this book were obtained thanks to the willingness of artists, photographs, institutions and their staff. These include: Bettina Berg and Gerhard Marks Haus, Bremen; Boston Public Library; Uffizi, Florence; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; The Cleveland Museum of Art; Michal Gabriel; The Courtauld Institute of Art, London; Landesmedienzentrum Baden-Württemberg; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Peter Hues, National Gallery of Art, Washington; Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid; Sandy Paul, Trinity College Library, Cambridge; Ondřej Polák; Rijksmuseum Amstredam; The Society of Dilettanti, London; Städel Museum, Frankfurt; José Luis Valverde Merino a Javier Rodrigo, Patrimonio nacional. Dirección de las collectiones reales, Madrid; V&A Images, London; The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD; Yale University Art Gallery, and, last but not least, photographers who have made their works available on Wikimedia Commons and Flickr. My thanks also go to Skyland Václav Kobylak for the English translation of this book. In addition, K. Bender generously allowed me to look through his archive of post-ancient depictions of Venus. Last but not least, thanks also to the anonymous reviewers for the suggestions that helped improve the book. As a final note, this work could not have been created without the support of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.[1]

[1] The publication of this book was supported by the Czech Academy of Sciences Strategy AV21 Programme "Europe and State: Between Barbarism and Civilization" researched at the Centre for Classical Studies, Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

INTRODUCTION

The Subject, Structure and Methodology of the Book

The subject of this book is the depiction of Greek Aphrodite, whom the Romans venerated as Venus. Everyone knows statues of this goddess, and for that very reason, they became the brunt of mockery in the beginning of the 20th century by avant-garde artists who, as Hans Arp conveyed profanely, *gave the clyster to Venus of Milo.*[1] Nonetheless, in the past decades, the public has had the opportunity to see ancient statues of Venus[2] or works inspired by them at a series of exhibitions around the world,[3] which is proof that they can still attract contemporary viewers. They can also provoke adverse reactions, because it involves a sensitive subject, the portrayal of naked women by men and for a male audience. The book contains opinions and perspectives that I have merely reproduced without identifying with them in any way. I am fully aware that the male approach to depicting a naked Venus can be offensive to women today.

The score of monographs dealing with ancient depictions of Venus began with the first one in 1873,[4] but lately they have distinctly risen in number.[5] K. Bender has already published six books containing lists of post-ancient depictions of the goddess in individual European cultures accompanied by extensive bibliographies.[6] The sheer number of depictions of Aphrodite and Venus is staggering, and therefore in this book I will focus only on statues. I will deal with depictions of the goddess in painting, graphics, artistic crafts and literature only to the extent necessary for understanding the sculptures themselves. This boundary presented itself naturally, as it corresponds to the way that Venus lives on in our imagination. Each of us first thinks of her statue,

---

[1] El Lissitzky and Hans Arp, *Die Kunstismen. Les Ismes de l'art. The Isms of Art* (Zürich: Eugen Rentsch, 1925), x.

[2] See Christine Kondoleon et al. (eds.), *Aphrodite and the Gods of Love* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2011).

[3] See, for example, Ekkehard Mai (ed.), *Faszination Venus: Bilder einer Göttin von Cranach bis Cabanel* (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 2000); Maria Sframeli, *The Myth of Venus* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale 2003); Michael Squire et al. (eds.): *The Classical Now* (London: Elephant Publishing, 2018); Thomas Kren et al. (eds.), *The Renaissance Nude* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2018).

[4] Johann Jacob Bernoulli, *Aphrodite: Ein Baustein zur griechischen Kunstmythologie* (Leipzig: Wilhlem Engelmann, 1873).

[5] See, for example, Göta Johansson (ed.), *Aphrodite: The Making of a Goddess* (Lund: Palmkron, 2005); Karen Schoch, *Die doppelte Aphrodite – alt und neu bei griechischen Kultbildern* (Göttingen: Universitätverlag, 2009); Mustafa Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler: Studien zu aufgestützten/angelehnten weiblichen Figuren der griechischen Marmorplastik* (Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2013); Kathrin Barbara Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit: Form, Funktion und Stellenwert klassischer Skulpturen im Hellenismus am Beispiel der Göttin Aphrodite* (Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2014); Robert Sturm, *Kauernde Aphrodite: Die Bedeutung des Bildmotivs in der antiken und postantiken Kunst* (Hamburg: Dr. Josef Kovac, 2015); Mandy Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus. Ihr Nachleben zwischen Aktualisierung und Neumodellierung von 1500 bis 1570* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2016).

[6] K. Bender, *The Iconography of Venus, 1.2: The Italian Venus Revisited* (s.l.: Lulu Com 2018); K. Bender, *The Iconography of Venus, 2,1: The French Venus* (s.l.: Lulu Com 2020); K. Bender, *The Iconography of Venus, 3.1: The Venus of the Low Countries* (s.l.: Lulu Com 2010); K. Bender, *The Iconography of Venus, 4.1: The German, Swiss and Central-European Venus* (s.l.: Lulu Com 2012); K. Bender: *The Iconography of Venus, 5.1: The British and Irish Venus* (s.l.: Lulu Com 2013). K. Bender: *The Iconography of Venus, 6.1. The Venus of the Eastern-, Southern- and Northern- European Regions*. N.p.: Lulu Com 2014.

because she has been preserved since ancient times primarily in this form. The most popular sculptures tend to be those of the naked Venus, which evoke her birth from the sea foam and her subsequent bath. They summarize not only her myth, but at the same time give visibility to her essence, which is erotic attraction, thus allowing one element to meld with the other.

The content of this book is the story of ancient and post ancient sculptural representations of Venus understood as a whole. Kenneth Clark's book,[7] to which I will return below, is still an unequalled model in the diachronic approach to depicting Venus, as scholars who have subsequently dealt with this ancient goddess have always approached her synchronically. They have either focused on the ancient Venus or on her reception in post-ancient Europe. In comprehensive works, there is either a short introductory chapter on the goddess in Greco-Roman antiquity, or contrarily there is an equally brief final chapter on her "next life" after the demise of ancient civilization. To date, only one single monograph has been written that studies the sculptures of Venus from the beginning in classical Greece all the way up to post-ancient Europe. Nonetheless, Berthold Hinz focuses on one sculptural type only, which he furthermore studies only up to the beginning of the 16th century.[8] On the contrary, the book that the reader now reads analyses all sculptural types and furthermore explores their reception in the post-ancient world (unless otherwise stated, all dates are AD). The goddess was known in the post-ancient world under her Latin name, and therefore her Greek name will be used in the following text only in connection with ancient Greece.

The structure of this book is straightforward. Its individual chapters are ordered chronologically; where necessary, however, their internal ordering combines the chronological perspective with the thematic. The first chapter explores the origin and development of the sculptural types of Aphrodite in the context of the evolution in the religious practice of Greek communities. This process determined the further development of Venus imagery. We will trace not only its primary stages but also its entire thematic breadth. Our main focus will be on the Cnidia, Praxiteles' statue from around 360 BC, the prototype of most later goddess statues. The second chapter is devoted to the adaptation of Greek sculptural types of Aphrodite for the needs of the Roman cult of Venus, which was closely linked to the Roman state and also played an important role in Roman concepts of the afterlife. The Romans were primarily responsible for continuing the tradition that the Greek statues of Aphrodite established. These statues are largely lost, but their memory has been preserved through countless Roman versions. The third chapter deals with the break in the representation of Venus brought about by the fall of the ancient Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity. This short chapter is the most important of the whole book because it will deal with the period when the modern view of ancient Venus statues was taking shape. Early modern Europe saw them primarily through medieval eyes, which profoundly influenced their reception in subsequent centuries.

The fourth chapter deals with the Italian reception of the ancient statue of the naked Venus, which began in the 15th century and culminated in the 16th century. This chapter is the longest one in the book and forms its core. It describes a paradox

[7] Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A study of Ideal Art* (London: John Murray, 1956).
[8] Berthold Hinz, *Aphrodite: Geschichte einer abendländischen Passion* (Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1998).

that has not yet received the attention of art historians. Renaissance Italy has become very thoroughly familiar with all the ancient sculptural types of the naked Venus, but this had only a limited impact on the original sculptural production. For clarity, the chapter is divided into thematic blocks that analyse in detail the various aspects of this paradox. We will first deal with the Roman collections of ancient statues and the various ways in which the knowledge of ancient statues of Venus was spread. We will study their reception in the artistic creation of the time in the independent sections devoted to the production of statuettes and monumental statues. One section is devoted to Giambologna, with whom the reception of ancient models of the depiction of Venus in Italian renaissance sculpture both culminated and simultaneously ended, as the ancient goddess was transformed into a bathing woman. In the last section, this development is connected with the inconsistent relationship to Venus and her ancient statues. Early modern Europe admired these statues and condemned the goddess.

In the two chapters that follow, we will explore the development of the reception of ancient statues of Venus after the 16th century, when focus on her shifted to ultramontane Europe. In the fifth chapter, the first section traces how the Renaissance concept of Venus statues flourished and faded in England over the 17th-18th centuries. The second section briefly discusses why readers learned little about ancient Venus statues in the work of the founder of art history, Johann Joachim Winckelmann. The final section, which is devoted to neoclassicism, emphasises that in the first half of the 19th century, sculptors imitated the forms of ancient Venus statues but changed their meaning. In the last chapter, we will elaborate upon the final phase of the reception of ancient statues of Venus. From the third quarter of the 19th century, female nakedness, the confirmation of the patriarchal concept of the world or its resolute rejection, and other isolated aspects of ancient statues of Venus began to come to the forefront. Venus de Milo will be discussed at lengths because it is a fitting example of the use of ancient statues of Venus in modern political propaganda. In the 1930s, surrealist artists began to explore responses to ancient statues of Venus in the subconscious of modern man. After the second half of the 20th century, some artists have turned their attention also to Venus as a goddess.

At the end of the introduction, a brief comment on the methodology of the book. In the 20th century, the past lost the firm contours that it had possessed in the 19th century, and began to change more quickly and radically with each successive generation. The impossibility of reaching some "definitive" image of the past that was not immediately refuted had an indisputably positive effect at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. Scholars shifted their attention from the search for the "one correct" image of the past to the way in which those who actually lived in the past perceived themselves and their culture. Only in previous decades have scholars begun to notice more attentively how this perception changed in time and space. They are interested in how the work of art was perceived by the audience for whom it was intended and how its perception has evolved in later centuries, including today. Works of art are understood not as manifestations of evolutionary tendencies guided by their internal logic or as the visibility of subconscious or timeless ideas but in their temporal and local conditioning. In the previous decades, this approach has

also found support in classical archaeology.[9] Also, in this book, sculptures of Venus were not the final goal of the research, but always its starting point.

The methodology of this book is the same as in my previous works. In the 1980s, when I was researching the depiction of life on Athenian vases from the 6th-4th centuries BC, I was interested in how these depictions changed over time and what these changes might say about Athenian society.[10] For me, what these images depicted was secondary; what was primary were the shifts in the way life was represented. The Athenian vase painter can distort beyond recognition the relationship between an individual "scene from reality" and real life as he knew it. He could depict what he saw, e.g. a naked women bathing, but he could also show what he dreamed of or what his customers wanted to see. I was not interested in solo scenes, but only in a series of scenes whose development I can objectively describe. I took a similar approach to the depiction of Venus. I was similarly uninterested in individual statues and their relationship to the goddess, focusing rather on recurring pictorial types whose changes showed tendencies that could be clearly defined. I was interested in what types of statues were used to represent Venus and how their composition changed over time.

The advantage of the combined synchronic and diachronic approach lies in the fact that it has led to a distinct increase in the historical value of the individual sculptures, which are always understood as part of a larger whole, which is the source of their purpose. I will not be interested in individual scenes and their relation to the goddess, but above all, in recurring image types whose changes show tendencies that can be clearly defined. I will be interested above all in the variations of iconographic themes and motifs. It is possible to analyse what they have in common and how they differ, thus allowing us to approach the content of the message. Sculptures of Venus are thus merely the subject of the book. Its contents are formed by the transformations in her representation. These transformations may tell us something about the relationship these statues had to the goddess and the women who served as models for their creation.

People tend to link Venus to "eternal beauty," and depictions of her are considered a visualization of the "female essence." However, the reader will find nothing on this topic in the book. On the contrary, I will be interested in the dramatic changes related to the development of artistic culture and the re-evaluation of deities, rituals, sexuality and the position of women in society.

"Renaissance" and "Renascences"

In the second half of this book, which is devoted to the reception of ancient Venus statues in modern Western culture, two art-historical concepts, the Renaissance and the nude, take centre stage. In the following two thematic blocks, we will briefly summarize their historical development.

---

[9] See, for example, Rosemary Barrow, *Creating Continuity with the Traditions of High Art: The Use of Classical Art and Literature by Victorian Painters 1860-1912* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007); Rachel Meredith Kousser, *Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture: The Allure of the Classical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Tonio Hölscher, *Visual Power in Ancient Greece and Rome: Between Art and Social Reality* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

[10] Above all: Bažant 1985 (cf. Osborne 2018).

Italian intellectuals and artists understood what we call the Renaissance in a different manner than we do today. We have a tendency to emphasize the continuity with ancient Greece and Rome. Those who experienced and created this epoch understood it as a discontinuity, which gave them a new and better start. In his work "Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects" published in 1550 (and in an amended addition in 1568), Giorgio Vasari compared the development of art to the development of a person, who is born, gets old, and finally dies. This allows him to understand the *process of a second birth (rinascità)* that took place in the art of his time.[11] After a blossoming of art comes a decline and definitive end, which is the basic prerequisite for a new beginning, i.e. the rebirth that took place in the 15th and 16th centuries.

However, today we use the term *renaissance*, which is taken from French. The reason for this is the fact that historian Jules Michelet planted the Italian concept of the cultural revolution in the 15th and 16th centuries to European consciousness in his work from 1855 entitled "La Renaissance". Michelet radically reevaluated the Italian concept of the cultural revolution. It didn't happen until the 16th century, not in Italy but France. The goal of Michelet's "renaissance" was the discovery of man and the material world. The essence of this intellectual revolution was the development of the empirical study of nature and the renewal of the Greco-Latin program for the self-development of humankind via reason. A political dimension was added to Michelet's concept by Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt in his groundbreaking work from 1860, "The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy" (Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien), thanks to which the French term entered all world languages. According to Burckhardt, a person in the Middle Ages was primarily embedded in a class or community; it was only in the Italian Renaissance that he became a self-aware individual who was fully allowed to develop his genius. From Michelet and Burckhardt on, the Italian Renaissance in the general consciousness has been venerated as the rediscovery of something that forms an essential part of Western civilization and is a permanent and fundamental part of it.[12]

Perhaps the most influential art historian of the 20th century, Erwin Panofsky, refuted this construction, in which antiquity, the Middle Ages and the modern period are isolated from one another according to the "thesis – antithesis – synthesis" scheme. His analyses are based on the concept that the development of Italian Renaissance art and the reception of ancient works of art in this epoch was much more linked to the previous epoch of European history and much less to ancient Greco-Roman culture. Nonetheless, even Panofsky assumed that the reception of antiquity was the goal here and understood the development of art as being designated by this goal. It was a reaction to the "revolt of the medievalists."[13] As early as the 1920s, specialists in the European Middle Ages began to point to the fact that ancient culture did not end with

---

[11] Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de'più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed archittettori, 1568*, ed. Gaetani Milanesi, vol. 1-9 (Florence: Sansoni, 1878-1885), vol. 1, 1878, 243. Cf. Matteo Burioni, "Vasari's Rinascità: History, Anthropology or Art Criticism?" in: *Renaissance? Perceptions of Continuity and Discontinuity in Europe, c. 1300– c. 1550,* ed. Alexander Lee et al. (Leiden: Brill, Leiden 2010), 115– 28.

[12] For Michelet and Burckhardt, see Jo Tollebeek, "'Renaissance' and 'fossilization:' Michelet, Burckhardt, and Huizinga," *Renaissance Studies* 15, no. 3 (September 2001): 354-366.

[13] Leidulf Melve, "The Revolt of the Medievalists: Directions in Recent Research on the Twelfth-century Renaissance," *Journal of Medieval History* 32, no. 3 (2006): 231-252.

the fall of the ancient Roman Empire. The Italian Renaissance was truly not the first and exclusive return to ancient models; the so-called "Macedonian renaissance" had already taken place in the Byzantine Empire in the 10th century. There had been a whole series of renaissances in the west, which spanned over nearly all of the Middle Ages, from the Northumbrian to Carolingian renaissance to the Ottonian renaissance and renaissance of the 12th century, which ended *de facto* after 1250.

Erwin Panofsky attempted to save the uniqueness of the Italian Renaissance and suggested that we not call these retrospective movements renaissances, as they were something fundamentally different.[14] He therefore dubbed them "renascences," which differed from the Italian Renaissance in the "principle of disjunction." Whenever a form was adopted from ancient times, it was almost always complemented by Christian content. On the contrary, whenever an ancient topic was adopted, it was almost always presented in a non-ancient and usually medieval form. According to Panofsky, only from the Italian Renaissance onward did ancient topics begin to be depicted in a thoroughly ancient form. However, the "principle of disjunction" is not a natural law, as there are so many exceptions to it that even using the term "exceptions" is a misnomer. The Italian Renaissance did not differ fundamentally in its intensity, extent of transformation or reinterpretation of ancient forms and topics from the previous epochs.[15]

Ancient Greco-Roman culture is without a doubt a part of the history of Western civilization, but its reception in post-ancient Europe was not something that was fated to happen or had to occur as a rule. We can create a fairly good image of other alternative models that stemmed from specific historical circumstances and what fields such as economic and political history, climatology, demographics, and religious studies tell us about the given epoch. In 1995, the respected "Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies" reacted to this new situation by renaming itself to the "Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies."[16] The term "renaissance," which is burdened by tradition and evokes a certain cultural turning point, is generally replaced by the ideologically neutral and purely chronological term "early modern period." The "rinascità" of Vasari and the "renaissance" of Michelet, Burckhardt and Panofsky provide us with a better understanding of the reception of ancient statues of Venus in the European culture of the 14th to 16th centuries, but they in no way explain it. As we will demonstrate in this book, in the case of Venus, the "principle of disjunction" never lost its cogency. From Renaissance Italy to the present day, people have looked at Venus from the position of a medieval man, although artists have recreated the ancient Greek art form in depicting her.

---

[14] Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1960), 84.
[15] Cf. Michael Squire, "Reception: The Legacy of Greek Sculpture," in *Handbook of Greek Sculpture*, ed. Olga Palagia (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 725–767.
[16] Cf. Salvatore Settis, "Rinascimento e dacedenza, una simmetria necessaria," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 56, no. 2 (2014): 139-151.

"Nude" and "Naked"

> *So much of the nude body as in daily life of the nation may be shown with modesty, and seen with reverence and delight – so much, and no more, ought to be shown by the national arts, either of painting or sculpture. What more than this, either art exhibits, will assuredly, pervert taste and in all probability morals.*
> John Ruskin, *The Eagle's Nest* (Chicago IL: Belford & Clarke, 1872), 102.

Modern Western culture continually returns to ancient Greece and Rome and their visual arts, but each time from a different position, with a different goal, and with different results.[17] The depiction of the "goddess of love" in various contexts and different cultures had a common denominator, i.e. Venus, but the form and content of these depictions was constantly transforming, often completely. This approach, which prevails among scholars today, is the opposite way in which Venus was seen by the famous art historian Lord Kenneth Clark, who was more interested in the way these depictions did not change or, more exactly, the way in which they were not supposed to change according to the dominant opinion of the time. Clark's "The Nude" was the very first book aimed at the general public that dealt with the reception of ancient visual culture in post-ancient Europe.[18] In it, the author focused on the depiction of the human body, primarily the female body, and thus systematically discussed Venus, whose ancient sculptures he understood as a generally acknowledged model.

Clark's book was a manifesto protesting against the relativization of everything that Western culture had traditionally endorsed. This negative wave rose as early as the end of the 19th century and a reaction to it was the creation of a new scientific discipline, the goal of which was to study ancient traditions in Western visual art. The success of scholarly books by Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky, Ernst Gombrich and others culminated in Clark's monograph, which is one of the most widely read books on the fine arts to this day. The success of the new discipline and thus Clark's book was due to the stance which these works held, i.e. one that was based on nostalgia for a static, patriarchal world of unchanging values, the emblem of which was the ennobling sculpture of the naked Venus and the female nude in general. Classical archeologist Nikolaus Himmelmann also dealt with nakedness in art in the 1980s from similar positions, but almost exclusively in the tradition of German idealism.[19] As of late, the depiction of the naked body has become a frequent topic among classical archeologists and art historians, which has led to a fundamental revision of Clark and Himmelmann's normative concept.[20]

---

[17] Cf. Ursula Rombach and Peter Seiler (eds.), *Imitatio als Transformation: Theorie und Praxis Der Antikennachahmung in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2012).

[18] Clark, *The Nude*. Cf. Kathryn Moore Heleniak, "Naked/Nude," in *Encyclopedia of Comparative Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, ed. Helene. E. Roberts, vol. 2 (Chicago IL: Fitzboy Dearborne, 1998), 641–649.

[19] Nikolaus Himmelmann, *Ideale Nacktheit* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 1985); idem, *Antike Götter im Mittelalter* (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1986); idem, *Ideale Nacktheit in der griechischen Kunst* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990). Cf. Tonio Hölscher, "Nikolaus Himmelmann: Ideale Nacktheit in der griechischen Kunst," *Gnomon* 65, no. 6 (1993): 519-528.

[20] E.g. Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), 12-33; Helen McDonald, *Erotic Ambiguities: The Female Nude in Art* (London: Routledge, 2000), 7-30; John-Paul Stonard, "Kenneth Clark's 'The Nude. A Study of Ideal Art, 1956,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 152, no. 1286 (May 2010): 317-321; Mireille M. Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge:

Clark saw the nude as a recasting of nature into an aesthetically perceived work of art, which was expressed in the secondary title of his book *A Study of Ideal Art*. The final paragraph of the book ends with a glorification of ancient nudes: *The Greeks perfected the nude in order that man feel like a god, and in a sense this is still its function, for although we no longer suppose that God is like a beautiful man, we still feel close to divinity in those flashes of self-identification when, through our own bodies, we seem to be aware of the universal order*.[21] We have no proof of the fact that the Greeks perfected the nude in order for man to feel like a god; on the contrary, we do know for sure that they created these sculptures to honor the gods. All ancient Greek depictions of Aphrodite were the subject or evocation of a religious cult. Originals of all sculptural types of this goddess which have been preserved from ancient Greece were created in order to be displayed in the temples of the goddess that they depicted. Sculptures of gods in ancient times were designated primarily to the gods, and their interpretation must stem from this fact.

Clark was also wrong in the way he approached post-ancient depictions of the naked body. He assumed that the goal of the visual arts was to create a depiction that had no tinge of uneasiness and was not disconcerting. Only ten years after the publication of Clark's book, Lucian Freud, grandson of the founder of psychoanalysis, began to depict the nakedness of women and men in a way that intentionally aimed at evoking a feeling of embarrassment in the viewer.[22] However, this in no way suggests that they are not artistic nudes. Furthermore, this method of depicting nakedness is clearly dominant from the end of the 20th century. Postmodern nudes do not allow for the soothing experience of a universal order of which the British historian wrote, as their creators plunge into the depths of a reality of wholly concrete people, which is always bizarre and often intolerable to the majority of viewers. We may disagree with it, we may dream of a world in which people are similar to gods, but we must take our present visual culture into consideration, as through it we understand the art of the past.

The nudes of Lucian Freud did not appear strictly out of thin air. As early as in ancient times and the Italian Renaissance, naked women were depicted by even the greatest of artists in a way that was not only perfectly perplexing, but also sometimes evoked a feeling of disgust. This is the case of Botticelli's series from 1482-1483 illustrating the bizarre story from Boccaccio's Decameron.[23] The dominant element of these paintings is a beautiful naked girl who is, however, hunted as if she were an animal, torn apart by dogs and finally disemboweled.[24] According to Clark, the sight of the human body always evokes unpleasant feelings, and therefore must always be *clothed by a consistent style*.[25] Rembrandt, however, intentionally depicted the female body in order to give the viewer the impression that he or she was looking at a real

---

Cambridge University Press, 2015), 172-197; Jill Burke, *The Italian Renaissance Nude* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 14-15.

[21] Clark, *The Nude*, 357.

[22] Cf. Frances Borzello, *The Naked Nude* (Farnborough: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 6-12.

[23] Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, 5.8.

[24] Cf. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus: Nudité, rêve, cruauté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 86-98.

[25] Clark, *The Nude*, 320.

live woman who was standing before the artist.[26] Clark was naturally aware of this fact, and therefore writes about Rembrandt's naked women in the chapter "*The Alternative Convention.*" The name of the chapter implies a hierarchy of conventions which, however, never existed. The depictions of Venus, which we will study in this book from beginning to present, have always oscillated between two opposite poles – the nude which was attractive in Clark's era and the nakedness that evoked unpleasant feelings. The goal of depicting Venus, however, was always both an expression of divinity, which is by principle not depictable, and a portrait of femininity. The more this portrait corresponds to sensual experience, the more attractive and also problematic it becomes. What has changed in time and space has been the intensity and understanding of these two basic components of every depiction of Venus.

[26] Cf. Eric Jan Sluijter, "The Nude, the Artist and the Model. The Case of Rembrandt," in *The Nude and the Norm in the Early Modern Low Countries,* ed. Karolien De Clippel et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 11-34.

1. APHRODITE. 8th to 1st Century BC

Veiled

Greek sculptors have depicted Aphrodite naked since the middle of the 4th century BC, and this is the form in which we most often imagine her today. However, the earliest Greek depictions show the goddess clothed from head to toe, as was also the standard depiction of her pre-Eastern counterparts.[1] Aphrodite shares a score of traits with her distant predecessor, Sumerian Inanna, which the Akkadians adopted as Ishtar.[2] The Greeks became acquainted with Ishtar thanks to the Phoenicians dwelling on the Syrio-Palestinian coast, where they worshiped her as Astarte.

Nevertheless, we find depictions of naked women throughout the whole Mediterranean, and their epicentres where the primary stimuli originated were in Egypt and Mesopotamia. These two cultures mutually influenced one another in terms of depictions of naked women. The series of nude female statues, which begins in the second half of the 4th millennium BC, is characterized by nudity and gestures, hands lowered along the body, cupping one or both breasts, one hand pointing to the lap, where the genitals may be depicted in detail.[3] At the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, unmistakable innovations were made in these depictions. While in the past often grotesquely enlarged reproductive organs symbolizing the fertility of the mythical being often dominated, the new type corresponded to visual experience, aiming to please the eye and create physical arousal.[4] In the Near East, the tradition of these seductive female nudes continued on into the first millennium BC.[5] In the 8th century BC, we encounter their reception in Greece, but in no way can we claim with certainty that they depict Aphrodite.[6] Furthermore, in the 7th – 6th centuries, Greek depictions of naked women rapidly disappeared.

An exception to this rule was Cyprus, where a female deity that was depicted naked had been worshiped since the second millennium BC.[7] This deity was simply

---

[1] Cf. Henriette Broekema, *Inanna, Lady of Heaven and Earth. History of a Sumerian Goddess* (Leeuwarden: Elikser B. V. Uitgeverij 2014), 372-380.

[2] Cf. Stephanie Lynn Budin, *The Origin of Aphrodite* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2003); David T. Sugimoto (ed.), *Transformation of a Goddess: Ishtar, Astarte, Aphrodite* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2014).

[3] Cf. Peter Roger Stuart Moorey, *Idols of the People: Miniature Images of Clay in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25-35; Stephanie L. Budin, "The Nude Female in the Southern Levant. A Mixing of Syro-Mesopotamian and Egyptian Iconographies," in *Cult and Ritual on the Levantine Coast and its Impact on the Eastern Mediterranean Realm*, ed. Anne-Marie Maila Afeiche (Beyrouth: Ministère de la culture, 2015), 315–335.

[4] See Zainab Bahrani, "The Iconography of the Nude in Mesopotamia," in *Notes in the History of Art* 12, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 12-19; id., *Women of Babylon. Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia* (London: Routledge, 2001), 83-90.

[5] See Amy Rebecca Gansel, "Images and Conceptions of Ideal Feminine Beauty in Neo-Assyrian Royal Contexts, c. 883-627 BCE," in: *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art,* ed. Brian Brown et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 391-420.

[6] See Stephanie Böhm, *Die "nackte Göttin." Zur Ikonographie und Deutung unbekleideter weiblicher Figuren in der frühgeschichtlichen Kunst* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1990).

[7] See Danielle Leibundgut Wieland, "Tonstatuen und -statuetten der paphischen Göttin aus dem Heiligtum der Aphrodite in Alt-Paphos auf Cypern," in *Figurines de terre cuite en Méditerranée grecque et*

called the Goddess, or the Goddess of Paphos according to the place of the same name where her primary temple was located. According to ancient Greek tradition, the cult of Aphrodite came from Cyprus. According to Herodotus, the Temple of Aphrodite Ourania (i.e. the Heavenly) was in Ashkelon, Palestine. *This temple, as I learn from what I hear, is the oldest of all temples of the goddess, for the temple in Cyprus was founded from it, as the Cyprians themselves say: and the temple on Cythera was founded by Phoenicians from the same land of Syria.*[8] Pausanias repeated Herodotus's theory in connection with Aphrodite's temple at the Athenian Agora, which proves that this opinion in the Greco-Roman world was dominant and held fast until at least the 2nd century.[9] Contemporary scholarship also basically agrees with Herodotus's version. Cyprus thus seemed predestined to be the place where Aphrodite's visual type was created. However, she was not matched with the Goddess of Paphos until the 4th century BC and the first depictions of Aphrodite as we know them from Greece appeared there for the first time.[10] In Cyprus, roots of the cult of Aphrodite stretch back at the end of the 2nd millennium BC, but in the next millennium Cypriots only passively adopted artistic stimuli from other Greek communities.

In the 8th century BC, the Greek mythological tradition began to take on the form that we know today. One of the oldest Greek written documents is the inscription in Euboean script from the third quarter of the 8th century BC on a ceramic cup produced in Rhodes but found on the Italian island of Ischia.[11] In this inscription, the simple ceramic drinking vessel is compared to the legendary golden chalice of the mythical King Nestor. *I am the cup of Nestor good for drinking. Whoever drinks from this cup, desire for beautifully crowned Aphrodite will seize him instantly.*[12] The inscription proves that Aphrodite was associated from the very beginning with entertainment, alcoholic intoxication and sex. The circumstances surrounding the creation of the inscription and its humorous tone point to the intimate relationship that would be typical of this deity until the end of the ancient period.

Among the Olympian gods, only Aphrodite had a name that declared her sphere of activity. The phrase "that which pertains to Aphrodite" (τα αφροδίσια) meant sexual intercourse, the verb ἀφροδισιάζειν mean to fornicate, etc.[13] In the first Greek literary works, Homer's epic poems Iliad and Odyssey, which are dated to the 8th century BC, there is not a single mention of Aphrodite's nakedness. Nonetheless, Helen in Homer's Iliad realized *when she marked the beauteous neck of the goddess, her lovely bosom,* and in Homer's hymn to Aphrodite *her tender throat and her white breast*

---

romaine, eds. Arthur Muller and Ergün Laflı (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Éditions du Septentrion, 2015), 589-603.

[8] Herodotus, *Histories,* 1.105. English translation A. D. Godley.

[9] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 1.14.

[10] Cf. Giorgos Papantoniou, "Hellenising the Cypriot Goddess: Reading the Amathousian Terracotta Figurines," in: *From Pella to Gandhara: Hybridisation and Identity in the Art and Architecture of the Hellenistic East,* ed. Anna Kouremenos et al. (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2011), 35-48.

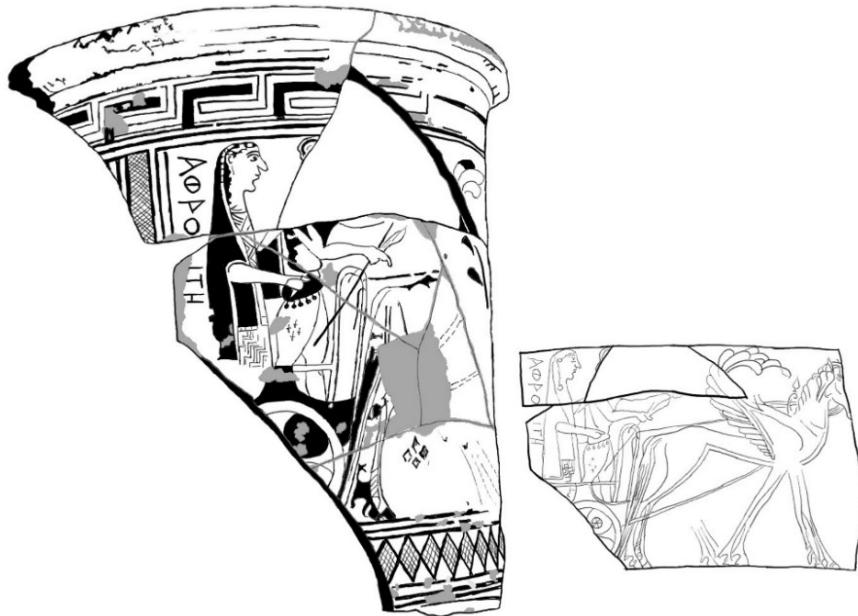
[11] Rhodian cup (kotyle), 740-720 BC. Ischia, Museo di Pithecusae 166788.

[12] English translation Ch. Faraone. For Nestor's cup see Homer, *The Illiad* 11, 632-637. Cf. Matthias Steinhart, "Zwei 'Becher des Nestor' und der Zauber der Aphrodite," *Würzburger Jahrbücher* 36 (2012): 7-38.

[13] See Barbara Breitenberger, *Aphrodite and Eros: The Development of Erotic Mythology in Early Greek Poetry and Cult* (London: Routledge, 2007), chap. 4 – 7.

are also emphasized.[14] Contrary to Athena and Artemis, Aphrodite was not upset in the slightest to be seen naked by someone – rather the contrary. When she was caught *in flagranti* while fornicating with Ares, Aphrodite apparently did not mind the Olympian gods watching her; the other goddesses, however, refused to look at the naked couple in bed out of shame.[15]

As was stressed above, Aphrodite's close link to sex was not initially expressed by her nakedness. In the fifth hymn, she is preparing for a visit to Anchises, with whom she is in love. She first bathes and anoints herself with aromatic oil, then dresses. When she comes to Anchises, the young man marvels at her dress and jewelry.[16] Even the story of Aphrodite's punished infidelity with Ares ends with the goddess bathing at home, anointing herself with divine oil, and dressing.[17] The repeating three-part sequence – bathing, anointment with oil and dressing – corresponded to cultic practice in Aphrodite's temples, which points to the fact that the oldest and unpreserved wooden statues of the goddess were clothed, just as in the oldest preserved depictions.



1. Aphrodite and Ares on a chariot, Naxian painting on a fragment of an amphora, mid 7th century BC.

In the 7th century BC, when Aphrodite's temples existed at least in Argos, we have evidence of the first depictions of Aphrodite with names included. The first preserved depiction of Aphrodite that includes her name is the Naxian painting on a fragment of amphora of the mid-7th century BC (**1**).[18] Aphrodite is riding in a chariot with an armed man whose identity is not preserved in the inscription but is evidently Ares. Male-female couples on chariots at that time were depicted only in marriage

---

[14] Homer, *Iliad,* 3.396-397, English translation Ch. Faraone. *Homeric hymn* 6.10-11, English translation M. L. West.

[15] Homer, *Odyssey,* 8.324.

[16] *Homeric hymn,* 5.61–5.

[17] Homer, *Odyssey,* 8.365-366.

[18] Cf. Gerald P. Schaus, "The Beginning of Greek Polychrome Painting," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 108 (1988): 108.

scenes, and thus Aphrodite is evidently depicted on this painting as Ares's wife. The goddess is clothed and has a veil draped over her head, a common aspect of Greek women's clothing.[19] Aphrodite not only wore the veil, she was also giving it away as a gift. According to Homer, Andromache, wife of the Trojan hero Hector, received the veil from Aphrodite as a gift.[20]

In the Greek art of the 6th century BC, women are always covered in several layers of clothing both on small statuettes and monumental marble statues, which had been a part of Greek temples since the 7th century BC. These sculptures are called korai (sg. kore), as they depict young girls wearing richly decorated clothing and jewelry and thus are meant to represent erotically attractive beings; their bodies, however, are carefully covered. Sometimes they wear tiaras, but their identity was not evidently defined in an intentional manner. They were either goddesses or mortal women who resembled them. In the Greek mirror of ca. 480 BC, Aphrodite, identified by the Erotes, is depicted in the same way as the korai in long, richly draped clothing.[21] On the slightly later Corinthian or Sicyonian mirror, she is dressed in a simple peplos, but in addition to the Erotes she is characterized by a dove, which she holds in her hand.[22] The dove was the primary attribute of Aphrodite.[23] Proof of the possibility that some korai may have depicted Aphrodite can be found in examples from later centuries, in which Aphrodite appears twice, once as she was depicted from the classical epoch onward and once as an archaic kore, such as the statuette of Aphrodite Corneto, which will be discussed below (**8**).

The most popular tale of Aphrodite in archaic Greek art was the Judgment of Paris; a series of these depictions begins around 640 BC and on them Aphrodite is always clothed.[24] Aphrodite's clothedness did in no way signify a limitation to or weakening of her erotic attraction.[25] The opposite was true, as evidenced by the Athenian vase painting on a cup of ca. 480 BC depicting the Judgment of Paris (**2**). Hermes brings Athena, Hera and Aphrodite to the shepherd Paris, who plays a lyre, for him to judge which of the goddesses is the most beautiful. While Athena and Hera wear no veil, Aphrodite not only wears a chiton and himation like the other goddesses, but also has a veil over her head. Although she is less visible than the other goddesses, she is the most erotically attractive of the three. The painter expressed this with three Erotes, who are flying around her, crowning her the victor.

---

[19] For the veil see Douglas L. Cairns, *The Meaning of the Veil in Ancient Greek Culture,* in *Women's Dress in the Ancient Greek World,* ed. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (London: Duckworth, 2002), 73-93.

[20] Homer, *Iliad,* 22.470.

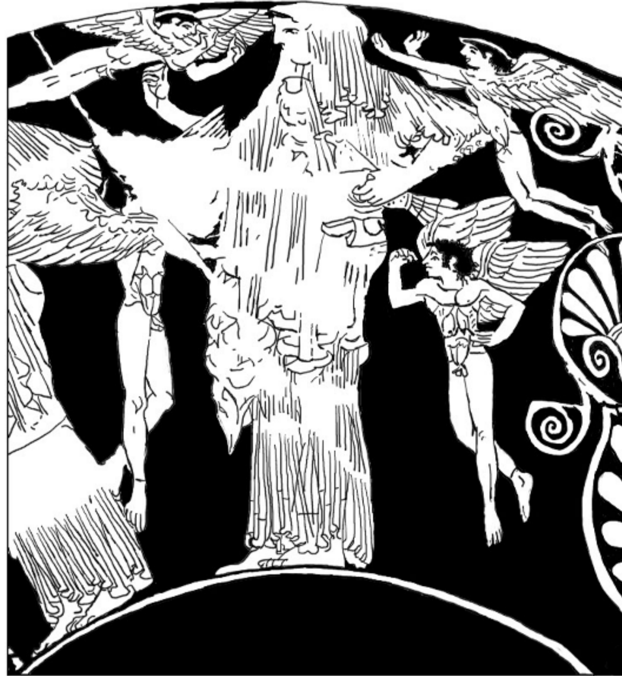
[21] St. Petersburg, State Ermitage ГР-5922.

[22] Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.667.

[23] For Aphrodite and her birds see Breitenberger, *Aphrodite and Eros* 2007, 15-19; Monica S. Cyrino, *Aphrodite* (London: Routledge, 2010), 121-122. Greek communities with a strong cult of Aphrodite such as Kythera had doves on their coins, see Karl Welz, "Die Tauben der Aphrodite," *Gazette numismatique suisse* 9, no. 34 (July1959): 33-37.

[24] See Anneliese Kossatz-Deichmann, *Paridis Iudicium* in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 7 (Zürich: Artemis, 1994), 176-188; Cristian Mancilla, *Artistic and Literary Representations of the Judgement of Paris in Antiquity* (n.p: Australian National University, 2015), http://hdl.handle.net/1885/14130

[25] See Gabriella Pironti, "Du voile à la voile: réflexions sur l'Aphrodite en voyage et ses parures," in *De la théâtralité du corps aux corps des dieux dans l'Antiquité,* ed. Valérie Huet and Florence Gherchanoc (Brest: Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, 2014), 95.



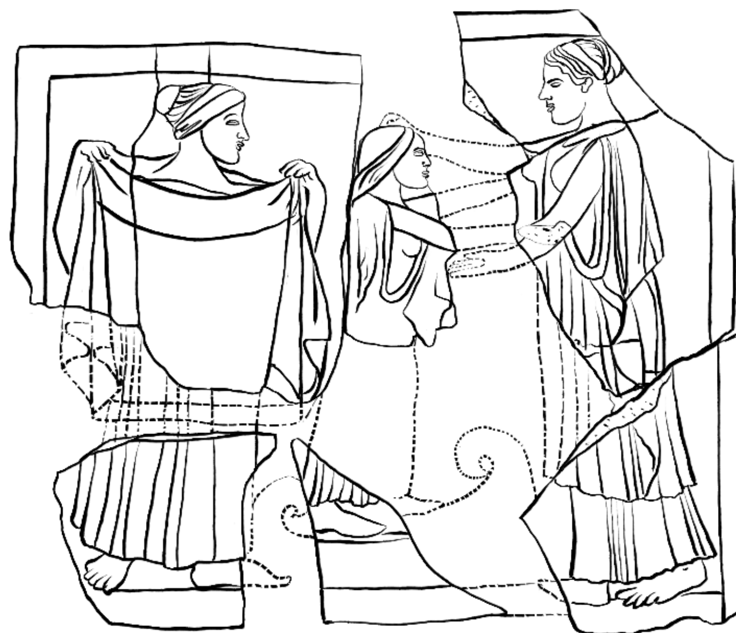
2. The Judgement of Paris, detail of Aphrodite. Athenian painting on a cup, c. 480 BC.

The veil was one of Aphrodite's attributes until the end of Greek culture, which is evidenced by reports of statues in Aphrodite's temples. According to Pausanias, in Sparta there was *a sanctuary of Morpho* (beautiful)*, a surname of Aphrodite, who sits wearing a veil and with fetters on her feet.* [26] We know what she looked like from a Roman coin.[27] Judging by coins from Troizen from the end of the 2nd century, the statue in the local Aphrodite temple depicted the goddess with a veil.[28] In Aphrodisias, there was a cult of a goddess that was later identified with Aphrodite and dated to the 7th century BC.[29] The sculpture in the temple there, which first originated in the 3rd century BC, was characterized by its uncommon clothing with a veil covering the head and reaching down to the ground. It wore a high polos on its head and stood in a deliberately archaizing upright position with outstretched arms. We have information on the appearance of the statue from smaller copies that Romans brought back as souvenirs from their travels to the eastern Mediterranean in the imperial epoch. The statue of Aphrodite of Aphrodisias appears on coins from the 1st century BC; on Hadrian's coin, she is depicted from the side – the star and moon crescent by her head point to the cosmic character of the goddess, and the naked Eros stands next to the

[26] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 3.15.22. English translation W.H.S. Jonep. Cf. Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, *L'Aphrodite grecque: Contribution à l'étude de ses cultes et de sa personalité dans le panthéon archaïque et classique* Kernos supplément, 4 (Liège: Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique, 1994), 193–216; Deborah Steiner, *Images in Mind. Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 160–68.
[27] London, The British Museum 1863,0706.41.
[28] Type Louvre-Naples, see Angelos Delivorrias et. al., "Aphrodite," in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 2 (Zürich: Artemis, 1984), 35, no. 240.
[29] Cf. Lisa R. Brody, *Aphrodisias, 3. The Aphrodite of Aphrosidias.* Results of the Excavations at Aphrosidias in Caria conducted by New York University (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2007).

goddess.[30] Aphrodite began to be associated with the planet Venus only in late Greece, despite the fact that her Near-Eastern model had already been linked to the planet earlier.[31]

In the post-ancient artistic tradition, Aphrodite is born from sea foam naked, but in ancient times she was depicted as being born while dressed from head to toe. We find Aphrodite's birth from the sea in literary tradition from the time around 700 BC.[32] However, the first depictions appear around 470 BC. In the terracotta relief from South Italian Lokroi (today Locri), the newly born Aphrodite stands on the waves, and the fact that she has just been born is indicated by her depiction in small scale, as if she were a child (**3**). She is welcomed by the two Horai, which according to the sixth Homeric hymn *clothed her in divine clothing.*[33] The one on the left holds an outer cloak, or himation, in order to dress the goddess. The goddess has emerged from the sea, thus coming naked into the world, and therefore needed to be dressed. The relief, however, does not depict this situation, as the goddess is already wearing a chiton and has a shawl wrapped around her head, indicating that clothedness belonged to the essence of this goddess at that time. The marble relief with the clothed Aphrodite, who is emerging from the sea, was found in Rome in 1887. It is likely a very high-quality counterfeit in the style of the period around 470 BC, the result of the cooperation between prominent experts on ancient culture and an outstanding sculptor.[34]



3. Birth of Aphrodite, the Greek terracotta relief from Locri, around 470 BC.

[30] See Léon Lacroix, *Les reproductions de statues sur les monnaies grecques: La statuaire archaïque et classique* (Liége: Presses universitaires, 1949), pl. 15, 3-7.
[31] See Wolfgang Heimpel, "A Catalogue of Near Eastern Venus Deities," *Syro Mesopotamian Studies* 4, no. 3 (December1982): 9–22.
[32] Hesiod, *Theogony,* 191-200; *Homeric hymn,* 6.3-4.
[33] *Homeric hymn* 6.6. English translation Martin L. West.
[34] Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano 8570. Cf. Siri Sande, "The Ludovisi Throne, the Boston Throne and the Warren Cup: Retrospective Works or Forgeries?" *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 29 no. 15 N.S. (2017): 23-51.

Why Athens?

In Athens, where most reports of the cult of Aphrodite originate and which is the source of the most important stimuli for her artistic form, veneration of Aphrodite is evidenced by the literary tradition and archeological finds starting at the beginning of the 6th century BC.[35] On the Athenian painting on a kantharos of ca. 480 BC found in the Acropolis, Aphrodite has been identified in the inscription.[36] The goddess is wearing a bracelet and is dressed in a cloak that is richly decorated in stylized flower blossoms. Next to her is Dionysus with a kantharos and a tendril of a grape vine in his hand. The whole scene evidently depicted a procession of the gods with their typical attributes; the container of wine and the grape vine characterized the god of wine and the child in Aphrodite's arms indicated her as the patron of fertility. The Athenian painting on the pinax of ca. 550 BC, which was brought into the sacred precinct as a sacrifice, was also found at the Athenian Acropolis and depicts Aphrodite with two small childlike figures.[37] The child on the left is identified in the inscription as Himeros (Desire), and the second child is evidently Eros. On a fragment of an Athenian vase from 575-550 BC found on the site of a Greek trading post in Egypt, Aphrodite, identified in the inscription, is also depicted with a child.[38] According to Hesiod, Eros and Himeros were older than Aphrodite and welcomed her after her birth from the sea.[39] However, in the 5th century BC, Pindaros sang the praise of Aphrodite as the *mother of Erotes*.[40]

Around 500 BC, two temples of Aphrodite, the Heavenly (Ourania) and the Common (Pandemos), were built in Athens.[41] People turned to Aphrodite so often that it was necessary to specify the addressee in order for their prayers to be answered as quickly and completely as possible. Aphrodite Ourania (the Divine) did not reside in the heavens, but on the earth; she was divine because she linked the earth with the heavens.[42] Thanks to her, the heavens and earth are constantly linked and the earth continues to bear fruit, as it is watered by the heavens. Aphrodite Ourania was in no way asexual, she ensured that the girl was safely harbored to the new home and the married couple's bedroom. Another highly risky step was the transition into motherhood, which definitively determined the status of a wife. Aphrodite Pandemos (i.e. the Common), who was named as such for providing a connection between people

---

[35] Vasiliki Machaira, "Multifaceted Aphrodite. Cult and Iconography in Athens. Several Years After," in *Festschrift für Heide Froning. Studies in Honour of Heide Froning,* eds. Taner Korkut and Britta Özen-Kleine (Istanbul: E Yayınları, 2018), 241-254.

[36] Athens, National Archeological Museum Akr. 603.

[37] Athens, National Archeological Museum Akr. 2526.

[38] London, The British Museum 1888,0601.446.

[39] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 201. Cf. Gabriella Pironti, "'Ce muthus n'est pas de moi, je le tiens de ma mère.' Cosmogonies grecques et savoir partagé," in *La mythologie de l'Antiquité à la Modernité. Appropriation – Adaptation – Détournement,* ed. Corinne Bonnet et al. (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), 45-57.

[40] Pindaros fr. 122.

[41] Rachel Rosenzweig, *Worshipping Aphrodite: Art and Cult in Classical Athens* (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Angelos Delivorrias, "The Worship of Aphrodite in Athens and Attica. Worshiping Women. Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens," eds. Nikos E. Kaltsas and Harvey Alan Shapiro (New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, 2008), 107-113.

[42] Aeschylus fr. 44.

within the community, which was just as risky as the transition from a virgin to a wife. Connections between people in the community required the achievement of political harmony, which could then meld the interests of the whole with the needs of its individual members. This political connection could neither be too loose in order to maintain productivity, nor too tight in order to avoid conflicts and counterproductivity. However, Aphrodite Pandemos was primarily the patroness of connection during sexual intercourse, when the physical penetration of women, i.e. those of the opposite sex who give life, took place. In the ancient Greek cult and the visual arts, Aphrodite Ourania and Pandemos held the same social and moral status, i.e. there were two aspects to one and the same goddess or, more precisely, Pandemos was an aspect of Aphrodite Ourania.[43]

The Temple of Aphrodite Ourania stood near the main square in Athens, the Agora, at its north-west corner.[44] Here it was linked with the Panathenean road, a ceremonial communication that linked the primary Athenian gate called the Dipylon and the Acropolis, the cultic center of the city. The Temples of Aphrodite Pandemos were on the north and southwest slope of the Acropolis. In both cases, they were picturesque sites in a rocky environment with a view of the surrounding landscape. The location of the temples was one of the attributes of the Greek gods. At the peak of the Acropolis was the dominant Athena, who was the primary divine protector of the city, and the monumental cultic structures made her patronage over culture and civilization visible. [45] The Temple of Aphrodite Pandemos located on the only partially modified rocky slopes of the Acropolis emphasized the fact that this goddess ruled everything that took place in nature. They were small-scale structures which, however, housed magnificent works of sculpture.

Pausanias wrote the following on the Temple of Aphrodite Pandemos on the southwestern slope of the Acropolis: *The old statues no longer existed in my time, but those I saw were the work of no inferior artists*.[46] Proof of the temples today can be found in the foundations carved into the rock and fragments of entablature, giving us knowledge that the tympanon was only 3.17m wide. It was a shrine, or aedicule, with two columns linked by an entablature.[47] On this fragment, at the top there is a dove holding pieces of woven yarn in its beak; under it is an inscription which begins with: *This is for you, great and holy Pandemos Aphr*(odite). At the bottom in smaller lettering are the names of sacrificers, a certain Archinos and his mother, Aphrodite's priestess, which proves that men also worshiped Aphrodite Pandemos. The theme of the entablature's decoration was linked to the fact that the festival of Aphrodisia, which included dove sacrifices, was celebrated in this sacred precinct.

---

[43] See Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, "Épithètes cultuelles et interprétation philosophique. À propos d'Aphrodite Ourania et Pandèmos à Athènes," *L'Antiquité Classique* 57 (1988): 142–157; Gabriella Pironti, "Les dieux grecs entre polyvalence et spécificité: L'example d'Aphrodite," *Europe* 87, no. 964-965 (August-September 2009): 289-304.

[44] See Charles M. Edwards, "Aphrodite on a Ladder," *Hesperia* 53, no. 1 (January - March, 1984), 59-72.

[45] Cf. Elisabetta Pala, "Aphrodite on the Akropolis: Evidence from Attic Pottery," in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite* eds. Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden: Brill 2010) 195–216.

[46] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 1.22.3, English translation W. H. S. Jones.

[47] See Luigi Beschi, "Contributi di topografia ateniese," *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene* 45-46 (1968-1969): 524 fig. 9.

According to Pausanias, statues of Aphrodite and Peitho stood in the temple on the southwestern slope of the Acropolis. Aphrodite's head was identified in the fragment of the marble statue, which was found below the slope on which the goddess stood.[48] The head, probably a Roman copy of the 2nd century, was evidently part of a so-called acrolithic sculpture, the body of which was made from wood, which was typical for statues that were shielded from the rain. Despite this fact, the sculpture was evidently left outside, as its bronze eyelashes left stains on the marble of the face, meaning it was exposed to the elements. According to the carved foundations, the temple was small, but the sculpture of the sitting Aphrodite and standing Peitho were able to fit inside it. An inscription from 283/282 BC points to the sitting sculptures and contains information concerning their washing.[49] This decree also states that the temple was cleansed by the sacrifice of a dove and the hinge of the door was greased. Therefore, it must have been a small temple that could be closed.

In the 5th century BC, these sanctuaries were joined by the largest Athenian sacred precinct of Aphrodite ever, the Aphrodite of the Gardens. In it, Aphrodite Ourania was evidently worshiped, which was the most widespread and oldest form of this goddess. Greek polytheism not only contained an infinite number of gods, but each divine being also had a whole array of forms that the Greeks painstakingly differentiated, worshipping the gods in temples that had been especially created for one specific form of god. Nonetheless, the god was present in its entirety in each of these specialized temples. In other words, any of the specific divine forms may have been worshiped in the temple of any of the forms of the deity. The temple of Aphrodite of the Gardens has not yet been found – we only know that it was on the bank of the Ilisos River beyond the walls of Athens.[50] The environment for which Athenian artists created depictions of Aphrodite in the classical epoch was pleasant and intimate, which were feelings which the Greeks associated with the goddess. Her sacred precincts were parks with rich vegetation where visitors could rest. While worshiping the goddess, people were meant to be completely relaxed, which was the physical and mental state inseparably linked to Aphrodite, as this state evoked sex and the erotic. The statue of the goddess was placed in a small shrine or edicule, which was a place designated only for a small group of visitors or individuals and thus always provided a personal encounter with the goddess.

Ancient civilization was typical for its extremely intense desire to be as close as possible to the sculpture of a deity, ensuring that believers had contact with the god itself. A common element of rituals was to dress the statues of deities and bathe them regularly, which in the case of Aphrodite is evidenced by Sicyon.[51] Contact with statues was extremely important for Greeks and Romans, and this was at its most intimate in the cult of Aphrodite, as statues played the largest role in her cult. Statues of the other deities were usually hidden in the shadows of the interiors of large temples. The statue of Aphrodite, however, was designated for viewing up close, in full light and in the

---

[48] Athens, The New Acropolis Museum EAM 177. Cf. Giorgos Dontas, "Ein verkanntes Meisterwerk im Nationalmuseum von Athen. Der Marmorkopf Γ. 177 und Überlegungen zum Stil Eupharnors," in *Festschrift für Nikolaus Himmelmann* eds. Hans-Ulrich Cain et al. (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1989), 143-50.

[49] See Franciszek Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* (Paris: De Boccard, 1969), 74, no. 39, line 26.

[50] Cf. Ernst Langlotz, *Aphrodite in den Garten* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1954); Ilaria Romeo "Sull'Afrodite nei giardini di Alcamene," *Xenia Antiqua* 2 (1993): 31-44.

[51] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2.10.4.

repose provided by the surrounding natural environment. However, the development of Aphrodite's depiction cannot be explained only through the nature of this goddess and the way in which she was venerated. This attitude was shared by all Greek communities, but only in Athens did a fundamental reform take place in the appearance of Aphrodite's statues. So we have to ask, why Athens?

To radically transform the cult statues, it was necessary to loosen their relationship to the deity depicted. This loosening gave the sculptors the required room for manoeuvre, but they needed new means of expression to use it. Both of these revolutionary changes are attested in Athens in the first half of the 5th century BC. Before we take a closer look at these revolutionary changes, it should be pointed out that the deities' relationship to the statues depicting them was never as strong in Greece as in other cultures. In Greece, the altar stood alone in the open air, while the statue was hidden in the temple. The statue was therefore not so closely linked to ritual activities as in a Christian cult. The form of the figure did not have an essential meaning either, as it touched upon the essence of the deity only indirectly.[52]

Pausanias wrote the following of the statue of Aphrodite, which stood nearby the temple of Aphrodite of the Gardens: *the shape of it is square, like that of the Hermae, and the inscription declares that the Heavenly Aphrodite is the oldest of those called Fates*.[53] Pausanias also described an archaic statue of Aphrodite of the same type at Delos: *a small wooden image of Aphrodite, its right hand defaced by time, and with a square base instead of feet*.[54] This statue, attributed to the mythical sculptor Daidalos, was evidently not a herm, as it had hands; nonetheless, the bottom of the statue was still formed by a pillar. On a Greek marble relief of the early 4th century BC in the Vatican collections, the goddess leans on her herm resting on a pedestal; on its head, the herm wears an archaic polos, which we know from the oldest depictions of Aphrodite.[55] The Greeks imagined the gods in the form of people, but statues of the deities could have any form, which may have sometimes surprised Greeks. A tale is told of a man who lost the ability to laugh. This happened to a certain Parmeniscus of Metapontum, who therefore set off to Apollo's Oracle of Delphi. Pythia advised him in her incoherent manner to go home, telling him "mother would help." Parmeniscus returned home, but nothing changed. Once, however, he happened to find himself in Delos, where he went to have his first look at the statue of Apollo's mother, Leto. He expected to see a marvelous work, but found such an unshapely and primitive wooden statue there that it made him laugh.[56]

The first proof of the fact that the statue was differentiated from the deity that the statue depicted in ancient times can be found in Aeschylus's tragedy Oresteia, which premiered in Athens in 458 BC. Orestes appears on the stage with the words *I now approach your house and image, goddess. Here I will keep watch and await the result of my trial*. The goddess herself appears on the stage and turns to *this stranger sitting at my image*.[57] On an Athenian amphora from around 450 BC, the goddess herself stands next to a statue of Athena, raising her hand to establish contact with Cassandra, who

---

[52] Joannis Mylonopoulos, ed., *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[53] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 1.19.2. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

[54] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.40.3. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

[55] Città del Vaticano, Musei Vaticani 9561.

[56] Athenaios, 14.2.

[57] Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 241- 242, 409 (similarly: 446). English translation Herbert Weir Smyth.

is walking towards the sculpture.[58] Goddess was not identical to the statue that depicted her, but was very familiar with it. She was permanently linked to it, so anyone who turned to the statue of goddess established contact with the goddess herself. The paradoxical state of the identity that emphasizes differentness is succinctly characterized by Jean-Pierre Vernant. In his view, statues in antiquity were created *to establish real contact with the world beyond, to actualize it, to make it present, and thereby to participate intimately in the divine; yet by the same move, it must also emphasize what is inaccessible and mysterious in divinity, its alien quality, its otherness*.[59]

Around 360 BC, the Greeks' approach to statues of deities was not only succinctly described, but also cogently explained by the philosopher Plato: *we set up statues as images, and we believe that when we worship these, lifeless though they be, the living gods beyond feel great good-will towards us and gratitude.* [60] The gods are "living," but their statues are "lifeless;" nonetheless, they are things that are full-fledged representatives of the gods, as they are connected to them.[61] Plato's testimony is extremely important to us, as this philosopher otherwise strictly refused the visual arts and saw the depiction of anything as insufficient and false. However, he saw the depiction of a deity as something fundamentally different from the depiction of, for example, a couch, a fact which he writes about in his famous passage on artistic imitation.[62] It was Plotinos, however, who attempted to define how a statue of divinity specifically differs from other depictions: *I think, therefore, that those ancient sages, who sought to secure the presence of the divine beings by erection of shrines and statues, showed insight into the nature of the All; they perceived that, though this Soul is everywhere tractable, its presence will be secured all the more readily when an appropriate receptacle is elaborated, a place especially capable of receiving some portion or phase of it, something reproducing it, or representing it and serving like a mirror to catching an image of it.*[63]

The Greeks abandoned the idea that a statue was a god in the first half of the 5th century BC, exactly at the time when the depiction of the gods began to develop dynamically. One element was closely linked to the other. A statue was separated from a deity without ceasing to be closely linked to it, and thus it never became a work of art as we understand it today. Thanks to the separation of the deity and statue, its form began to change, and these changes were initiated by the constant and uninterrupted connection between the deity and the statue. Each generation produced a new version of the form of Aphrodite, which embodied the same thing as the pillars, herms or archaic idols in previous centuries. Even in their new form, the statues of Aphrodite continued primarily to reference the generative power without which all life on earth would cease to exist.

---

[58] Cambridge, Corpus Christi College. See Fernande Hölscher, "Gods and Statues – an Approach to Archaistic Images in Fifth Century B.C.E." in *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome,* ed. Joannis Mylanopoulos (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 116.

[59] Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals. Collected Essays* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 153. Cf. Richard Neer, *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 14-19.

[60] Plato, *Laws,* 931a. English translation R. G. Bury.

[61] Cf. Jan N. Bremmer, "The Agency of Greek and Roman Statues. From Homer to Constantine," *Opuscula. Annual of the Swedish Institutes at Athens and Rome* 6 (2013): 7–21.

[62] Plato, *Republic,* 10.596e-597a.

[63] Plotinus, *Enneads,* 4.3.11. English translation C. MacKenna.

In order for Greek sculptors to evoke the impression of an intimate encounter via Aphrodite's statue, it was necessary to create a revolution in the visual arts. Thanks to this revolution, visual artists were given tools that allowed them to depict the goddess in a relaxed and seemingly accessible form. A fundamental element in the Athenian visual arts that took place around 480-450 BC was the effort to create a probable depiction of the human body that was meant to captivate the viewer via its impression of liveliness and self-control.[64] Artists systematically replaced conventional attitudes by dynamic compositional models which they had observed in life in order for the viewers to identify with the statues. Depictions were not only meant to capture the mind of the viewer, but also his or her senses and were designed to evoke a strong emotional impression. In the visual arts, an important role began to be played by erotic attraction, the seductiveness of the body's curves, and positions which show provocatively bowed heads and averted gazes. Statues enter into the viewer's space and demand their attention; they evoke an affectionate interest, but primarily admiration and respect, as these depictions must always embody models that were worthy of following. In the depiction of the human figure, much greater emphasis was placed on its inner life, upstanding character (ethos) and the positive feelings which its exemplary life stance provoked (pathos). For Greek civilization, in which men distinctly dominated, it was typical that the sculptors' attention was initially focused on the male form. The transformation in depicting women in monumental sculpture began slightly later, around the middle of the 5th century BC; however, artists in the following three generations reached solutions in this area that significantly impacted the following development of Western culture.

A prerequisite for the revolution in the Greek visual arts was the radical problematization of the world of phenomena. Parmenides declared that human perceptions are nothing more than false sensations, and Demokritos correctly assumed that invisible atoms are hidden behind the scenes of the visible world. If we can never know exactly what the essence is of what we see, there is not the slightest reason for us to adhere to the way in which the world was depicted by previous generations. Therefore, we are no longer bound to tradition in depicting the gods, who are by their very essence undepictable. Thus, there is no need to continue depicting Aphrodite sitting or standing stiffly – we can attempt to make a certain and important aspect of this goddess more visible. Greek philosophers and artists distanced themselves from the world of appearances but did not deny it. They realized that it was an indelible and important part of human existence, and from appearances they were able to create an all-powerful means of expression. The cultic statue of the Aphrodite started to change until it melded with the image of a woman portrayed in her private intimacy. Visitors to the temples of Aphrodite eventually saw the goddess as if they were looking into her garden and watching as she relaxed. This process culminated in the 4th century BC in statues of Aphrodite that were undressing and bathing.

[64] Cf. Andrew Stewart, "The Persian and Carthaginian Invasions of 480 B.C.E. and the Beginning of the Classical Style," *American Journal of Archaeology* 112, no. 3-4 (July – October, 2008): 377–412, 581-615.

Unveiled and Resting

The Athenian revolution in the depiction of Aphrodite stemmed from the fact that it gave artistic form to the feeling of intimacy which the Greeks associated with this goddess. In order to do so, they used a relaxed pose and informal clothing, which each person knew from their everyday contact with female acquaintances. A radical re-evaluation of Aphrodite's statue took place, launching the process of reassessment of the form of the Greek statue in general. In this new sculptural type,[65] which was created roughly mid-5th century BC, Aphrodite is sitting in a chair with a backrest, which was typically used in Athenian households.[66] Thus, she sits in her own home in undisturbed privacy. The goddess lounges comfortably, with one hand raised and resting on the backrest. The symmetry of the older image types (**4**) is thoroughly displaced; the goddess looks forward but her body is turned to the side; she has one elbow behind her and one foot over the other. This perfectly thought-out position was evidently the work of a prominent artist, who used it for an important order. Experts consider it to be either Calamis the Elder, Phidias, or his pupils.

4. Aphrodite with Eros and a dove, Greek terracotta statuette from Vassallaggi (Gela), 530-520 BC.

The new sculptural type is preserved in the original fragment evidently from Aphrodite's temple on the northern slope of the Acropolis.[67] It forms an exception, as we know the majority of famous Greek statues only from their Roman versions. The problem lies in the fact that these Roman versions were not necessarily copies in today's sense, but rather free variations of them. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing how closely they adhered to the lost Greek exemplars.[68] A dozen later Roman

---

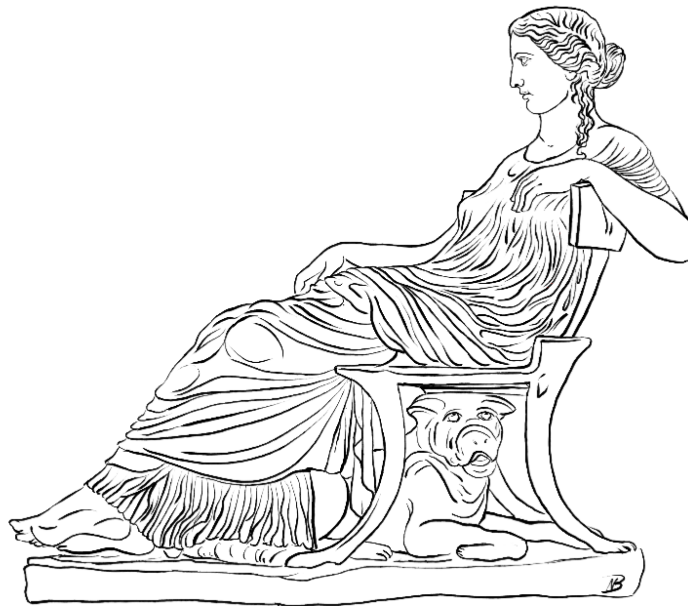
[65] Cf. Carlo Gasparri, "L'Afrodite seduta tipo Agrippina-Olympia. Sulla produzione di sculture in Atene nel V sec. a. C." *Prospettiva* 100 (October 2000): 3-8. He interprets the figure as Hygieia.

[66] Cf. Gisela M. A. Richter, *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans* (London: Phaidon Press, 1966), 33-37.

[67] Athens, Acropolis Museum 6692. Cf. Angelos Delivorrias, "Das Original der sitzenden Aphrodite-Olympias," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung* 93 (1978): 1-23.

[68] Cf. Miranda Marvin, *The Language of the Muses: The Dialogue Between Roman and Greek Sculpture* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008); Klaus Junker and Adrian Stähli, eds., *Original und Kopie: Formen*

versions of the sitting Aphrodite have been preserved. On four of them, a dog sits under the goddess's chair. A heavily restored statue with a Molossus dog under a chair was found in Rome's Circus of Maxentius, which proves that it was an echo of some other famous statue (**5**). In Roman circuses designated for chariot races, there was a long transverse wall called the spina (or spine) on which famous statues were placed. The best Roman version of this sculptural type was found in Verona,[69] and we can create an image of its head from the herm originating in Herculaneum.[70] The thick, unruly hair bound with ribbons reaching around the forehead is typical for this head. This was evidently a part of a famous Greek work, which was often copied and modified, and thus it is probable that it belonged to the type of Aphrodite resting in a chair.



5. Seated Venus from Rome, the Roman marble version of the Greek original from the 40s of the 5th century BC.

The famous depiction of Aphrodite on the eastern façade of the Parthenon in the Athenian Acropolis is closely linked to the artistic and ideological concept of the new sculptural type of the sitting Aphrodite. The central scene of the sculptural group was the birth of Athena; at the sides of the central group was the clothed Aphrodite on the right (**6**) and her counterpart, the reclining, naked Dionysus, the god of wine. As we have pointed out above, both deities were closely linked to one another in Greek thought. Both are depicted in their characteristic situations of sweet idleness; their figures fill the narrowing space at the sides of the triangular tympanon, which allowed the sculptor to make their backs turned away from the dramatic central scene, conspicuously ignoring it.

und Konzepte der Nachahmung in der antiken Kunst (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2008); Anna Anguissola, *Difficillima imitatio: Immagine e lessico delle copie tra Grecia e Roma* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2012).

[69] Verona, Museo Civico, cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 821.

[70] Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 6369, cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 822.

6. Phidias' workshop, reclining Aphrodite from the eastern pediment of the Parthenon, h. 123 cm, Pentelic marble, c. 432 BC.

The specific situation in which Aphrodite was depicted evoked an intimate moment of two close female friends. The goddess is lying comfortably on the lap of her female assistant, Peitho (Persuasion), in games of love. Initially she seemed to be looking into her mirror, the angle of which is apparently being modified by the sitting Peitho with her outstretched left hand. The goddess is wearing a translucent chiton that falls over her body, which is visible under it as if she were naked. The clinging drapery, which looks as if it were wet, was one of the most important innovations of Greek sculpture of the final three decades of the 5th century BC and was used widely by the sculptor.[71] The effect of clothing depicted in this manner was originally much more intense, as ancient sculptures were richly colored and the creases were emphasized with black paint.[72] This specific method of depicting drapery is characterized by its revealing of the naked body while simultaneously emphasizing the fact that it is veiled, which was an important aspect of the ideological program of Aphrodite. This made it possible to make the deity present but at the same time stress her inaccessibility. This effect was made more powerful by the chiton falling from Aphrodite's shoulder, also partially revealing her bosom. This trick became an important attribute of the new types of Aphrodite's statues, as it even more strongly disrupted the boundaries between clothing and the body hidden beneath it.

The reform of the depiction of Aphrodite in Athenian sculpture of the third quarter of the 5th century BC is characterized by the combination of the traditional (and thus expected) clothedness and the never fully fulfilled promise of unveiling. This trait predetermined the development of the depiction of the goddess in the following centuries. Proof of the fact that Athenians understood the sophisticated language of these sculptures can be found for instance in Socrates's commentary on his visit to the

[71] Cf. Neer, *The Emergence*, 104-135.

[72] For polychromy of ancient sculpture cf., for example, Vinzenz Brinkmann et al., *Bunte Götter – Golden Edition. Die Farben der Antike* (Munich: Prestel 2020).

hetaira Theodote in Xenophon's writing from the time after 371 BC.[73] Theodote very successfully attracted the attention of men because she knew the secret of veiling. Being veiled is an attribute of chastity, but hides within it a huge erotic potential, which Phidias and his successors used masterfully in depicting Aphrodite. Phidias's sculpture of the standing Aphrodite from the 430s BC represents also a completely new sculptural type.[74] The best echo of the lost original is considered to be a fragment of the sculpture in Berlin, the so-called Aphrodite Brazzà (**7**).[75]

7. Aphrodite Brazzà, height 158 cm, Greek marble statue probably from Attica, ca. 430 BC.

Aphrodite was originally leaning against a small column, statuette or tree. The motif of leaning in this Aphrodite statue evoked a relaxed atmosphere, which is characteristic for lovers' games, which were her domain. The goddess's left leg is stepping forward and is lightly lifted; the vertical creases model her thigh, which creates the first plan of a sculpture dynamically extended in space. The distinctly

[73] Xenophon, *Memorabilia,* 3.11. Cf. Neer, *The Emergece*, 160-161.
[74] Cf. Claire Cullen Davison, *Pheidias: The Sculptures and Ancient Sources* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2009), 29-37.
[75] See Mustafa Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler: Studien zu aufgestützten/angelehnten weiblichen Figuren der griechischen Marmorplastik* (Istanbul, Ege Yayınları, 2013), cat. no. I.

asymmetrical stance of the sculpture allowed the seductive outline of the feminine body to stand out, which was emphasized by the partially unveiled bosom. The contrapposto, i.e. the differentiation of the supporting and free leg, a vital aspect of the Athenian revolution in depicting the human figure mentioned above, was the primary means of expression of Athenian sculptors from the 470s BC on. It embodied not only a new aesthetic, but also a philosophical and ethical ideal. Man depicted in such a way evoked the impression of a randomly selected moment and distinctly contributed to the credibility of the depiction and the effect of reality. However, the fact that all asymmetries were immediately balanced was much more important; the depicted figure reacted to the difference between the free and supporting leg by lifting his shoulder over his angled hip.

Thanks to the thorough cohesion of all other asymmetries, his stance embodied harmony, which was understood as the unity of opposites. The dynamic counterpoise was a means for visualizing the unchanging order of the world and simultaneously characterized a being which had full control of its body and was completely relaxed and free. Everything done by the figure depicted in this manner is done of his own will. The counterpoise was the attribute of what the Greeks called *σωφροσύνη*, a new civic ideal, the content of which was rationality and self-control and the voluntary submission of one's interests to the needs of the community. Through contrapposto, the depicted Greek men and their gods at first glance stood out from their eastern and southern neighbors. Beginning with Aphrodite Brazzà, the depiction of a relaxed and leaning woman figure with one leg bent became one of the most widespread sculptural types in Greece. The counterpoise of a freely standing figure, which is prepared for immediate action, became a typical depiction of men; the counterpoise of a comfortably leaning and thus passive figure became typical for women.

Aphrodite Brazzà's left leg was evidently resting on a turtle, which would allow us to link this sculptural type with the report by Pausanias on Aphrodite Ourania, which Phidias created for Elis.[76] The turtle on the Berlin statue is a modern addition, but the restorer was evidently basing his work off what had been preserved under the foot while adding to the statue. The accuracy of the reconstruction of the Berlin statue and its link to Phidias's statue in Elis was supported by a fortuitous archeological find that occurred in this city.[77] A fragment of a ceramic statuette of this type was found here depicting a foot in a sandal resting on a turtle. The statuette of the figure in a chiton and himation with a foot on a turtle was also found on the site of the ancient cult of Aphrodite in Paphos, Cyprus, and therefore we can justifiably assume that it was truly a part of the original sculptural type.

What significance did the turtle have? *The meaning of the tortoise,* wrote Pausanias, *I leave to those who care to guess*.[78] Plutarch was informative: *Pheidias made the Aphrodite of the Eleans with one foot on a tortoise, to typify for womankind keeping at home and keeping silence*.[79] The turtle constantly carries its shell with it, and thus never

---

[76] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6.25. Cf. Heide Froning, "Überlegungen zur Aphrodite Urania des Phidias in Elis," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung* 120 (2005): 285-294.

[77] Elis, Archeological Museum P 306. See Heide Froning and Nina Zimmermann-Elseify, *Die Terrakotten der antiken Stadt Elis* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 54–56, no. S5, pl. 9.

[78] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 6.25.1. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

[79] Plutarchos, *Conjugalia Praecepta*, 32 (*Moralia* 142d).

abandons its home, something which a woman should take as an example. In preserved literary records or findings of sacrifices in temples, however, we find no arguments for Plutarch's interpretation of Phidias's statue. In the archaic epoch, statuettes of turtles were also brought to temples, but in no case was Aphrodite the recipient. [80] Thanks to its proverbial fertility, the turtle nonetheless may be an appropriate symbol for matrimonial sexuality, which was also Aphrodite's domain. However, the turtle lives both on land and in the sea, where Aphrodite was born, and this was probably the main reason she was depicted with a turtle.[81]

A part of the new sculptural type of Aphrodite, which was created in the third quarter of the 5th century BC by Phidias, was the statuette of Aphrodite on a pedestal depicted next to the goddess, who is leaning on it.[82] The oldest echo of this trait of Phidias's statue can be found in the statue from Tarquinia, known as Afrodita Corneto, which originated around 420 BC (**8**).[83]

8. Aphrodite Corneto, h. 83 cm, Greek marble statue, ca. 420 BC, both arms are modern additions.

---

[80] See Elinor Bevan, "Ancient Deities and Tortoise-Representations in Sanctuaries," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 83 (1988), 1-6.
[81] Cf. Salvatore Settis, *ΧΕΛΩΝΗ: Saggio sull'Afrodite Urania di Fidia* (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, 1966); Pironti, *Du voile à la voile*, 92-94.
[82] Cf. Schoch, *Die doppelte Aphrodite*, 2009.
[83] See Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler*, cat. No. II.

The statuette that the goddess leans upon justifies the distinct skew of the upper part of her body, and the goddess therefore looks highly relaxed. At the same time, it allowed the message of Phidias's Aphrodite to be elaborated upon. On the statuette, the goddess is depicted as standing upright; she looks straight forward and wears rich and carefully draped clothing, which is the way goddesses were depicted in the 6th century BC. She has a veil draped over her head from behind and holds the edge of it in her hand as if she was unveiling. This artistic convention, called "anacalypsis" in scholarly literature, was often associated with Aphrodite – the gesture evidently signified that the face of the woman in question was veiled.[84]

Her new form, which is much closer to the appearance of visitors to the sacred precinct in which Phidias's statue was placed, is in obvious contrast with the old form of the goddess, for which symmetry and formalness are characteristic. Why was Aphrodite depicted on Phidias's statue twice in two different styles? It may have been a topographical reference, as the statuette in the archaic style evoked the old statue in the temple for which Phidias's statue was destined.[85] In any case, the appearance of the statue that Phidias's Aphrodite leaned upon emphasized the novelty of this concept. Proof of this interpretation can be found in the fact that the motif appears for the first time in connection with Aphrodite; other deities were depicted in such a way only later. No other deity in monumental sculpture so radically abandoned the stiff posture emphasizing separation from mortals, which until then had characterized statues of the Olympian gods. Aphrodite now represented the exact opposite, i.e. release and spontaneity, through which the deity entered into the world of people. Probably because she represented an unprecedented novelty, Phidias's Aphrodite also emphasized a connection to traditional piety. Not only does she physically lean on the "old goddess," pointing out the uninterrupted continuity with the past, her gestures also stress devoutness. Her right hand holds the veil which is draped over her head, pointing to the fact that she is clothed.

Phidias's pupil Alcamanes was associated with the sculptural type that we know from six Roman versions, one of which is in Paris's Louvre (**9**).[86] The sculptor continued to innovate the statue of Aphrodite where his teacher had left off. Phidias had renewed the traditional concept of Aphrodite's statue with a distinct counterpoise, and Alcamenes's statue takes this concept to the extreme. The difference between the supporting and free leg could not be any greater, and thus the sculptor definitively abandoned the traditional vertical concept of the statue and substituted it with a dynamic diagonal. From the hips upward, the goddess is bending towards the column with a relief of a dove, which is her attribute. The closest to the creation of the assumed original by Alcamenes is the Aphrodite d'Este, the original of which was created at the end of the 5th century BC.[87] The goddess is leaning to the left onto a tree trunk and is accompanied by Eros leaning to the left, as he is leaning on his mother's left shoulder.

---

[84] Cf. Gaëlle Deschodt, "Images et mariage, une question de méthode: Le geste d'anakalypsis," *Mondes anciens* 1 (2011). http://journals.openedition.org/mondesanciens/370

[85] Cf. Hölscher, *Gods and Statues*.

[86] See Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler*, cat. no. VI.

[87] Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum I 1192. Cf. Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler*, cat. no. III; Maria Friedrich, "Aphrodite mit dem Eros-Knaben. Die sog. Aphrodite d'Este," in *Ansichtssache. Antike Skulpturengruppen im Raum,* ed. Jens-Arne Dickmann and Ralf von den Hoff (Freiburg: Albrecht-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, 2017), 89-93.

In regard to the posture, the position of Aphrodite d'Este's legs is a compromise between Aphrodite Corneto and the Parisian statue. The Parisian Venus has a deeper neckline than the Aphrodite from the Corneto collection. The chiton has slipped off her shoulder so both her neck and one of her breasts is partially revealed. This unveiled portion of the goddess's body together with her eyes is an attribute of her irresistible beauty.[88]

9. "Alcamenes Aphrodite," h. 118 cm, marble The Roman marble version of the Greek original from ca. 430-420 BC.

Ancient sources concur on the fact that Alcamenes's statue stood in the precinct devoted to Aphrodite called Aphrodite of the Gardens.[89] Pausanias wrote that it was *one of the most noteworthy things in Athens*.[90] We do not, however, learn any other details from literary sources about what the statue looked like. Identification of the statues with this work is based on the assumption that statues in two smaller sanctuaries devoted to this goddess were created after this model – one was in Athens and the other in Daphne between Athens and Eleusis.[91] By a fortuitous coincidence, not only a fragment of the original statue of ca. 420 BC was preserved in Daphne[92], but also a

[88] Homer, *Iliad*, 3.396-398.
[89] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 36.16; Lucian, *Imagines,* 4 and 6.
[90] Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.19.2-3, English translation W. H. S. Jones.
[91] See Angelos Delivorrias, "Die Kultstatue der Aphrodite von Daphni," *Antike Plastik* 8 (1968): 19-31.
[92] Athens, National Archeological Museum 1604. Cf. Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler*, cat. no. IV.

votive relief of the beginning of the 4th century BC that reproduced it.[93] Pausanias mentions Aphrodite's Temple in Daphne near Eleusis only briefly – *a temple of Aphrodite, before which is a noteworthy wall of unwrought stones*.[94] This was thus a typical holy precinct of Aphrodite, which fluidly melded in with the surrounding natural framework. On the fragment of the statue from expensive Parian marble, we see a woman bent in the direction of her left arm, which she is using to lean on something. This is evidently the same sculptural type as the statue in the Louvre, but this Aphrodite's right shoulder is revealed.

Aphrodite is depicted in the same way in the votive relief, which evidently reproduces the statue in the temple in Daphne. The support of the statue was not just a purely functional element meant to ensure that the statue was stable; it was also the bearer of meaning. With her left arm, the goddess is leaning on a tree that she distinctly bends towards with one foot over the other. The tree that Aphrodite is leaning on symbolizes the irreplaceable role of this goddess in the renewal of nature. In her right hand, the goddess lifts a sacrificial bowl towards a figure standing in front of her. This figure is depicted in a smaller scale, but is on a pedestal, and is thus also a statue. The inscription accompanying the relief states that it is a votive gift to Aphrodite from the son of a certain Theagenes. The statue perhaps depicts the gift-giver, who in the form of a statue erected in the temple permanently venerates the goddess. In this case, Aphrodite would not allude to the statue, but directly to the goddess that has appeared in the temple in order to favorably accept Theagenes's prayer. A very similar relief is the one which Angelos Delivorrias constructed from fragments archived in various museums. It also depicts Aphrodite leaning in a relaxed pose on a tree, cooling herself with a fan and looking pensively forward; on her head she wears a diadem emphasizing her divine status.[95]

For the Aphrodite associated with Phidias and Alcamenes, the pose in which she leans with her left arm on a support next to her and at the same time places her left leg forward is characteristic. This highly unstable posture may have carried significance. The pose in which Aphrodite is depicted is relaxed; the goddess is resting, but surely not for long, as it is an ostentatiously momentary pose preceding action. It looks like a reaction to a certain situation which has caught the goddess's attention, and thus she has frozen for a moment. As soon as the emotional constellation changes, the goddess will change her position. This realistic detail, which was evidently observed in real life, may have been inspired by literary tradition. The posture denoting a leaning stance can be understood as a consequence of divine power, which the poets had already described in the 7th century BC. In his work "Theogony," Hesiod attributes an appearance to the Charites that was so beautiful it paralyzed the limbs – *from their eyes desire, the limb-melter, trickles down when they look; and they look beautifully from under their eyebrows.*[96] Paralyzing love was primarily the work of Eros and Aphrodite. *Eros the looser of limbs stirs me, that creature irresistible, bitter-sweet,* Sapho

---

[93] Athens, National Archeological Museum 1601. Drawing: Delivorrias, *Die Kultstatue*, 24, fig. 1.

[94] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 1.37.7. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

[95] Roman marble relief after the Greek original from ca. 420 BC. Upper and lower fragment: Tivoli, Hadrian's Villa, central fragment: Città del Vaticano, Musei Vaticani. Drawing: Angelos Delivorrias, "A New Aphrodite for John," in *Greek Offerings: Essays on Greek Art in Honour of John Boardman,* ed. Olga Palagia (Oford: Oxbow Monograph, 1997), 110.

[96] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 910-11. English translation Glenn W. Most.

complains in one of her poems.[97] An ironic epigram in a Greek anthology is based on repeating the words *relaxing* three times: *The daughter of limb-relaxing Bacchus and Limb-relaxing Aphrodite is limb-relaxing Gout*.[98] Aphrodite was not only the initiator of each relaxing amorous desire, she also experienced it for herself when she fell in love with Anchises: *smile-loving Aphrodite fell in love with him at sight, and immoderate longing seized her mind.* [99]

The fundamental transformation of the depiction of Aphrodite in classical Greek art not only took place due to her being depicted in a relaxed position, but also thanks to her becoming more and more unveiled over the course of time.[100] This was a logical step – the new type of Aphrodite's depiction portrayed her in her intimacy and nakedness is the most attractive aspect of female privacy. It is, however, necessary to mention that this change did not reflect the development of the attitude towards the unveiled female body in real life. From 6th century BC, the Greek visual arts depicted men exercising in the daytime in gymnasiums and undressing during evening symposiums.[101] The Greeks were aware of their differentness and were proud of it.[102] To them, it was a sign of their superiority over all other nations. Nakedness to the Greeks became a sign of their civilizational maturity, which they nonetheless used not only to demonstrate their supremacy over barbarians, but also over Greek women. Nakedness in Greece was the privilege of men, and only they were allowed to appear naked in public. Plato's Socrates in the Republic from around 370 BC gives an example of a naked woman exercising in the gymnasium as an example of a violation of custom that was so obvious that everyone would have laughed at it. His companion agreed: *it would seem ridiculous under present conditions*.[103]

While the Greeks in the 5th to 4th century BC continued to exercise and entertain themselves while naked, women were veiled so that only their faces could be seen. However, the image of life in the visual arts overlaps with reality, but is never identical to it. Nakedness in the visual arts may have evoked completely different ideas and roused different emotions than in real life. The significance of depicting the body always depended on the specific context into which it is placed, and therefore the place which the depiction holds on the proverbial scale between the negative and positive can never be categorically determined.[104] The approach to nakedness in the visual arts in classical Greece clearly transformed, which does not however mean that the way in which it was perceived in real life simultaneously changed in an identical manner.

The new approach to the depiction of a naked body first appeared on Athenian painted vases, on which new innovations always appeared before monumental

---

[97] Sapho, 5.81. English translation J. M. Edmonds.

[98] *Greek Anthology,* 11.414. English translation W. R. Paton.

[99] *Homeric hymn,* 5.56-57. English translation Martin L. West.

[100] See, for exampel, Nigel Spivey, *Understanding Greek sculpture: Ancient Meanings, Modern Readings* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996), 174-186.

[101] See Mireille M. Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 177-182.

[102] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.6.4-6. Cf. Myles McDonnell, "The Introduction of Athletic Nudity: Thukydides, Plato, and the Vases," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111 (1991): 182-193.

[103] Plato, *Republic*, 5, 452b. English translation P. Shorey.

[104] See, for example, Robin Osborne, "Men Without Clothes. Heroic Nakedness and Greek Art," *Gender & History* 9, no. 3 (November 1997), 504–528; Jeffrey M.Hurwit, "The Problem with Dexileos: Heroic and Other Nudities in Greek Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 111, no. 1 (January 2007): 35-60.

sculpture. Naked athletes appear on them most often from 550 to 450 BC. At the same time, we see undressed women on the vases as well; they are, however, depicted exclusively as prostitutes offering themselves or as captives of war who have lost the right to their own bodies.[105] While male nakedness on Athenian vases exalts and celebrates the depicted figures, it conversely points to the lowest social classes or evokes extreme situations among the depicted women. From the 470s BC onward, naked athletes from Athenian vases gradually begin to disappear; at the same time, the status of women depicted without clothing also begins to change. Female nudity ceases to be linked to negative or deplorable figures, but on the contrary becomes an attribute of beauty without clearly defining the social status of the depicted woman. Another turning point in the perception of nakedness in the visual arts took place in the last third of the 5th century BC, when there is proof of venerable Athenian women being depicted on vases without clothing, most often in scenes linked to bathing and/or weddings.[106]

At the same time, nakedness also began to be associated with Aphrodite. The first birth of Aphrodite on Athenian vases appears roughly in the same period as the aforementioned scenes from South Italian Lokroi roughly around 460 BC, but Aphrodite is always clothed. Around 435 BC, Phidias created a colossal statue of Zeus for his temple in Olympia, which in ancient times was considered to be one of the greatest wonders of the world. On the pedestal of this colossal statue made of gold and ivory was a depiction of the birth of Aphrodite in a golden relief. In his "Description of Greece" in the second century, Pausanias wrote*: After Hestia is Eros receiving Aphrodite as she rises from the sea, and Aphrodite is being crowned by Persuation.*[107] Phidias's composition was completed at its sides by the astral deities, the personifications of the sun and moon. This allows us to understand the deities on either side of the scene of Aphrodite's birth as a sort of Olympian choir celebrating the birth of the goddess, which holds crucial significance for the prosperity of the land.[108] An echo of this composition may be the gilded silver Roman medallion from Galaxidi of the 1st to 3rd century, which depicts Aphrodite, identified in the inscription, emerging from the sea, which is indicated by small waves.[109] The goddess is turned halfway to the right, but her head is tilted back towards Amor, who is bowing down to her and lifting her out of the water with both hands. The goddess is naked, but holds cloth in her raised left hand as it swells in the wind.

The unveiling of Aphrodite in Athenian monumental sculpture progressed slowly. In addition to the sculptural type of the standing Aphrodite leaning on a support, a number of other sculptural types showing the goddess's bosom more unveiled than before appeared at the end of the 5th century BC. These types were also surely famous in the ancient period, as a whole score of versions of them from Roman

---

[105] See, for example, Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity*, 48-49; Robin Osborne, *The Transformation of Athens: Painted Pottery and the Creation of Classical Greece* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 128-137.

[106] See, for example, Robert F. Sutton, "The Invention of the Female Nude: Zeuxis, Vase-Painting, and the Kneeling Bather," in *Athenian Potters and Painters,* Volume II, eds. John H. Oakley and Olga Palagia (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009), 270-279.

[107] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 5.11.8. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

[108] Pirenne-Delforge, *L'Aphrodite grecque*, 230.

[109] Paris, Musée du Louvre Bj 15 (MNB 1290).

times have been preserved. We know one of them from the Roman Doria Pamphilj collection, and its model may have been the statue from the Temple of Aphrodite Ourania by the Agora,[110] or from the temple in Daphne.[111] Today's form of the statue is the work of a restorer, who completed both her arms.[112] Just like Phidias's statue for Elis, this statue also has a differentiated supporting and free leg, lifting the right hip. The left thigh, which is pushed forwards, is emphasized by the cloak draped over it. Just like Phidias's sculpture, Aphrodite is clothed, but her breasts and a part of her abdomen are outlined beneath the thin chiton. Contrary to Phidias's statue, this goddess's hips are almost completely hidden, increasing the contrast between the unveiled and veiled portions of her body. The version of the Doria Pamphilj sculptural type is known from the original Greek statue, which was created at the end of the 5th century BC.[113] The statue was found in the Athenian Agora, and may have thus originated in the Athenian Temple of Ares, where there were two statues of Aphrodite.[114]

This famous sculptural type, known as Venus Louvre-Naples (Fréjus, or Genetrix), is preserved in a number of versions (**10**).[115] It was created before the end of the 5th century BC. On the statues of the Louvre-Naples type, the goddess is wearing a chiton and raising the hem of her cloak covering her back with her right hand above her shoulder while the other end is wrapped around her left hand. In her outstretched left hand, she held an attribute that is no longer preserved on any exemplar. It may have been an apple or a toiletry item. On all the new Athenian types of the standing Aphrodite, the attention of the viewer is subtly directed to the left leg, which is pronouncedly shifted forward. In the Louvre-Naples type, the goddess also bows her head towards it. The graceful thigh, which is closest to the viewer, is outlined under the tight-fitting clothing, but only a subtle portion of the skin can be seen on the foot, as the clothing reaches down below the ankles. The overflowing creases confuse the viewer, and thus the Louvre-Naples Venus seems from a distance to be completely veiled; however, after a more detailed observation, we find that the upper edge of the chiton has fallen and reveals not only the shoulder, but also the breast. The border between the clothing and the goddess's body is not only subtly shifted, but the perception of the statue has also changed fundamentally. That part of the body which is fully unveiled completely changes the significance of the draped creases of clothing covering the vast majority of the body. We never see the curves of Aphrodite's body in their full course, but we can imagine them under the folded creases of clothing based on the sections that are not clearly visible. However, it is the view of the exposed breast that first allows the viewer to imagine the goddess completely naked. This was a wholly new motif in monumental sculpture, but we can find exposed breasts for the

---

[110] Angelos Delivorrias, "Problèmes de conséquence méthodologique et d'ambiguïté iconographique," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome, Antiquité* 103, no. 1 (1991): 136-137.

[111] Martha Weber, "Die Kultbilder der Aphrodite Urania der zweiten Hälfte des 5. Jhs. v. Chr. in Athen: Attika und das Bürgerrechtsgesetz von 451/50 v. Chr." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung* 121 (2006): 197–210.

[112] Roma, Villa Doria Pamphilj. Cf. Raissa Calza et al., eds., *Antichità di Villa Doria Pamfilj* (Rome: De Luca editore, 1977), no. 12.

[113] Parian marble, 1.83 m, Athens, Agora Museum 1882.

[114] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 1.8.4.

[115] See Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit*, 122-151.

first time on a bronze statuette from the period around the mid-5th century BC now located in the collection at Harvard.[116]

10 (left). Naples Venus (type Louvre-Naples), Roman marble version of the Greek statue from ca. 420-400 BC.
11 (right).Venus of Arles, h. 194 cm, the Roman marble version from the end of the 1st century BC of the Greek original from the time around 365 BC.

The unveiling of Aphrodite began with the Louvre-Naples Venus, which evokes the Greek model from the end of the 5th century BC; however, the next step was not taken until a half-century later. The Venus of Arles is the main representative of the type that we know from a score of other versions, which share the fact that the whole upper half of the goddess's body is exposed (**11**).[117] The statue in larger-than-life size was found in 1651 near the theatre in Arles without arms and the lower portion of the body. The statue's state today is the result of a restoration by François Girardon, which took place when the statue was given to Louis XIV and exhibited in Versailles. Girardon's attributes mutually exclude one another; the statue with completed arms holds the handle of a mirror in its right hand and an apple in its raised left hand. On the original, the goddess was likely only holding a mirror, which she gazed into. The ribbons in her hair fall down onto her shoulders and back. It is possible that the original statue was created by Praxiteles, perhaps for the Boeotian Thespiae.[118] It is linked to

[116] Harvard Art Museums 1960.666. Cf. George M. A. Hanfmann, "An Early Classical Aphrodite," *American Journal of Archaeology* 66, no. 3 (July 1962): 281-284.
[117] See Brunilde S. Ridgway, "The Aphrodite of Arles," *American Journal of Archaeology* 80, no. 2 (Spring 1976): 147-154.
[118] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.27.5.

the later Cnidian Aphrodite in its proportions, the shape of the bracelet on the left arm and the similar posture, with head slightly bowed and tilted towards the left shoulder. The goddess also has the same hairstyle – the hair is parted in the middle and combed back so that it covers the upper part of the ears, and the locks in the back are bound in a knot. However, this concurrence can also be explained by the claim that the Venus of Arles is not a reflection of Praxiteles's work created before his statue known as the Cnidia but is, on the contrary, a later Roman variation on this famous statue.[119]

The Cnidia

The first completely naked Aphrodite and thus the first ever depiction of an unveiled female body in monumental art was created by Praxiteles around 360 BC.[120] According to Pliny, the sculptor created two Aphrodites, which he then sold simultaneously: *one of them was draped and for this reason was preferred by the people of Cos, who had an option on the sale, although he offered it at the same price as the other. This they considered to be the only decent and dignified course of action. The statue which they refused was purchased by the people of Cnidus and achieved an immeasurably greater reputation.* [121] This story is likely to have been fabricated, as sculptors in ancient times created their work on commission, and thus it is unlikely that someone would have created a sculpture without already having a specific buyer for it. Nonetheless, the story of the insipience of the people of Cos and the foresight of the Cnidians is valuable proof of the development of the depiction of Aphrodite. The people of Cos refused the naked Aphrodite as *indecent* and *undignified*, and thus in Pliny's time there was still a vivid awareness of the fact that nakedness was a sensational novelty at the time of the statue's creation.

The statue was a pioneering work and the starting point of a new trend, a fact which was not forgotten. In fact, in ancient times it was considered to be the most famous work ever: *superior to anything not merely by Praxiteles, but in the whole world, is the Venus, which many people have sailed to Cnidus to see*.[122] This manifested itself in the exceptionally large number of sculptural echoes of the work. Over three hundred versions have been preserved, fifty of which are life-size. As Roman sculptures are not exact copies of their Greek originals and have been elaborated upon, all variations of the Cnidia are more or less different from one another. The original marble statue has not been preserved, but we know its appearance from later Cnidian coins. On the coins which were minted by Emperor Caracalla in Cnidus, the Cnidia's head is seen from the profile, probably due to the fact that heads stood out better on coins when designed in this manner.[123] On the coin minted by Emperor Maximinus in Tarsus, the Cnidia's head is depicted in a three-quarter profile like on the marble statues. [124]

---

[119] Jean-Luc Martinez and Alain Pasquier, eds., *Praxitèle* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, Paris 2007), 134-139.

[120] See, for example, Antonio Corso, *The Art of Praxiteles II. The Mature Years* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2007), 9-186; Martinez and Pasquier , *Praxitèle,* 139-146; Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit*, 17-32; Rosemary Barrow, "The Female Body: Aphrodite of Cnidos," in *Gender, Identity and the Body in Greek and Roman Sculpture,* ed. Michael Silk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 35-48.

[121] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 36.6. English translation D. E. Eichholz. Cf. Stéphanie Paul, *Cultes et sanctuaires de l'île de Cos* (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2013), 93-95.

[122] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 36.6. English translation D. E. Eichholz.

[123] Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 407.

[124] Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 408.

Praxiteles's statue depicts the goddess from the front, but she stands in a relaxed pose with one leg bent, covering her loins with her right hand. In addition, she is not looking straight ahead. Her head is tilted to the right in a three-quarter profile as if she were looking at her left hand, which holds her clothing. Under it is a vessel of water. The works closest to the depictions on the coins are two Roman statues in the Vatican museums, which have unfortunately been considerably restored. The Colonna Venus, which was given to the pope in 1783 by Filippo Giuseppe Colonna, no longer has its original hands and head (**12**). The head with which it is exhibited is from a different marble than the body and is too small. It evidently belonged to the same sculptural type, but was created in a smaller dimension. The so-called Standing Venus (Venus *ex balneo*), which was exhibited in the Vatican's Cortile del Belvedere in the 16th century, is on the contrary exceptional among the versions of the Cnidia in that its original head is intact (**13**).[125] The most important characteristic of the Cnidia was the differentiation of the free and supporting leg, setting it apart from the depiction of naked goddesses in Near Eastern tradition.

12 (left). Colonna Venus, h. 204 cm, The Roman marble version of Cnidia from around 360 BC.
13 (right). Standing Venus, h. 185 cm, The Roman marble version of Cnidia from around 360 BC.

With the Colonna Venus, the vessel for water is a large hydria standing on a pedestal; with the Standing Venus, the vessel is small and has no pedestal, which corresponds to what the coins depict. On both Vatican statues, the goddess's hair is parted in the middle and combed back, which we know from Maximinus and

[125] Città del Vaticano, Museo Pio Clementino 4260. Cf. Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of the Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), no. 92.

Caracalla's coins. Both Vatican statues have in common the fact that Venus is standing on her right leg, the counterbalance of which is created by the vertical creases of her cloak, which she holds near her in her outstretched left hand. Contrary to the Colonna Venus, whose clothing is static, it denotes movement in the Standing Venus. The creases do not fall downwards, obeying the laws of gravity, but bend towards the goddess, making it look as if she had just lifted the clothing upwards and was now pulling it towards herself to put it on. On the contrary, we can claim that the Colonna Venus is taking off her clothes. These differences indicate that no specific action is depicted in these statues, and they simply suggest bathing.

The temple in which the Cnidia stood is not in any way localized in preserved written sources. Judging by the coins, the statue was not on a high pedestal and those who came to bow to it may therefore have had their heads roughly at the same level as her eyes. The statue was evidently not designated for a large temple and thus we can imagine it in some smaller-sized shrine. In the 1960s, the remnants of a circular structure with a diameter of 17.3 meters with a wall surrounded by a row of columns in Corinthian style were unearthed in Cnidus.[126] The temple was interpreted as the shrine in which Praxiteles's statue was exhibited. On the eastern side of the temple, there was a stairwell leading to the entrance, which was in line with the altar in front of the building. The entrance to the temple was oriented so that the statue had a view of the sea. The existence of a circular shrine with the Cnidia is confirmed by its evocation at a scale of 1:1 that Emperor Hadrian ordered to be built in his villa in Tivoli in 125-133.[127] An exemplar of the Colonna Venus, which may have stood at the center of the cella, was found near this shrine in 1956.[128] Today the statue is in the local museum there, and a copy of it stands at the center of the partially reconstructed circular colonnade. The Dorian style in which the temple in Tivoli is built is surprising, as Vitruvius recommends the Corinthian style for temples of this goddess.[129]

Pliny wrote the following of the shrine in which the Cnidia stood: *The shrine in which it stands is entirely open so as to allow the image of the goddess to be viewed from every side, and it is believed to have been made in this way with the blessing of the goddess herself. The statue is equally admirable from every angle. There is a story that a man once fell in love with it and hiding by night embraced it, and that a stain betrays this lustful act*.[130] By reading Pliny's text carefully, we realize that is likely a compilation of two texts from different epochs, as it contains a contradiction. Pliny first writes that Aphrodite's shrine was completely open, which corresponds to what archeologists call a monopteros: a colonnade which delimits a circular or right-angled space.[131] Then, however, he states that someone *had hidden himself (delituisset)* inside the shrine. If the shrine had been

---

[126] Sophie Montel, "The Architectural Setting of the Knidian Aphrodite," in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite,* eds. Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 251-268.

[127] See Giorgio Ortolani, *Il padiglione di Afrodite Cnidia a Villa Adriana: Progetto e significato* (Rome: Librerie Dedalo, 1998).

[128] Tivoli, Museo archeologico 2752.

[129] Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture,* 1.2.5.

[130] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History,* 36.6. English translation D. E. Eichholz. Cf. Adolf Heinrich Borbein, "Die griechische Statue des 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. Formanalytische Untersuchungen zur Kunst der Nachklassik," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Archäologischen Instituts* 88 (1973): 188-194; George L. Hersey, *Falling in Love with Statues: Artificial Humans from Pygmalion to the Present* (Chicago ILL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 73-76.

[131] See Montel, *The Architectural Setting*, 255.

completely open (tota aperitur), how could the worshiper of the goddess have hidden inside it? The young man in love with the Cnidia could have either stayed overnight in the completely open shrine, or he could have hidden himself in a closed shrine. Over the course of more than four centuries that divided Praxiteles from Pliny, who died in 79, the shrine was evidently renovated multiple times, which perhaps explains the contradictions in Pliny's text. Lucian wrote of a closed shrine with doors at the front and back in the 2nd century in his story of three young men who decide to visit Aphrodite's temple in Cnidus together.[132]

Based on ancient descriptions of preserved ruins in Cnidus and Tivoli, a circular shrine with a statue at its center can certainly be considered possible. A theatron (a place for viewing or performances) is an architectonic type that we know from Greece from the beginning of the 5th century BC, when statues began to be furnished with circular pedestals, which were suitable for statues that were designed to be walked around. Statues that were conceived in order to captivate the viewer from all angles are known from the 4th century BC.[133] The Cnidia, however, is not one of them. As we walk around it, we do not gain anything; on the contrary, we lose something. When we look at it from the sides, we are not able to appreciate the sculptor's treatment of the naked body and the differentiation between the supporting and free leg; her action is unclear and her contours are much less attractive than when viewed from the front.

We do not assume that the Cnidia was designated to be viewed from behind, as her proportions from this angle are grotesquely deformed. As the goddess is leaning forwards in order to establish contact with the viewer, from behind her head looks disproportionately small in relation to her body. When viewed from behind, her bulky backside is dominant, an element which was surely not the sculptor's intention. Moreover, she looks rather boyish. Thus, the most impressive and coherent view of the statue is from the front. The literary motif of circumambulating the Cnidia may have been inspired by the fact that the naked Venus was also depicted from behind with her head turned to the right on coins, mirrors and gems from the end of the 1st century BC.[134]

We know the story of the ardent admirer of the Cnidia not only from Pliny and Lucian's "Amores," but also from other ancient sources.[135] In ancient literature, we repeatedly encounter the motif of love for statues, but such behavior was generally considered to be rare and socially unacceptable. The anecdote was primarily intended to entertain via the folly of the protagonist, as only a complete fool could mistake a statue for a living being.[136] At the end of the 20th century, however, a debate flared up

---

[132] Lucian, *Amores*, 15–16. Cf. Melissa Haynes,"Framing a View of the Unviewable: Architecture, Aphrodite, and Erotic Looking in the Lucianic Erôtes," *Helios* 40 (2013): 71 – 95.

[133] Cf. Borbein, *Formanalytische Untersuchungen*, 53-54.

[134] Evamaria Schmidt, "Venus," in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* VIII. 1. (Zürich: Artemis, 1997), 192–230.

[135] Lucian, *Imagines,* 4; Lucian, *Amores*, 15–16; Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, 8.11.4. Cf. Stijn Bussels, *The Animated Image: Roman Theory on Naturalism, Vividness and Divine Power* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012, 161–70; Giulia Ferrari, "Agalmatofilia. L'amore per le statue nel mondo antico. L'Afrodite di Cnido e il caso di Pigmalione," *Psicoart* 3, no. 3 (2013): 1-17.

.

[136] Neer, *The Emergece*, 53.

concerning the Cnidia's message, which was based on the report of her "rape."[137] Deliberations on whether this statue was sexually approachable or unapproachable, who she was looking at and who was looking at her, and who identified with her and why did not lead to clear conclusions. *The Cnidian Aphrodite,* Leonard Barkan emphasized, *is neither a god nor a human being; it is a statue. It is thus equally absurd to say that this piece of stone is a god-and-only-a-god as it is to say that this piece of stone has complex emotions going on inside its marble head.*[138] In the text below, we will view the Cnidia exclusively as a work of sculpture, which communicated with the audience of its time via its shapes and the associations that it evoked.

14. The Kaufmann head, Hellenistic head from Asia Minor marble after Cnidia from around 360 BC.

The best variation on the head of Praxiletes's Aphrodite of Cnidus is generally considered to be the fragment known as the Kaufmann Head (**14**). The goddess has wavy hair divided with a part in the middle and combed back. The hair is tied in a knot on the back of the neck. The only decoration in the hair is a thin ribbon wrapped twice around. The Kaufmann Head has rounded cheeks and a slightly opened mouth with full lips; the eyes are slightly shut and its expression is dreamy. The sculptor indicated Aphrodite's absent expression by placing the eye directly under the eyebrow and using a contrasting design for the eyelids; the upper eyelid has a thin, sharply cut contour and is convex while the line of the lower lid is softer and almost horizontal.

[137] See, for instance, Natalie Boymel Kampel, "Woman's Desire, Archaeology and Feminist Theory," in *KOINE: Mediterranean Studies in Honor of R. Ross Holloway*, eds. Derek Counts and Anthony Tuck (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009), 207-215; Jan Bažant, "The Legend of Knidia Today," *Eirene* 53 (2017): 91–99; Barrow, *The Female Body*, 35-48.

[138] Leonard Barkan, "Praxiteles' Aphrodite and the Love of Art," in *The Forms of Renaissance Thought*, eds. Leonard Barkan et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 28-29.

Aphrodite's gaze evokes the impression of someone who is standing directly before us but is preoccupied. The statue has been detached from the human world also thanks to its larger-than-life-size dimensions. The viewer stood before the statue, which was in arm's reach, but Praxiteles depicted it so that the inaccessibility of the goddess would stand out even more distinctly. At the same time, the statue looks as if it were alive, and the effect of reality was originally heightened by polychrome. Its hair was probably yellow or gilded, and the eyes, face, mouth and jewelry may have been emphasized with colors. The cloak that the goddess held in her hand was also colored, and the vessel was likely to have been painted to look like bronze. Polychrome was a highly important aspect of a statue. As Pliny stated: *Praxiteles used to say, when asked which of his own works in marble he placed highest, "The ones to which Nicias has set his hand" – so much value did he assign to his colouring of surfaces*.[139] Nicias was a very famous painter in his time.

In Athens, naked Aphrodites appear in statuettes and vase painting already in the first half of the 4th century BC[140] and they may have appeared there later in monumental art.[141] Nonetheless, it seems that statues of clothed Aphrodites with veils covering their heads prevailed in Athens.[142] Athenian sculptor Praxiteles did not create the Cnidia for Athens, but for a Greek community with a different cultural tradition. Cnidus is located in Caria in Asia Minor, on the border between the Greek and Near Eastern world, where depictions of tempting, naked women had been common for millennia.[143] In Cnidus, Aphrodite's nakedness may have been considered something that inherently belonged to the goddess. Already in the 5th century BC, small statuettes of a naked goddess of a Near Eastern type with hands lifted up to the breasts were brought as votive gifts to the temple in which the Cnidia was later placed.[144] This does not however mean that small statuettes were an inspiration for Praxiteles's larger-than-life statue from a formal standpoint. This inspiration came from the monumental statues of naked and half-naked women in Egypt, which had been a source of inspiration for Greek sculptors since the mid-7th century BC.[145] However, most important for the further development of both ancient and world art was the fact that Praxiteles fundamentally transformed the Egyptian models.

The Cnidia differs at first glance from the Near Eastern depictions of naked goddesses in that she neither stands upright nor looks straight ahead stiffly; she is depicted in a relaxed pose with her head turned to the side. This strongly heightened the effect of reality, thanks to which the goddess could enter into the human world. Praxiteles's Aphrodite does not exist in mythical timelessness, but is placed into a wholly specific and highly intimate situation. The goddess holds clothing in her raised left hand, and under it is a hydria, a vessel for water. We see her bathing, here and

---

[139] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.133. English translation H. Rackham.

[140] Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 380.

[141] Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 398 and 473.

[142] Cf. Andrew Stewart, "Hellenistic Freestanding Sculpture from the Athenian Agora, 1. Aphrodite," *Hesperia* 81, no. 2 (2012): 267–342.

[143] Andrew Stewart, *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1990, 178.

[144] Cf. Mustafa Şahin, "Terrakotten aus Knidos: Erste Ergebnisse. Die Kulte auf den Rundtempelterrasse," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 55 (2005): 65–93, 70-72.

[145] Cf. Nicholas Reeves, "The Birth of Venus? " in: *Joyful in Thebes. Egyptological Studies in Honor of Betsy M. Brian,* eds. Richard Jasnow and Kathlyn M. Cooney (Atlanta GA: Lockwood Press, 2015), 373-386.

now, which allows women to identify with her and men to embody someone spying on her. The bath was a traditional attribute of Aphrodite's beauty and erotic attractiveness. When Zeus sent erotic passion down on Aphrodite towards Anchises so she could experience what she caused upon others, she withdrew to her temple in Paphos, Cyprus. *There she went in, and closed the gleaming doors, and there the Graces bathed her and rubbed her with olive oil, divine oil*.[146] In ancient Greece, the bath was primarily associated with women and was understood there as a source of erotic attraction because it took place in privacy, behind closed doors; it was also attractive for what might ensue after a bath. Figuratively speaking, Praxiteles brought the viewer to the keyhole so he or she could look into Aphrodite's bath.

This, however, has not exhausted the topic of bathing in regard to the Cnidia. It was not only an attribute of the goddess's beauty, but also a reminder of her birth from the sea foam, in which she bathed for the first time, which had been depicted in Greek art since the 5th century BC. One of the most famous images in ancient times was the birth of Aphrodite by painter Apelles of Kos, which was created in the third quarter of the 4th century BC.[147] Not only was Aphrodite born from the sea, she ruled the seas as well. Thus, visitors to the temple could see the vessel, which was a part of the Cnidia, as reference to the element of water from which Aphrodite was meant to protect sailors. Pausanias noted: *For the Cnidians hold Aphrodite in very great honour and they have sanctuaries of the goddess; the oldest is to her as Doritis (Bountiful), the next in age as Acraea (Of the Height), while the newest is to the Aphrodite called Cnidian by men generally, but Euploia (Fair Voyage) by the Cnidian themselves*.[148] The Cnidia earned the title of Euploia due to the fact that Cnidus was a port city located on a site that was critical for ancient seafaring. The north-south line of Asia Minor's coast takes a right-angle turn here to the east, where sea navigation was dangerous and sailors needed protection more than anywhere else.

The Cnidia can be compared to a vase painting from the 5th century BC.[149] The woman depicted on this lekythos, a vessel for oil used in Greece after a bath, is naked, which was emphasized using an uncommon technique. The decoration has been created using so-called red-figure painting, with a black background and figures in the ochre color of a fired ceramic vessel. In this case, however, the nakedness of the woman was accentuated with a supplementary white coating. She is undoubtedly a woman, but her proportions are rather boyish. Incidentally, this is also proof of the progress that Greek artists made in the depiction of the anatomy of the female body over the course of the century that differentiates this vase painting from the Cnidia. The woman is at home, which is indicated by the objects on the floor, i.e. a box on the left and a basket of wool on the right. She was looking into a mirror, but someone has interrupted her. She continues to hold the mirror in her left hand before her, but has turned to look over her shoulder. Her right hand, which she was using to style her hair, is outstretched with the palm facing outwards. This gesture is a clear command for the intruding party to leave. The fact that she is embarrassed is indicated by her lightly

---

[146] *Homeric hymn,* 5.60-62. English translation Martin L. West.

[147] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History,* 35.91.

[148] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,*1.1.3. English translation W. H. S. Jones. Cf. Martin Eckert, *Die Aphrodite der Seefahrer und ihre Heiligtümer am Mittelmeer* (Münster, LIT-Verlag, 2016).

[149] Los Angeles, Getty Museum HS3999.

tilted head and the fact that she has not completely turned to the person arriving, allowing him to see her only from the side.

Comparison of the Cnidia to this vase painting is illuminative. The statue seems as if the sculptor has recorded a fleeting moment, but only at first glance. While the woman's gesture on the vase is unambiguous, we can interpret the Cnidia's gestures in various manners. With Praxiteles's statue, the depiction of the true shapes of the naked female body and the probable action evoked strong emotions in the viewer. This was a novelty that followed the request for an individual experience of the goddess's presence. The clothing plays an important role in the conception of the statue for the very reason that it is completely non-functional. It serves no purpose to the goddess, but the sculptor is nevertheless pointing the viewer towards it. It is an important semantic element, which gives the statue a certain dynamic; a moment earlier, the goddess was veiled and in the next moment she will be dressed, or vice versa; the viewer in any case has the unique opportunity to see the goddess naked.

The intentional ambiguity of the depicted action is similarly important, as it is one of the primary traits emphasizing her supernatural status. The Cnidia does not allow us to know exactly what she is doing. She can enter the bath or leave it; she may have turned her head to look in the direction of a suspicious sound she has heard, or may have turned to look towards the vessel of water lying next to her. She may be holding the clothing with her left hand to put it on or, on the contrary, to lay it down in order to take her bath. She may be covering her loins with her left hand, or she could be pointing to them.

The primary dynamic element of the statue is the distinct differentiation of the free and supporting leg – in the Cnidia, Praxiteles modified this contrapposto and interpreted it in a new way.[150] Polykleitos's "Spear Bearer / Doryphoros" from 440 BC evokes calm and serenity. The differentiation of the Cnidia's legs is more distinct and thus evokes discomposure, which excites the viewer. The goddess is moving the part of her body which is the most important for sexual activity. Praxiteles's statue does not embody self-control like Polykleitos's "Doryphoros", but rather spontaneity and erotic desire. A person is capable of recognizing from a far distance when the hip of an observed figure deviates by even few centimeters.[151] At the beginning of his career, performances of American singer Elvis Presley were monitored by the police to determine whether or not he was moving his pelvis excessively, as his allegedly vulgar dancing while singing was seen as reason for criminal prosecution. The singer even received the nickname "Elvis the Pelvis" for his erotic movements. The Cnidia looks as if she were dancing; at the same time, her hip over her supporting leg stands out so prominently that if she were to perform as a singer in the USA in the 1950s, she would have been arrested on the spot.

Greek Aphrodite was the patroness of the erotic, the Cnidia, however, has her erotic charge fully under control; her sexuality accentuates her divinity and thus inaccessibility. While classical Greek male statues depicted in contrapposto are walking and thus have their legs apart, the Cnidia's knees on the contrary are pressed against one another so that one thigh almost crosses over the other. This detail

---

[150] Rhys Carpenter, *Greek Sculpture* (Chicago ILL: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 173-74.

[151] See Enrico Marani and Wijnand F.R.M Koch, *The Pelvis: Structure, Gender and Society* (Berlin: Springer, 2014), 298-299.

naturally places a significant limit on the erotic appeal of Praxiteles's statue, which was surely intentional. The elegance of Praxiteles's design, which the viewer immediately accepts as something wholly natural, stands out when compared to alternative versions. On the Boeotian statuette of Aphrodite from roughly the same period, her erotic nature is indicated by an unveiled body including the loins, but her divine nature is shown by the cloak that veils the rest of her body and is also draped over her head.[152] The problem of depicting the naked goddess was solved in this manner, but the result is improbable and the goddess gives off a stiff impression.

The most important means of all through which Praxiteles depicted the erotically attractive but asexual goddess was the elimination of the genitals. Lucian wrote of the Cnidia: *She's a most beautiful statue of Parian marble – arrogantly smiling a little as a grin parts her lips. Draped by no garment, all her beauty is uncovered and revealed, except in so far as she unobtrusively uses one hand to hide her private parts. So great was the power of the craftsman's art that the hard unyielding marble did justice to every limb.*[153] Yet this is not true – Praxiteles deviated from the anatomy of the female body in the most important area.[154] The Cnidia's genitals are smooth and permanently closed, and her womb is wholly inaccessible. Praxiteles depicted the naked Aphrodite, but fundamentally changed his artistic strategy just before finishing the objective. Instead of bringing the nakedness to completion, he deviated from the form of the female body and resorted to an artistic convention. Praxiteles calls attention to the goddess's genitals by closing her thighs and covering them with a hand; despite this fact, it is as if the goddess has left on an invisible undergarment. Praxiteles's innovation caught on so firmly that half a millennium later it did not occur to Lucian to mention this anomaly. In his time, it was clearly an obvious element of the goddess of love's appearance.

An example can also be found on the Esquilin Venus, a well-preserved Roman version from the mid-1st century after a late-Hellenistic version of the Cnidia.[155] This statue is evidently depicting Venus as a young mother, which may be indicated by an accentuated crease in the skin as a result of pregnancy, which characterizes her as a woman who has recently given birth.[156] Why did the sculptor of the Esquilin Venus faithfully reproduce the anatomy of the female body including the subtle changes brought on by pregnancy with the exception of the area that is so crucial to reproduction (**15**)?

---

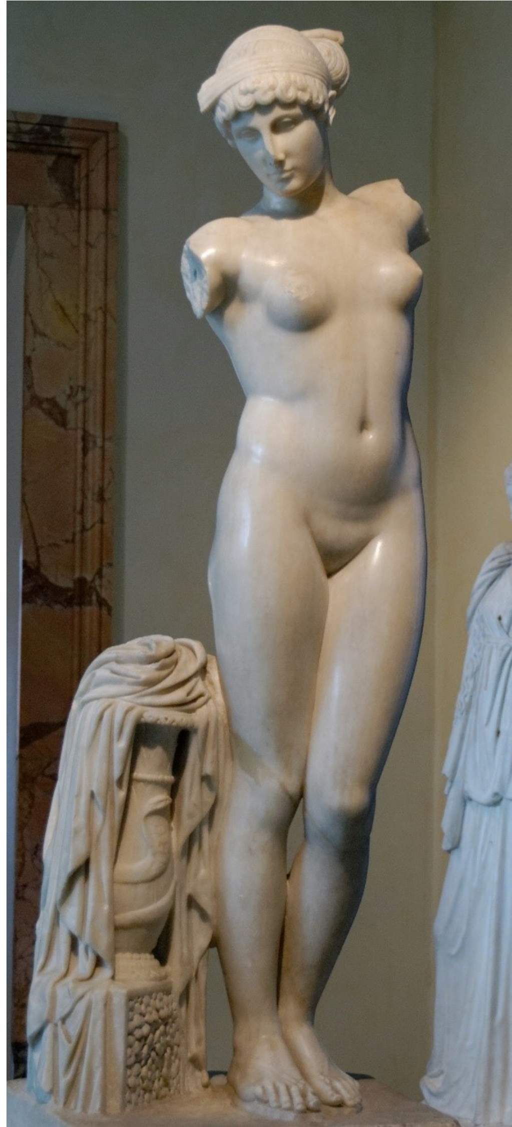
[152] London, The British Museum 1867,0205.5. Cf. Chantal Courtois, "La collection Béatrix de Candolle: Terre cuites en filiation," *Genava. Revue d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie* 54, (2006): 227-237.

[153] Lucian, *Amores,* 13. English translation M. D. Macleod.

[154] See, for instance, Kristen Elisabeth Seaman, "Retrieving the Original Aphrodite of Knidos," *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Rendiconti Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* Ser. 9, no. 15 (2004): 551-557.

[155] Cf. Bernard Andreae, "Ist die sogenannte Venus vom Esquilin ein Körperportät der unbekleideten Kleopatra?" in *Amicitiae Gratia: tomos stē mnēmē Alkmēnēs Stauridē,* eds. Alkmini Stavridis and Diana Zapheiropoulou (Athens: Tameio Archaiologikon Porōn, 2008), 97-104.

[156] See Licinio Glori, *Cleopatra "Venere esquilina"* (Rome: C. Bestetti, 1955), 19-25.



15. Esquilin Venus, h. 155 cm, the Roman version from Parian marble of the late Hellenistic original.

The Cnidia's hand placed before the genitals was not necessarily a gesture of chastity, which is embodied in the title "Venus pudica," i.e. the bashful Aphrodite, which is commonly used for this sculptural type today despite being a modern name. We know nothing of the sort from ancient times.[157] The Cnidia is covering her loins and at the same time gesturing towards them. This gesture was used to characterize deities of sexuality with a thousand-year-long tradition, which the Greeks knew well.[158] We have two literary documents concerning how this gesture was interpreted in ancient Rome. Apuleius describes a sort of "strip-tease" in a story in which a girl plays Venus: *she stripped herself of all her clothes, and let down her hair. With joyous wantonness she beautifully transformed herself into the picture of Venus rising from the ocean*

---

[157] Cf. Rober Couzin, "Invented Traditions. Latin Terminology and the Writing of Art History," *Journal of Art Historiography* 19 (December 2018): 14-15.

[158] Cf., for instance, Böhm, *Die "nackte Göttin"*, 56-59; Andrew Stewart, *Art, Desire and the Body in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 101-106.

waves. For a time she even held one rosy little hand in front of her smooth-shaven pubes, purposely shadowing it, rather than modestly hiding it.[159]

In Lucian's aforementioned story of the three young men who set off to see the Cnidia, the gesture is spoken of in a similar sense. This is the very first time in ancient literary tradition that the Cnidia's hand covering her loins is mentioned; however, it is important that she is not doing so because she is embarrassed of her nakedness. As Lucian stresses, the statue was *smiling a little* and did so *arrogantly*. Scholars long ignored this detail about the Cnidia and her following variations, despite the fact that it fundamentally influenced the depiction of the naked woman in Western artistic tradition. After the onset of Christianity in the late ancient period, it was no longer necessary for Venus to have smooth genitals, a fact which had an influence on the depiction of naked women in general. On a Byzantine pyxis of the5th – 6th century from Egypt, Venus is depicted in exactly the way a naked woman looks.[160] In the Christian era, Venus ceased to be a venerated goddess; along with this, the taboo from the previous "pagan" epoch that forbade depictions of her genitals also ceased to be valid.

In post-ancient Europe, realistic depictions of the female genitalia were prevalent. Only during the Italian Renaissance were Venus's unnaturally smoothed genitals renewed. At the beginning of the 16th century, however, the genitals were still being added to drawings of ancient sculptures. This means that the drawers realized this anomaly. It was commented on for the first time by Denis Diderot in 1765.[161] The lack of depiction of the female genitals began to be dealt with in art history by Ann-Sophie Lehmann around 2000.[162] In classical archeology, Wiltrud Neumer-Pfau already pointed out this specific characteristic of ancient Greek depictions of Aphrodite in the 1980s.[163] In the heated discussion that arose concerning this topic, Zainab Bahrani wrote: *The genitals on the Hellenistic Aphrodite statues are neither under–represented nor schematically represented. They are not represented; they are denied, non–existent. They are a void where something, a part of the female anatomy, and significantly, the sexual part, should be. The vulva is not covered by clothes or obscured by any props. It is rejected as non–existent. This detail is particularly remarkable in that the Aphrodite statues represent a goddess of sexuality.*[164] Kristen Seaman opposed this opinion with the statement that on some statues of Venus, pubic hair or the lines of the labia are

---

[159] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses,* 2.17. English translation J. Arthur Hanson. Cf. Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 293-295.

[160] Baltimore, MD, Walters Art Museum 71.64.

[161] Denis Diderot, *Salons,* 2 eds. Jean Seznec and Jean Adhémar (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 210. Cf. also Josef Kirchner, *Die Darstellung des ersten Menschenpaares in der bildenden Kunst von der ältesten Zeit bis auf unsere Tage* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1903), 85; Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 136-148.

[162] See Ann-Sophie Lehmann, "Das unsichtbare Geschlecht: Zu einem abwesenden Teil des weiblichen Körpers in der bildenden Kunst," in *Körperteile: Eine kulturelle Anatomie*, eds. Claudia Benthien and Christoph Wulf (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlts, 2001), 314-336.

[163] See Wiltrud Neumer-Pfau, *Studien zur Ikonographie und gesellschaftlichen Funktion hellenistischer Aphrodite-Statuen* (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1982); idem, "Die nackte Liebesgöttin: Aphroditestatuen als Verkörperung des Weiblichkeitsideals in der griechisch–hellenistischen Welt," in *Approaches to Iconology*, ed. Werner Muensterberger (Leiden: Brill, 1985–1986): 205–234.

[164] Bahrani, *Women of Babylon*, 76.

indicated by a relief or painting and sometimes by both techniques.[165] The Cnidia may naturally have had a hairless pubic region, which was evidently common in Greece at the time of the statue's creation. The problem, however, had in no way been solved. If the pubic hair and vulva were discretely indicated on several versions of the Cnidia, why do we not find them on the absolute majority? Roland Smith pointed out this contradiction in 1991.[166]

In monumental Greek art, men were depicted naked several centuries before women and their genitals were depicted quite realistically from the beginning to the end of ancient civilization, including three-dimensionally indicated pubic hair. Greek artists approached the male genitalia just like they did the nose, ears or any other protuberance on the human body. At the same time, the Greeks long before Praxiteles had depicted the female genitals including pubic hair or indication of the vulva and it offended no one. Indicated genitalia can be found for example on a depiction of Aphrodite on a Paestan lebes gamikos of the third quarter of the 4th century BC.[167] However, Praxiteles deviated from this practice with the Cnidia and violated the generally established convention of the Greek visual arts, which ordered that all visible anatomic features be systematically and faithfully recorded. This was not an omission or improvisation, but an important part of the characteristic of the naked Aphrodite sculptural type that the sculptor had just created.

At the beginning of the 3rd century, Philostratus the Elder expressed the following in a description of a painting depicting the statue of the goddess: *The type of the goddess is that of Aphrodite goddess of Modesty, naked and graceful, and the material is ivory, closely joined. However, the goddess is unwilling to seem painted, but she stands out as though one could take hold of her*.[168] She is a goddess and at the same time the work of human hands, which is sophisticatedly designed from pieces of ivory. She keeps her distance from viewers, but simultaneously urges them to lay their hands on her. She is chaste despite being naked, but indecent at the same time, although she does not show it. The depiction of Aphrodite can never be complete; each one of her statues is only the visualization of her absence and permanent inaccessibility. The myth of Anchises tells of how Aphrodite's genitals were once available to all, even mortals. This is the reason the myth was told in ancient times; Anchises, however, was the last mortal whom the goddess chose as a sexual partner. Aphrodite forced the young man to solemnly swear he would never tell anyone of it. Anchises did not keep his oath of silence and was punished for it.[169] Even if he had kept it, the mythical age of heroes had irreversibly come to an end. The fates of people and gods, which Aphrodite and the other Olympian gods in the mythical past had connected, were once again permanently divided. An unsurpassable chasm between the immortal and eternally-young gods on one hand and the mortal and ageing people on the other had opened and it continued to widen as time passed.

---

[165] Seaman, *Retrieving the Original Aphrodite*, 554–555; id., *An Aphrodite of Knidos and Its Copies* (Berkeley: University of California, 2009), 20–22.
[166] See Roland R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 83.
[167] Paestum, museum. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 1182.
[168] Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines*, 2.1–3. English translation A. Fairbanks.
[169] See Jenny Strauss Clay, *The Politics of Olympus: Form and Meaning in the Homeric Hymns* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 199-200.

People were conscientious of this matter; they strove towards contact with the gods, but in their own interest avoided direct contact with them, a fact which the gods were also well aware of. In the Iliad, Hera makes this wholly clear – the sight of the gods in their true form must be terrifying by rule.[170] Semele paid for this with her life while Tiresias went blind. Aeneas was punished for having sex with Aphrodite (and for his impertinence) by being struck by lightning, which permanently damaged his legs. Alcman therefore warned: *nay, mortal man may not go soaring to the heavens, nor seek to wed Aphrodite of Paphos.*[171] Aphrodite had a different relationship with nakedness than the virgin Artemis, who had Actaion torn apart by his own dogs for happening to glimpse her undressed.[172] Aphrodite would not have minded someone seeing her naked at all, but it may have had fatal consequences for the person in question. The omitted details of the private parts were a result of the depiction of naked Aphrodite or more precisely a *conditio sine qua non* of the new method of depicting the Greek goddess of love. In order for her to appear in monumental sculpture, Aphrodite's womb had to be veiled and her genitals had to be covered via artistic convention.[173] The goddess thus protected those who came to worship her, a fact told in epigrams about her.[174] In one epigram, the goddess herself appeared among tourists in Cnidus. *Paphian Cytherea came through the waves to Cnidus, wishing to see her own image, and having viewed it from all sides in its open shrine, she cried, "Where did Praxiteles see me naked?" Praxiteles did not look on forbidden things, but the steel carved the Paphian as Ares would have her*.[175]

In the 4th century, the content of the epigram was retold by Ausonius, who explicitly claimed the sight of the naked goddess was a sin.[176] In both epigrams, the same strategy for defending the depiction of the naked goddess was used. As a mortal must not in any way see the goddess naked, the responsibility was transferred to the sculptor's chisel. Praxiteles neither saw nor did anything that was forbidden. The sculpture was created by the chisel which he held in his hand. The tool, however, was commanded by the god Ares, Aphrodite's divine lover, who was the patron of iron and all tools made from it. Only a god could see the form of Aphrodite's naked body. This explains how a sculptor was able to create a faithful representation of Aphrodite's naked body without violating the divine restriction. The authors of the epigrams borrowed this strategy from ancient sacrificial practice, during which the sacrificer was not guilty of killing the sacrificial animal; it was the knife he held in his hand that carried responsibility.[177]

Like every fundamental innovation in artistic culture, the Cnidia did not appear in Greece merely "out of thin air." Its creation required the culmination of several

---

[170] Homer, *Iliad,* 20.131.
[171] Alcman, 1.1.16-17. English translation J.M. Edmonds.
[172] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 3.138-252.
[173] See, for instance, Brunilde S. Ridgway, "Some Personal Thoughts on the Knidia," in *Macellum: Culinaria archaeologica. Robert Fleischer zum 60. Geburtstag von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern,* eds. Robert Fleischer and Nicole Birkle (Mainz: Nicole Birkle 2001), 257.
[174] Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 199-211.
[175] Greek Anthology, 16.161. Cf. Barkan, *Praxiteles*, 4.
[176] Ausonius, *Epigrammata,* 62.
[177] Cf. Robert Parker, *On Greek Religion* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 129-130.

generations of lasting effort elicited by the growth of the cult of Aphrodite's popularity in Athens, which we have mentioned above. In the second half of the 5th century, local sculptors had to meet the exceptionally large demand for new statues. At the time, a whole series of various visual art types that abandoned the previous tradition were created for Athenian temples. The development culminated in 360 BC with Praxiteles's creation of his statue of Aphrodite, which is completely unveiled. This was to meet the need for a more intimate relationship between the viewer and the deity's statue. This is also the main characteristic of Praxiteles's Hermes and the Infant Dionysus in his arms, or the similarly conceived group sculpture of Eirene with the Infant Pluto by Cephisodotus, which was created at roughly the same time as the Cnidia. In comparison with these statues, sculptures of deities from the previous century seemed cold and inaccessible.

Both Praxiteles and Cephisodotus created much more visually attractive forms of the deity, which appeal to the sensual experience of the viewer and urge him or her to identify completely with the depicted deity, which is meant to be perceived as an indelible part of the human world. However, this in no way means the deity is more accessible to people. On the contrary, sculptors began to emphasize the fact that the deities are wholly enclosed in a world of their own, a fact which is expressed perfectly in both Cephisodotus and Praxiteles's group of sculptures. In them, all communication takes place exclusively between the depicted figures, who ignore the surrounding world.[178] Sculptors used a radical intensification of the effect of reality to react to the fact that a chasm between the world of people and the Olympian gods had opened up and was swiftly growing larger. At the same time, sculptors admitted to this chasm via the absence of eye contact between the depicted deity and the viewer, which emphasizes the asymmetry of their relationship.

Praxiteles created a type of depiction of the goddess which evoked the manifestation of a deity – an epiphany, the essence of which was the experience of visual and bodily presence and at the same time an equally intense feeling of absence.[179] The clothedness of Aphrodite's genitals became a key attribute of statues of the goddess, as it clearly demonstrated her inaccessibility. Through this convention, statues expressed what is written in Lucian's inscription on the statue of Aphrodite: *To thee, Cypris, I dedicate the beautiful image of thy form (ἄγαλμα), since I have nothing better than thy form (μορφή)*.[180] In the epigram, the statue of the goddess is first indicated by the common word for sculptures which please a god – agalma. It is then given another term used for a statue, morfe, which relates to Aphrodite's beauty. The person giving away the statue apologizes for *having nothing better* than her external form, i.e. a statue of the goddess with smooth genitals, because no other existed in Lucian's time.

Viewed from today's perspective, one of this goddess's paradoxes is the fact that she had a beautiful and erotically attractive body which was, however, intentionally functionless. The smooth genitals, closed thighs and other artistic

---

[178] See Andrew Stewart, *Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 263-264.

[179] See Pascale Linant de Bellefonds and Évelyne Prioux, *Voir les mythes: Poésie hellénistique et arts figurés* (Paris: Picard, 2017), 127-131.

[180] *Greek Anthology,* 16.164. English translation W. R. Paton. Cf. Verity Platt, "Evasive Epiphanies in Ekphrastic Epigram," *Ramus* 31, no. 1-2 (2002): 44-46.

conventions which Praxiteles created were renewed in the 16th century with the reception of the ancient visual arts. In the modern world, Praxiteles's Aphrodite and the countless variations of her have become an attribute of a civilized lifestyle that neither shocks nor leaves us underwhelmed. No objection can be made to this; however, we must be careful not to assume the same attitude was shared by the ancient Greeks. What we must assume is that they knew very well that Aphrodite could not be depicted in the exact way she would have looked if she were a woman.

Variations of the Cnidia

The concept of Aphrodite in the Hellenistic epoch is characterized by its uninterrupted stylistic and thematic continuity with the art of the previous epoch, which took on the status of a mandatory pattern. Within this pattern, however, a fundamental transformation of meanings took place. Both trends were linked to the transformation of the political, economic and social context in which the works of art were created. The Hellenistic monarchies that arose in the eastern Mediterranean and Near East conquered by Alexander the Great meant the end of the Greek polis, but also brought about an increase in the quality of life and completely new opportunities of self-realization. The Greeks ceased to identify with their city state, and their individual fate came to the forefront. The primary patrons were Dionysus and Aphrodite, who brought delight to life.[181] The posture of Aphrodite's statues and her gestures continue to be more distinctly targeted at the viewers with the goal of gaining control of their senses and pulling them into the depicted situation. These new goals were achieved by using allusions and quotes from famous works of art from the past, deepening the psychological characteristic, heightening the effect of reality and playfulness, and eroticizing the depiction of anatomy and themes – at the same time, all of this took place within the frame of social conventions, and decorum was always upheld.

We see these transformations in traditional visual types and their numerous forms, primarily in the Cnidia. Preserved exemplars of Praxiteles's statue vary greatly and dating them is highly difficult, as they are almost always fragments which are by vast majority later Roman variations.[182] We are thus dealing with copies of copies and variations of variations. Fragments of the provably oldest variation on the Cnidia were found in the wreck of the Antikythera and likely originated in the late 2nd century BC.[183] The group sculpture depicting Aphrodite and Pan, which was found on Delos, was created around 100 BC (**16**).[184]

---

[181] Cf. Paul Zanker, *Eine Kunst für die Sinne: Zur Bilderwelt des Dionysos und Aphrodite* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1998).

[182] See, for example, Dericksen M. Brinckerhoff, *Hellenistic Statues of Aphrodite: Studies in the History of their Development* (New York: Garland, 1978); Christine Mitchell Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Knidos and her Successors: A Historical Review of the Female Nude in Greek art* (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Kristen Elisabeth Seaman, *An Aphrodite of Knidos and Its Copies* (Berkeley: University of California, 2009); Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit*.

[183] Peter Bol, *Die Skulpturen des Schiffsfundes von Antikythera* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1972), no. 40, 43-45.

[184] Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit*, 113-122; S. Rebecca Martin, "Revisiting the Slipper Slapper and Other Sculpture Dedications in the Clubhouse of the Poseidoniasts of Beirut," *Journal of Greek Archaeology* 2 (2017): 253-282.

16. Aphrodite, Pan and Eros, h. 129 cm, marble group of statues from Delos, ca. 100 BC.

This sculptural group is highly valuable to us, as this Aphrodite is the oldest and clearly proven record of the reception of the Cnidia. The naked Aphrodite is covering her loins with her left hand, which Pan is attempting to pull away. The goddess has taken off the sandal from her left foot and raises it at Pan, whom Eros, flying over Aphrodite's shoulder, is holding by the horn.[185] In Greek art, sandal-swatting was a frequent motif in erotic scenes. The Cnidia's composition on this statue is a mirror image and has been subtly altered. The group sculpture was created from Parian marble, which was perfectly polished and designed in very high detail.

The effect of the statue's reality was heightened by its original coloration; Aphrodite had brown-red hair, her sandal was red, the stump of the tree was black and the support between Aphrodite and Pan was sky-blue. The wall near which the sculptural group stood was evidently also sky-blue, and therefore the support was not immediately visible at first glance. If we assume that the pubic hair may have been indicated with coloration, the question remains as to why it was not also designed three-dimensionally like this Aphrodite's nipples. Nipples and genitalia did not evidently belong to the same category; if this was the case, both details would have been created three-dimensionally or indicated in paint. The Delos statue group is a Greek original of exceptionally high quality; however, there is no Roman replica of it, a fact which may have been due to historical circumstances. Several decades later, in 69 BC, the island was ransacked by pirates and the sculptural group ended up in the ruins of a collapsed house, which was never rebuilt.

---

[185] Sadie Pickup, "A Slip and a Slap: Aphrodite and her Footwear," *Shoes, Slippers, and Sandals. Feet and Footwear in Classical Antiquity,* ed. Sadie Pickup and Sally Waite (London: Routledge, 2018), 229-246.

17 (left). Medici Venus, h. 135 cm, 1st century BC version of the Hellenistic original.
18 (right). Capitoline Venus, h. 193 cm, the Roman marble version
of the Hellenistic original.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the two most famous works inspired by the Cnidia were two very similar statues in life size known as the the Medici Venus (**17**) and Capitoline Venus (**18**).[186] In terms of the state of their preservation, the difference between them primarily lies in the fact that the later has its original arms intact; with the former, we must rely on the fact that the restorer carried out his work responsibly. On both statues, the goddess is covering her genitals with her left hand and her breasts with her right, gestures which had been depicted in various forms on small statuettes for millennia.[187] This statue type was probably created at the end of the 4th or beginning of the 3rd century BC and can be found on one hundred and fifty statues. It is also

[186] Cf. Andrew Stewart "A Tale of Seven Nudes: The Capitoline and Medici Aphrodites, Four Nymphs at Elean Herakleia, and an Aphrodite at Megalopolis," *Antichthon* 44 (2010): 12-32.
[187] We first encounter them in the 8th to 7th century BC in Greek art: Böhm, *Die "nackte Göttin,"* no. B2, pl. 20e.

found on coins, the majority of which were minted in the eastern Mediterranean in the late 2nd and early 3rd century . Next to the Capitoline Venus is a vase. Next to the Medici Venus is a dolphin.This sculptural type exists in a number of other variations, and a tree or Amor may be depicted by the goddess's leg. This would indicate the existence of a bronze original, as the crafting of marble required a support, the design of which was left up to the author of this particular sculpture.

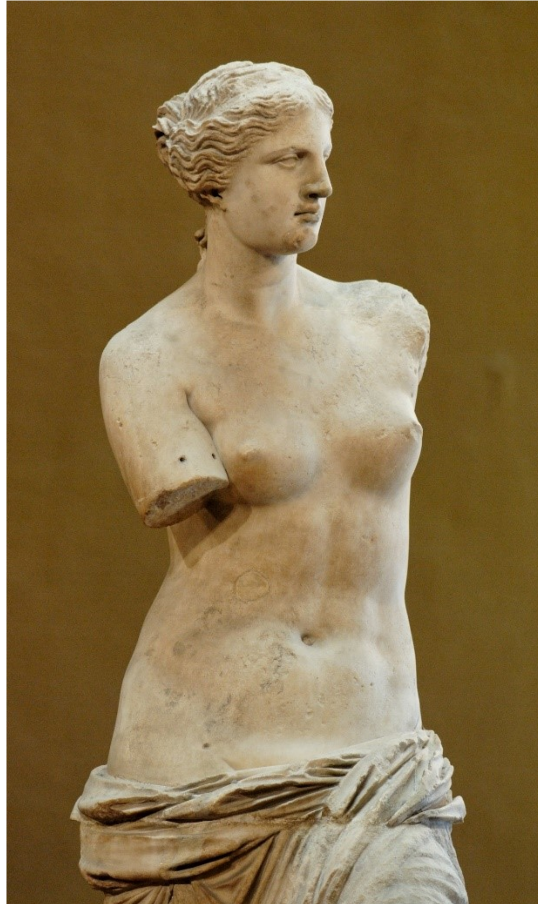
The Capitoline goddess has a complex hairstyle, but one lock of hair has fallen onto her back, which shows that she is depicted at her toilette. This is also indicated by the vessel nearby with clothing thrown over it and a decorative hem with ornamental fringes. Next to the Capitoline Venus is a loutrophoros (a ritual vessel used for bathing) with clothing thrown over it; in some variations of this sculptural type, the loutrophoros may be replaced with a hydria (a vessel also used for bathing). The loutrophoros was an Athenian vessel used exclusively for a marriage bath and ceased to be produced around 300 BC. Two things may be deduced from this fact – firstly, the original statue was created at the end of the 4th century BC and secondly, the depicted theme was linked in some way to a marriage bath.[188] However, we cannot rule out the possibility that the statues with the loutrophoros were created later and the antiquated shape of the vase was meant to give it an old-fashioned atmosphere. The Medici Venus has shorter hair with a simpler hairstyle and she is looking off to the side towards her left leg with a dolphin nearby with two small Erotes playing on its back, which can also be an evocation of a bath and the birth of the goddess.[189] The goddess is standing on a socle with the name of the sculptor, Athenian Kleomenes, son of Apollodorus, and the type of writing corresponds to the 1st century BC.

Similarly to the Cnidia, the Capitoline Venus and the Medici Venus have their knees pressed together; their shoulders are raised and they are stooping to make the surface area of the front part of their bodies as small as possible. This can be seen as the natural reaction of a naked woman who has been surprised by someone. The gestures and posture of this type of statue of Venus are not clear; they may be covering their genitals and breasts, or pointing at them coquettishly. The gesture of the right hand is proof of this pointing, as it does not actually cover the breast. This applies mainly to the Capitoline Venus. The Medici version has its hand raised higher, thus partially covering the left breast. Comparing these two statues with the Cnidia is illuminating. The Cnidia ushered in a new era, but it was still far from a perfect depiction of the naked female body. The Cnidia gives off a somewhat awkward impression, which is due to the thickness of her waist and bulky sides. Her breasts are improbably situated and too small in comparison with her bulky body. The Capitoline and Medici Venuses have breasts that are fuller and more realistically depicted. The erotic attraction is also heightened by the softly modeled and slightly overhanging armpit area or the sharper curves dividing the abdomen from the crotch.

---

[188] Stewart, *A Tale of Seven Nudes*, 15.

[189] Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium,* 35 (Moralia 983e-f): *Aphrodite, born of the sea, regards practically all sea creatures as sacred and related to herself and relishes the slaughter of none of them*. English translation H. Cherniss and W. C. Helmbold.



19. Venus de Milo, h. 204 cm, Greek marble version from 120-110 BC
after the original from the end of the 4th century BC.

The best and most famous of the preserved statues of the naked goddess is without a doubt the Venus de Milo (**19**).[190] We are more familiar with its Latin name, but it is originally a Greek statue in larger-than-life size found in a gymnasium in Milos (or Melos) in 1822. The name of the sculptor, Alexandros of Antioch on the Meander, was carved into the pedestal of the statue. Judging by the shape of the lettering, the inscription was created around 120-110 BC. However, the pedestal remained in Milos and has now been lost, thus making it impossible to rule out the fact that it may have belonged to another statue. Aphrodite has wavy hair parted in the middle, combed back and tied in a knot. She has a partially opened and gently smiling mouth, which contrasts with her unsteady position. Her free left leg is placed forward and is sharply bent, forcing the goddess to put her right leg backwards to keep her balance. Her body is depicted in a slightly twisted manner; her clothing covers only her legs and clings to her hips thanks to the rolled-up fabric which is wrapped around them. With her right hand, she was probably holding on to the clothing and had her left hand stretched forward or was leaning on a column. A fragment of her left upper arm and hand holding an apple also belong to the statue. This was an allusion to her victory in the Judgment of Paris and possibly also to the name of the island (the Greek word for apple is *μήλο*). From a formal standpoint, the regular face points to Praxiteles's Cnidia.

[190] Cf. for example, Kousser, *Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculture*, 28-34; Marianne Hamiaux, "Le type statuaire de la Vénus de Milo," *Revue archéologique* 63, no. 1 (2017): 65–84.

However, both the surface of the body, which convincingly evokes the anatomy of the female body, and the dramatic drapery with deep creases corresponds to the late Hellenistic era when the statue was created.

The Aphrodite of Milos is of great importance to us, as it gives us definite (although limited) information on the circumstances of the find, thus allowing us to at least approximately reconstruct the ideological framework in which it was perceived at the time. The donation of the Venus de Milo to the city's gymnasium was evidently a part of a contest amongst the adult members of Milos's elite.[191] The statue was said to have stood together with other statues in an alcove, and allegedly had the following inscription, which is now lost: *Bakchios, son of Satios, assistant gymnasiarch, (dedicated) this exedra and this (?) to Hermes and Herakles*. In the context of the gymnasium, the column may have indicated the finish line in running competitions and was a traditional part of gymnasia's equipment. The final column and apple made Aphrodite the patron of athletic competitions, in which nakedness also played a role. Venus de Milo is a high-quality statue made by an excellent artist and thus must have been very expensive, which was also an important aspect of its message, as gymnasia began to take on a wholly new social status in Hellenistic cities. To a certain degree, they substituted buildings of municipal councils and other political institutions of the city state, which had lost their original meaning under the Hellenistic monarchies. The gymnasium preserved its traditional function – athletic training continued to be an important part of military preparation. Young Greeks were also given general education here and the premises of the gymnasia also served as community religious centers. In this new context, however, visits to gymnasia and their financial support allowed members of the elite to win recognition in the public life of the community. The new significance of gymnasia manifested itself in their shift from the periphery to the city center. The gymnasium in Milos was next to the theater. Gymnasia were also monumentalized through architecture and rich sculpture decorations. The symbolism of Venus de Milo based on the traditional motif of the celebration of victory in the Judgment of Paris, her decent eroticism (which was a traditional attribute of the social elite), and the sculptural style indicating a famous work from the classical epoch were connected with the education of the conservative youth of the Greek social elite in the Hellenistic epoch.

Aphrodite was depicted in a similar pose to Venus de Milo but in a different ideological context on a late-Hellenistic marble statuette found in Kos,[192] which depicts the goddess as she teaches Eros how to shoot his bow, a theme also well-known in statuettes and vase painting.[193] The divine mother uses her left hand to help her son pull back the bow as he kneels on a rock. Aphrodite is either trying to hold back her son or, on the contrary, is helping him take better aim of his target; in any case, the emphasis here is on the intimate relationship between mother and son. A score of sculptural types depicting the naked Aphrodite arose in Greek Hellenistic art. In her

---

[191] Rachel Meredith Kousser, "Creating the Past: The Venus de Milo and the Hellenistic Reception of Classical Greece," *American Journal of Archaeology* 109, no. 2 (April 2005): 27-250.
[192] Rhodos, Museum 13.621. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 632.
[193] Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, 634-635; Kousser, *Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture*, 35-36.

time, the Venus of Syracuse, known as the Venus Landolina after archeologist Saverio Landolino who discovered it in 1804, was highly famous (**20**).[194]

20. Venus of Syracuse, h. 157.5 cm, the Roman version from Parian marble of the Hellenistic original.

This statue combines the gesture of the hand in front of the breasts and genitals that we know from the Capitoline and Medici Venus, with clothing over her hips, which we know from the Venus de Milo. The goddess is holding the clothing in front of her loins, but her legs are bare as if a strong wind were blowing into the garments, causing the fabric to flutter behind the bottom half of her body. The billowing garments behind the Venus thus take on the shape of a seashell, the attribute of the goddess. In the 4th century BC, when Aphrodite began to be depicted completely naked, statuettes of the goddess may depict her kneeling in an open seashell, evoking a bath or bathing.[195] As we noted above, in the improvised hairstyle of the Capitoline Venus, the goddess's hair is tied at the top in a knot, and several locks fall downwards, which is linked to bathing. We already know the motif from classical Greek art of the naked Aphrodite holding her loose hair with both arms upraised.[196] In Hellenistic sculpture, this motif appears very often and can be associated with Apelles's painting from roughly the same period as the Cnidia. Apelles's *Aphrodite emerging from the Sea*

[194] Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 743.

[195] Cf. Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi, "Aphrodite, Coming of Age and Marriage: Contextualisation and Reconsideration of the Nude Young Women Kneeling in a Shell," in *Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas* ed. Giorgos Papantoniou et al. (Leiden, Brill, 2019), 259-271.

[196] Cf. Gaëlle Ficheux, "La chevelure d'Aphrodite et la magie amoureuse," in *L'expression des corps. Gestes, attitudes, regards dans l'iconographie antique,* ed. Lydie Bodiou (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 182-194.

was dedicated by his late lamented Majesty Augustus in the shrine of his father Caesar; it is known as the Anadyomene.[197]

A Greek anthology contains the epigram of Antipater of Sidon, who died in 125 BC, where the motif is described in more detail: *Look on the work of Apelles' pencil: Cypris, just rising from the sea, her mother; how, grasping her dripping hair with her hand, she wrings the foam from wet locks*.[198] All preserved Roman marble statues corresponding to this type adhere to some Greek original that was famous in its time, as the goddess is always standing on her left leg with her left arm loose so that the left hand is lower than the right.[199] On the statue in the Vatican, Venus's clothing is wrapped around her legs and tied in a pronounced knot (**21**). On the statue in the Colonna Palace, there is a dolphin, which we also find on some other versions.[200] The Venus of Benghazi, whose lower half has been cut off, gives evidence of her original placement, which was probably in some kind of water reservoir evoking the sea.[201] Individual types of depictions of Venus may have been mutually combined, and proof of this may be found in the statue from Rhodes, which depicts the kneeling goddess with an Anadyomene-type gesture (**22**).[202]

21 (left). Venus Anadyomene, h. 149 cm, the Roman version of the Hellenistic original.
22 (right). The crouching Venus Anadyomene, h. 49 cm, the Roman version of the Hellenistic original.

---

[197] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.91. English translation H. Rackham.
[198] *Greek Anthology* 16.178, English translation W. R. Patin. Similarly Greek Anthology 16, 179. Cf. Platt, *Evasive Epiphanies*, 36-40.
[199] Cf. Marianne Eileen Wardle, *Naked and Unashamed: A Study of the Aphrodite Anadyomene in the Graeco-Roman World*. PhD diss. (Durham NC: Duke University, 2010).
[200] Roma, Palazzo Colonna 765. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 424.
[201] Philadelphia, PA, Penn Museum 69-14-1. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 677.
[202] Rhodos, Museum. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 1027.

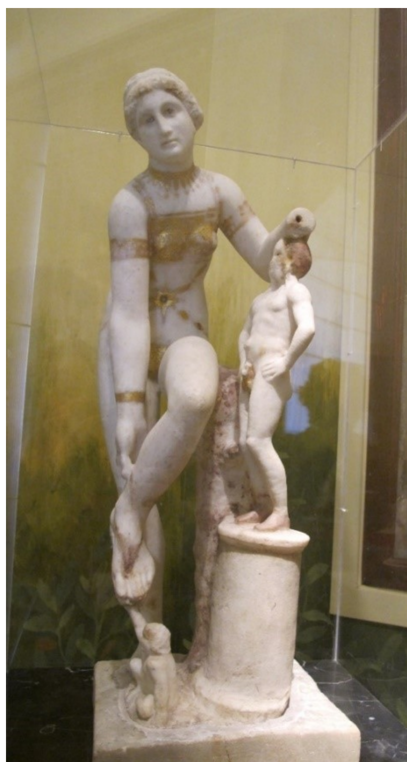
The crouching and naked Aphrodite in her bath was a very successful sculptural type (**55**).[203] From the many preserved versions, the exemplar of highest quality is the one found in Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli.[204] The most intact depiction of the crouching Venus can be seen in the Roman museum in Torlonia.[205] The whole weight of her body is supported by her right leg as she keeps her balance with the other. Venus's pose looks as if the sculptor had promptly recorded a wholly random moment, which is typical for Hellenistic sculpture. The illusion of reality is heightened by the depiction of details observed from real life, e.g. the folds of the stomach and deformation of the breast with her arm pressed against it. Kunze interpreted the statue type as representing the goddess surprised during her bath, pressing her legs together, covering her loins with the outstretched fingers of her left hand and tilting her right shoulder downwards, hiding her breasts with her right arm.[206] However, the posture was not linked exclusively to this goddess and did not always necessarily evoke a bath. We also know this type from vase painting, terracottas and gems from the 5th century BC. Thus, just like Aphrodite wringing out her hair, this is a composition with a long tradition in vase painting and statuettes.

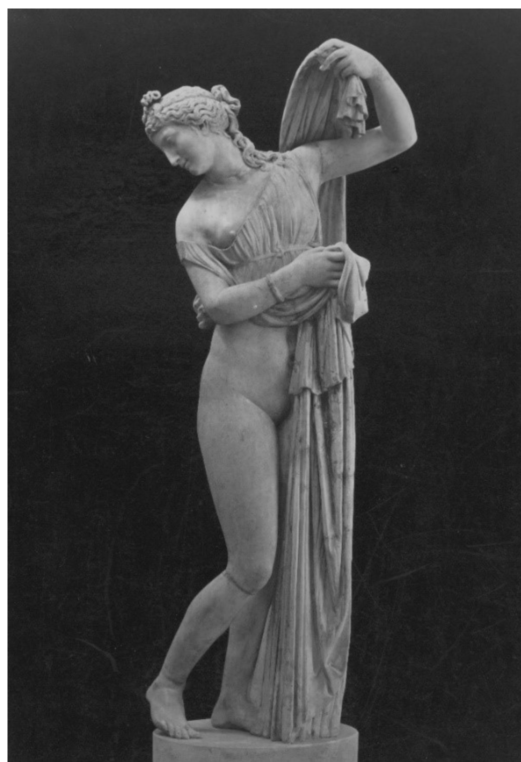
The Aphrodite taking off her sandal is also a common iconographic type that we know from classical Greek art and was not exclusively bound to Aphrodite. The sandal was a traditional Greek erotic attribute, which for example appears in connection with Aphrodite in the sculptural group of Aphrodite with Eros mentioned above (**16**). The goddess taking off her footwear is depicted on a terracotta in Boston, as she is wearing a distinct diadem on her head.[207] We know this iconographic type from almost two hundred exemplars; all of them are larger-than-life size and are mostly statuettes, gems or reliefs. The goddess's supporting leg may either be the right or left, and she may be leaning on a pillar or a ship's rudder.[208] She may be holding a wreath or apple, and can also be accompanied by Eros. The sandal, which is a crucial object in the composition, does not have to be depicted at all. In a whole score of variations on the theme of Aphrodite, we observe a tendency towards a greater degree of relaxation, which is accompanied by the emphasis on the erotic dimension of the depiction. This is clearly visible in the relief from Delos.[209] At its center is a reproduction of the Cnidia, with Eros standing at her right leg with a seashell and alabastron, which was an elongated vessel used in ancient times to store aromatic liquids. Eros's attributes point to a bath, the character of which is indicated by a figure on the right, where a herm and a column with a human face and erect phallus is depicted. The Venus from Pompeii in a gold "bikini" and tying her sandal is of a

[203] Cf., for example, Reinhard Lullies, *Die kauernde Venus* (Munich: Filser-Verlag, 1954); Antonio Corso, "The Theme of Bathing Aphrodites in Classical Greece: Birth of an Iconographic Pattern, Development, Success," *Orbis terrarum* 12 (2014): 57-64.
[204] Roma, Museo nazionale 108597.
[205] Roma, Museo Torlonia 170. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 1021.
[206] See Christian Kunze, *Zum Greifen nah. Stilphänomene in der hellenistischen Skulptur und ihre inhaltliche Interpretation* (Munich: Biering & Brinkmann, 2002), 108-125.
[207] Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 97.357. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 472.
[208] Haifa, National Maritime Museum.
[209] Delos, Archaelogical Musem A 4017. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 400.

similar character. She leans on a statuette of Priapus, which also has an erect phallus, which is now missing (**23**).[210]

Hellenistic statues of Aphrodite usually depict the goddess in her intimate privacy, where the goddess is in no way hiding her nakedness and is devoting herself completely to her toilette. One series of depictions shows Aphrodite dressing in the manner of contemporary women. She began by tying on a strophion, a form of the modern brassiere. This part of the female wardrobe held a similar function and was meant to support the breasts. The technique, however, was different. The Greeks used a narrow piece of cloth, which was tied under the breasts. This brassiere appears among the garments that were brought to Aphrodite as sacrifices.[211] On all preserved depictions of Aphrodite putting on a brassiere, the goddess is depicted in the same pose and her gestures are the same, which may point to some sculptural model that was famous in its time. Aphrodite is holding the end of the brassiere's strap under her breasts; the other end is wound around her back and she is pulling the piece of fabric tight with her right hand.[212] On the Greek terracotta statuette from Myrina from the second half of the 1st century BC she is leaning her left elbow on the herm of Pan with an erect phallus, which underlines the erotic character of the scene.[213] It is unnecessary to go into great detail about why this theme was depicted. Who would not want to peer into Aphrodite's bedroom and watch the most beautiful goddess as she began to dress?





23 (left). Venus tying her sandal at the column with Priapus from Pompeii, h. 125 cm, polychrome marble version from before 79 AD after the Hellenistic original from around 200 BC.
24 (right). Venus Callipyge Farnese, h. 152 cm, The Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.

---

[210] Naples, Museo archeologico 152798, after the Hellenistic original from the time around 200 BC.
[211] *Anthologia Palatina,* 5.199; 6.211.
[212] New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 42.201.9. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 505.
[213] Paris, Musée du Louvre MYR 23. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 513.

An uncommon image type is known as the Aphrodite Callipyge, or literally Aphrodite of the Beautiful Buttocks (**24**).[214] The female figure is lifting her clothing up with both hands in order to look at her backside. The name of the statue, Callipyge, is not ancient, but it is based upon a story which Athenaeus incorporated into his work "Deipnosophistae" after 192. Two beautiful girls allegedly lived on a farm near Syracuse and were said to have had an argument over which one had a more beautiful behind. A rich young man who happened to walk by was chosen to decide. After both the girls had showed him this part of their bodies, he selected the older sister, whom he fell in love with on the spot. When his younger brother found out, he went to have a look at the girls and fell in love with the younger sister. The father of the brothers was left with no other choice but to marry off his sons to the poor farmer girls with the beautiful buttocks, whom since began to be called "Callipygoi". When the girls became rich wives, they had the Temple of Aphrodite Callipyge built.[215] The statue was found in the 16th century in Rome, but its present appearance is the result of thorough reconstruction, during which the head was recreated . The erotic charge of the statue is irrefutable, but it is unclear whether it is truly a depiction of Venus. Other exemplars of this sculptural type have not been preserved and we know of none, even from coins – this means it was not a famous ancient work of art. A very similar depiction has been preserved on a relief of ca. 100 BC that depicts a dancer, probably a hetaira.[216] In one of his "Letters of Courtesans," Alciphron, who lived in the 2nd century, described a competition between two hetairai over who had prettier buttocks, including the detail of one looking over her shoulder at her buttocks.[217]

The vast number of statues and statuettes depicting the naked Aphrodite from the Hellenistic and Roman epoch can be divided into three groups. The first draws from the Cnidia in the fact that the naked goddess is trying to hide her nakedness or is pointing to it. The second group includes depictions in which the naked goddess is fully attending to her toilette and is in no way hiding her nakedness. In the third group, which is the least numerous, the goddess is dressing or undressing. This image type depicts the goddess using both hands to hold her cloak, which frames her naked body. The scene may be referring to the birth of the goddess, as we also find this sculptural type inserted into a seashell. On the Greek terracotta statuette from Myrina from the second half of the 1st century BC, which is signed by its author (Antistos), Aphrodite is characterized with a diadem and goose.[218] On the relief that was also produced in Asia Minor in the 1st century, the goddess is identified by the depicted altar and Eros next to her.[219] The sculptural type was also created in a luxurious marble version and an exemplar from the Hadrianic age was in larger-than-life size.[220] This would point to the fact that it is an echo of another famous Hellenistic statue.

---

214 Naples, Museo archeologico nazionale 6020. Cf. Carlo Gasparri, ed., *Le sculture Farnese, vol. 1: Le sculture ideali* (Milano: Electa, 2009), no. 31.
215 Athenaios, *Deipnosophistae,* 12.554 c–e.
216 Cos, Archeological Museum. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 767.
217 Alciphron, 14 (Megara to Bacchis).
218 Paris, Musée du Louvre Myr 631. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 778.
219 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum GR 1.1959 (2294746). Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 781.
220 Sevilla, Archeological Museum 801, found in Santiponce (Italica) near Seville. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 786.

What do the adaptations and variations on the Cnidia tell us about how the statue was interpreted in later centuries? There is a clear tendency: Over the course of the centuries, the emphasis on laxness and femininity increased. An analysis of the Cnidia's copies and the numerous variations on this sculptural type confirms what we know about the reception of Aphrodite of Cnidus from later literary sources. In the Hellenistic and primarily Roman epochs, erotic attraction in depictions of Aphrodite came to the fore. At the same time, we encounter anecdotal motifs, which bring the goddess nearer to the world of those who venerate her. Moreover, Aphrodite was more and more frequently accompanied by the malevolent Eros/Amor, the initiator of sexual contact. The goddess is depicted in more active and erotically attractive poses, with her breasts more accentuated and other specifically feminine anatomic characteristics, all with the exception of the genitals. The crotch remains completely smooth until the end of the ancient period.

As was mentioned above in connection with the Cnidia, the new forms of Aphrodite were not a consequence of changes in people's attitudes towards the goddess, but of the gods towards the people. The radical intensification of the feminine element in Praxiteles's depiction of the naked Aphrodite arose due to the fact that the gods began to disappear from the view of mortals in the 4th century BC, a trend which strengthened in the Hellenistic epoch. Faith in their omnipotence was not affected by this; on the contrary, the invisibility of the gods intensified it. They were still there and omnipotent – people had only ceased to believe that they could be seen. Mortals could only admire the inaccessible gods and try to model themselves after them. The more they believed in the gods' inaccessibility and thus the undepictable nature of a deity, the more artists attempted to focus on the little that mortals had in common with them. This continued to be the only possibility to come closer to the gods. In other words, sculptors and their clients saw Aphrodite in the form of a woman before Praxiteles, while he and his successors depicted a woman in the form of a goddess.

Armed

Aside from Athens, Aphrodite was also highly venerated in Sparta (judging by the number of her temples there) and was worshiped as an armed goddess. As Plutarch wrote, when Aphrodite entered Sparta she *put aside her mirrors and ornaments and her magic girdle, and took a spear and shield, adorning herself to please Lycurgus.*[221] In another passage, Plutarch writes that the Spartans worshiped Aphrodite in full armor in order to denote the fact that even she embodies the virtues that war requires.[222] It should also be mentioned that while only Athena was depicted in armor elsewhere in Greece, we find weapons as an attribute of a whole score of other female deities in Sparta, where war was paramount. Combativeness was not only an "archaic" characteristic that Aphrodite "inherited" from Ishtar, but something that made up the essence of this goddess.[223] For ancient Greeks, Aphrodite was not only the source of erotic desire and

[221] Plutarch, *Moralia*, 317f (De Fortuna Romanorum, 4).
[222] Plutarch, *Moralia*, 239a (Instituta Laconica, 28).
[223] Cf. Martina Seifert, ed., *Aphrodite: Herrin des Krieges, Göttin der Liebe* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2009).

procreation, but also of destruction and the fury of war – otherwise there would be no sense in the veneration of her armed statue. The question remains as to when, where and to what degree the armed Aphrodite was worshiped in Greece. There is no consensus concerning the answers to these questions in present scholarship.

Armed Aphrodite is considered to be either a phenomenon limited exclusively to Sparta and furthermore only in the early stage of her cult's development,[224] or on the contrary a pan-Greek phenomenon that was not limited only to the early stage of Aphrodite's veneration.[225] A fragment of text on the myth of Aphrodite was found only several years ago that presents her in a wholly different way than we had known her hitherto. In this myth, the goddess hates mankind and destroys it with deadly arrows. Her adversary is Eileithyia, the goddess of childbirth, who holds mankind in her favor. The text, composed in hexameters, was made on papyrus from the 2nd to 3rd century, but may have already originated in Hellenistic Greece.[226] Aphrodite sowing death was perhaps not a new motif and only exaggerated what had always been a part of the goddess. On the other hand, we know of epigrams on statues of armed Aphrodite from the 3rd century BC, the authors of which contemplated the reasons why the goddess needed weapons. Her weapons evoke disapproval and the goddess is called upon to put them down, as they do not suit her.[227] However, the very existence of these epigrams proves that armed Aphrodite was nothing out of the ordinary for Greeks.[228] Neverthless, we know of Spartan armed statues only from mentions made by Pausanias.

In Homer's Iliad, Ares, god of war, is Aphrodite's brother; in the Odyssey, in which Hephaistos is Aphrodite's husband, Ares is her lover.[229] According to Hesiod, Aphrodite was the wife of Ares.[230] Hesiod emphasizes the unity of these contradictory deities by continuing with their offspring. Their daughter Harmonia had exactly the opposite influence than their sons Panic and Fear had, but their shared origin emphasizes their unity. These were two sides of the same coin, just like armed Aphrodite and the Aphrodite who was the source of erotic desire and procreation. The only temple in which Aphrodite and Ares were venerated together was by the city gates in Argos. According to Pausanias, there was: *a sanctuary built with two rooms, having an entrance on the west side and another on the east. At the latter is a wooden image of Aphrodite, and at the west entrance one of Ares. They say that the images are votive offerings*

---

[224] Stephanie Budin, "Aphrodite Enoplion," in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite,* ed. Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 79-112.

[225] Gabriella Pironti, "Rethinking Aphrodite as a Goddess at Work" in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, 113–130.

[226] Wolfgang Luppe, "Eine mythologische Erzählung in Hexametern (P.Oxy. LXXVII 5104)," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 58, no. 1 (2012), 5-7.

[227] *Greek Anthology* 9.321.

[228] *Greek Anthology* 9. 320; 16.171, 173, 174, 176, 177. Cf. Johan Flemberg, "The Transformations of the Armed Aphrodite," in *Greece and Gender*, ed. Brit Berggreen Bergen and Nanno Marinatos (Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1995), 109-110.

[229] Homer, *Iliad,* 5.359; *Odyssey,* 8.266-319.

[230] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 934-937. Cf. Gabriel Pironti, *Entre ciel et guerre:. Figures d'Aphrodite en Grèce ancienne*. Kernos supplément, 18 (Liège: Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique, 2007); idem, *Rethinking Aphrodite*.

of Polyneices and of the Argives who joined him in the campaign to redress his wrongs.[231] The connection of Aphrodite to the god of war was emphasized by the legend that the statues were a shared votive gift from the participants of a military expedition. It was characteristic in that Ares was looking away from the city towards potential enemies whom he was to defend the city against. On the contrary, Aphrodite was turned around towards Argolis and the citizens of Argos, as she was intended to guard above all their harmonious married life.[232]

At the same time that statues of Aphrodite began to undress and thus stress their femininity from the classical period onward, we also see the very opposite – statues of Aphrodite with weapons, which are typical male attributes, begin to appear.[233] Judging by the artistic style, the oldest known sculptural type may have originated around 400 BC, but it could just as likely have been a Roman creation. We know the sculptural type from four Roman exemplars, the most preserved of which is the statue from Epidauros.[234] The posture and depiction of the drapery is a variation on the Louvre-Naples Venus type, but the goddess has a sheath slung over her shoulder; in her left hand she holds a spear or scepter and an apple, helmet or other attribute in her right. The military attributes are balanced by the emphasized femininity, and just like the Louvre-Naples Venus, one of the goddess's breasts is bare and her crotch is outlined under the thin chiton as if she were naked. The crotch of the goddess of Epidauros is not only defined more distinctly than the sculpture in the Louvre, it is also accentuated by the cloak, as its falling creases repeat the curve of the creases on the chiton.

The sculptural type of the entirely naked Aphrodite with a sword has been preserved in a whole score of Roman versions, the most famous of which is the statue in Florence.[235] Next to the goddess is a loutrophoros, a vessel for water with her cloak thrown over it, which we also find in several other versions. Because loutrophoroi ceased to be produced around 300 BC, the origin of this sculptural type was dated to this era.[236] However, similarly to the Capitoline Venus, we cannot rule out the fact that a later Roman sculptor may have used this attribute in order to give the sculpture an archaic appearance. Aphrodite is either donning the strap with an accompanying sword over her shoulder to arm herself after the bath, which is indicated by the loutrophoros, or taking off the strap in order to bathe herself. The ambiguity of the action proves that for this visual type it was not important whether Aphrodite was returning from battle or departing for it – important was the link between the goddess and war. On the Roman statue found in Cyprus the composition is only subtly

---

[231] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 2.25.1, English translation W.H.S.Jones. Cf. Ugo Fusco, "The Sanctuary of Aphrodite and Ares (Paus. 2.25.1) in the Periurban Area of Argos and Temples with a Double Cella in Greece," *Tekmeria* 13 (2016): 97-124.

[232] Pirenne-Delforge, *L'Aphrodite grecque*, 168.

[233] See Johan Flemberg, *Venus Armata: Studien zur bewaffneten Aphrodite in der griechisch-römischen Kunst* (Stockholm: Paul Åström, 1991); Rachel Meredith Kousser, *Sensual Power: A Warrior Aphrodite in Greek and Roman Sculpture*. Ph.D. Dissertation (New York: New York University, 2001).

[234] Athens, Archeological Museum MNA 262. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 243.

[235] Firenze, Accademia de Belle Arti. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 457.

[236] See Andrew Stewar, "Two Notes on Greeks Bearing Arms: The Hoplites of the Chigi Jug and Gelon's Armed Aphrodite," in *Medien der Geschichte. Antikes Griechenland und Rom,* ed. Ortwin Dally et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 238-40.

changed.[237] The statue was found in the so-called House of Theseus, which evidently served as a residence for the Roman governor on the island.

The statue in the Louvre, is of the same type, but is in larger-than-life size and accompanied by Amor with a helmet, it is Roman marble version from the 2nd century after the Greek bronze original from ca. 300 BC (**25**).[238] In the 2nd to 3rd century, the backside of coins minted in Cyzicus show an echo of the naked armed Aphrodite sculptural type.[239] The goddess holds a sword in her left hand, tilting her head towards it. Her right hand is raised and holds the strap that fastens the sword's sheath that is slung over her shoulder. A column with a helmet resting upon it stands next to the goddess along with a shield. The image on the coin points to the fact that this type of Aphrodite statue was venerated in Cyzicus at the time when these coins were minted. Deviations from preserved statues can be explained by the fact that this sculptural type had to be transformed to fit the circular relief on the coins.

25. Armed Venus with Amor, Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.

While emphasis is placed on a spear or shield in depictions of men in armor, the strap for the accompanying sheath plays an important role in depictions of armed Aphrodite. This may have been the key to understanding statues of armed Aphrodite.

---

[237] Nea Paphos, Museum FR 67/73.
[238] Paris, Musée du Louvre MA 370. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 456.
[239] Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 461.

The strap with sword slung over the shoulder can be understood as the counterpart to Aphrodite's magical belt of love, which was called "kestos himas" in Homer. Kestos himas was in a way a counterpart to Athena's aegis, and in both cases was a magical object, the effect of which characterized the given goddess's sphere of influence. The sculptural type of Aphrodite with a sword and sheath on a strap may have been a reference to the Homeric kestos himas, but armed Aphrodite also appears in Hellensitic art without a strap. On a gem signed by an otherwise unknown artist named Gelon, the half-naked Aphrodite is depicted with a spear resting on her shoulder as she puts a shield over her right arm (**26**).[240] The gem was found in Eretria as a part of funeral paraphernalia, which also included a depiction of the Erotes, who gave the tomb its name. A similar gem was found in Amrit, Syria.[241] The unmistakable emphasis on erotism links these statues to the Cnidia.

26. Gelon, Armed Aphrodite, Greek garnet gem (intaglio) from Eretria, late 3rd century BC.

Gelon's gem is not the only record of the depiction of Aphrodite with a shield that was created in the Hellenistic epoch. The most famous sculptural type is the Capuan Venus, which was found in 1750 near a local amphitheater (**27**). The statue belongs to the same sculptural type as the Venus de Milo – the goddess is depicted in a similar pose and her clothing is also arranged in a similar manner. Moreover, she has a diadem and differs from the Venus de Milo in that she originally held a shield in both hands and her left foot was placed on a helmet lying on the ground. The sculptural type was known from Roman coins minted by Hadrian, Lucius Verus, Marcus Aurelius and Plautilla, which also depict Eros.[242] The original of Aphrodite of Capua is said to be created in Corinth.[243]

---

[240] See Stewart, *Two Notes*, 227-243.
[241] Paris, De Clerq Collection, 3rd century BC. See Gisela M. A.Richter, *Engraved Gems of the Greeks and Etruscans* (London: Phaidon, 1968), 144, no. 555.
[242] Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 637.
[243] For staute of armed Aphrodite in Corinth see Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 2.5.1. Corinth was utterly destroyed by Romans in 146 BC, but see Derek R. Smith, "New Evidence for the Identification

27. Capuan Venus, h. 210 cm, the Roman marble version from the beginning of the 2nd century of the Greek original from the end of the 4th century BC.

of Aphrodite on Staters of Corinth," *The Numismatic Chronicle* vol. 165 (2005): 41-43. Cf. Kousser, *Sensual Power*, Appendix 1, 233.349; Kousser, *Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture*, 19-28.

Aphrodite with a shield is traditionally interpreted as the goddess using the shield of her lover as a mirror.[244] Aphrodite was thus meant to be celebrated as a victor who can overcome anything, even her lover and the god of war. However, there is no support for this interpretation in what we know about how Aphrodite's shield was perceived in the ancient period. In his work Argonautica from the 3rd century BC, Apolloinus wrote the following of Jason's cloak: *Next in order had been wrought Cytherea with drooping tresses, wielding the swift shield of Ares; and from her shoulder to her left arm the fastening of her tunic was loosed beneath her breast; and opposite in the shield of bronze her image appeared clear to view as she stood.*[245] Apollonius does not state here that Aphrodite used the shield as a mirror and thus changed the significance of the shield, which was a traditional symbol of military victory. We also have no proof of the fact that Aphrodite was opposed to war.

Pausanias saw the statue of armed Aphrodite in a temple in Sparta, which drew attention to the dual nature of the goddess.[246] The uniqueness of the temple stemmed from the fact that it had two floors. However, the concept of placing statues on individual floors or combining them together was not surprising in any way. The goddess was viewed from two different angles, both as the patronesses of warriors (who was venerated in the lower temple with the statue of armed Aphrodite) and the patroness of the marital sex (who was venerated in the upper temple with a statue of Aphrodite the Beautiful). Aphrodite the Beautiful (Morpho) had her head concealed under a veil and her legs bound, which we know from Pausanias's description and the depiction on Roman coins minted in Sparta. There was a whole score of analogies in archaic Greece to the imprisonment or neutralization of statues of gods. The statue of Ares worshiped in Sparta was placed in chains, allegedly so he could not escape the country.[247] Aphrodite could have had shackles on her feet for the same reason. However, the fact that both Ares and Aphrodite were venerated in Sparta in the form of fettered statues can also be interpreted by claiming that a community cannot exist without war and sexuality, but it is also necessary to prevent these elements from endangering or ultimately destroying the community.[248]

This points to the story of Aphrodite the Beautiful chained by Tyndareos that Pausanias refuted as a fabrication. Tyndareos was the father of Clytemnestra, who murdered her husband to live with her lover, and of Helen, who abandoned her husband for her lover. In order to understand this interpretation, it is important to note that it comes from the archaic epoch. This epoch gave rise to both the statue of the chained Aphrodite the Beautiful and the etiological legend that explained the shackles as Tyndareos's punishment for the goddess's corruption of his daughters. Archaic statues did not only depict the gods, but were also a form of their existence. The deities in this epoch could enter the statues, a fact which is evidenced by tales of gazing or

---

[244] Cf. Sandrine Dubel, "Aphrodite se mirant au bouclier d'Arès: Transpositions homériques et jeux de matière l'epos hellénistique," in *Métamorphoses du regard ancien,* ed. Évelyne Prioux and Agnès Rouveret (Nanterre: Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2010), 13-28.

[245] Apollonios, *Argonautica,* 1.742-746. English translation R. C. Seaton.

[246] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 3.15.11.

[247] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 3.15.7.

[248] Cf. Pirenne-Delforge, *L'Aphrodite grecque*, 207; Dietrich Boschung, "Unheimliche Statuen und ihre Bändigung," in *Leibhafte Kunst. Statuen und kulturelle Identität*, ed. Dietrich Boschung and Christiane Vorster (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 281-306.

walking statues. Greeks abandoned this idea already in the 5th century BC, and therefore Pausanias refused the legend of Tyndareos, which assumed that the statue of Aphrodite was capable of action. Tyndareos neutralized Aphrodite the Beautiful's eyes and legs in her temple because sight and movement were attributes of life. Graceful movements and enchanting glances were the greatest weapons a female had at her disposal, and it was Aphrodite who granted them. Aphrodite the Beautiful was thus not only held captive by shackles on her feet – but the veil over her face perhaps also prevented her from bewitching someone with her beautiful appearance and captivating gaze.[249] Armed Aphrodite was mortally dangerous, but Aphrodite the Beautiful was even more powerful.

---

[249] Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 163.

2. VENUS. 4th Century BC to 3rd Century AD

Mother of Aeneas

The roots of the veneration of Aphrodite in the western Mediterranean reach far into the past, and the epicenter of her cult was located in Eryx on the western coast of Sicily.[1] The temple was at the peak of the mountain Eryx, which towered over the city of the same name, today's Erice. According to one version of the local myth, the founder of the city of Eryx was the son of Aphrodite.[2] Inhabitants of Eryx, the Elymians, completely adopted Greek culture centuries before the Romans, proof of which is seen on a tetradrachma with Aphrodite of ca. 410-400 BC.[3] On the backside of the coin, Aphrodite is sitting on a stool with a dove on her hand, and Eros stands before her. The goddess is shown in the manner she began to be depicted in Athens around the mid-5th century BC. She sits in a relaxed pose, with her left hand hanging downward and her legs crossed. The relaxed atmosphere is strengthened by Eros, who is reaching for the dove that Aphrodite holds in her raised right hand. The dove in Aphrodite's hand is perhaps linked to the local legend concerning doves that continually follow their mistress.[4] Venus's temple in Eryx has not been preserved, but we do know that the Romans held it in high regard, which is evidenced by the coin minted in late republican Rome.[5] The appearance of the Greek-style temple with columns around a triangular tympanon is only schematically denoted; however, the image on the coin captures its placement on top of a hill over the city with defensive walls depicted below it.

On the Apennine peninsula, echoes of Greek depictions of Aphrodite first appeared among the Etruscans, who knew her as Turan. A wholly unique work is the small marble statue of a naked woman, probably Turan, from the end of the 6th century BC, which was created for the Etruscan temple (**28**).[6] The woman was decorated with golden jewelry including a diadem, earrings and necklace (however, only holes are left where the decorations once were). The goddess had one hand lifted towards her breast and the other towards her crotch, on which the genitals were indicated in three-dimensional detail. The statue in Orvieto was evidently carved after Near Eastern models by a sculptor from eastern Greece. The bronze vessel for perfume, which in accord with its function was given the shape of Aphrodite's/ Turan's head, was

---

[1] Thucydides, 6.2 and 46. Similarly: Polybius, *Histories,* 1.55. Cf. Cathrin Schmitt, "Die Göttin auf dem Berg Eryx. Astarte – Aphrodite – Venus," in *Phönizische, griechische und römische Gottheiten im historischen Wandel* eds. Linda-Marie Günther and Bärbel Morstadt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 109-136.

[2] Diodorus Siculus, 4.83.1-4.

[3] Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 851.

[4] Aelian, *Varia Historia,* 1.15.

[5] See Eleanor Ghey and Ian Leins, eds., *A catalogue of the Roman Republican Coins in the British Museum, with Descriptions and Chronology Based on M. H. Crawford, Roman Republican Coinage (1974)* (London: The British Museum, 2010), no. 424.1.

[6] Cf. Antonio Corso, "A Goddess of Cycladic Marble from Etruria," in *Paria Lithos: Parian quarries, marble and workshops of sculpture,* ed. Demetrius Umberto Schilardi (Athens: Cyclades Institute of Archaeology, 2000), 559-566.

produced in Etruria or some Italian city in Latium around 300 BC.[7] The goddess has a necklace, earrings and a diadem with two doves on her head.

28. Aphrodite/ Turan, marble statuette, h. c. 75 cm, the end of the 6th century BC.

The Etruscans transmitted Greek ideas to the Praenestians and all other cities in Latium, including Rome. Proof of this is found in the Praenestian mirror from Orbetello from the early 4th century BC, which depicts the Greek myth of Aphrodite in Greek style.[8] Praeneste (today's Palestrina), where the mirror was produced, belonged to the Romans in the 5th century BC and Latin was spoken there; however, the mirror was produced in a local Etruscan workshop. The mixing of cultures is evident in the

[7] Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 98.682.

[8] Musée du Louvre Br 1728. Cf. Ariadne Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins: Sex and Category in Roman Religion* (London: Routledge, 1998), 95-126.

inscribed names of the gods – on the right is "PROSPENAI," which is a combination of the Etruscan name "Phersipnai" and the Latin "Proserpina". On the left is "VENOS," the first proof of the Latin name of the Roman counterpart to Greek Aphrodite. The significance of the name is similar to the Greek Aphrodite, and is linked to the word "venustas" (beauty), which also had sexual undertones.[9] On the mirror, Venus is depicted as she mourns with her face veiled. Proserpina is pointing to a closed chest containing a small Adonis, over whom the goddesses are arguing. Zeus, depicted above the chest, has passed his judgment – the beautiful Adonis is to spend a third of the year with Venus on earth, a third of the year with Proserpina in the underworld, and a third of the year by himself. However, Adonis gave his own third to Venus, and thus remained above the ground for two thirds of the year, during which the earth blossomed as Aphrodite rejoiced.

In ancient Rome, Venus also guarded good morals similarly to Aphrodite Apostrophia (She Who Turns Away). In Thebes, there were three archaic wooden statues of Aphrodite *so very ancient that they are actually said to be votive offerings of Harmonia … They call the first Heavenly, the second Common, and the third the Rejecter (Apostrophia). Harmonia gave to Aphrodite the surname Heavenly to signify a love pure and free from bodily lust; that of Common, to denote sexual intercourse; the third that of Rejecter, that mankind might reject unlawful passion and sinful acts.* [10] The Roman form of this Rejecter was Venus Verticordia, which literally translates to the "Changer of Hearts": *so that minds of unmarried girls and mature women would easily change from lust to modesty.*[11] Already at the end of the 3rd century BC, a certain Sulpicia, wife of consul Q. Fulvius Flaccus dedicated a statue to Venus in Rome. It was evidently necessary to correct immoral Roman girls and married women at the time, and the virtuous Sulpicia, who was their exact opposite, was chosen for the task.[12] The Temple of Venus Verticordia was built in Rome in 114 BC, and is linked to a tragic tale. A Roman eques was returning home with his daughter, who was still a virgin, when the girl was killed by lightning and the fall stripped her of her clothing, revealing her genitals. The event was explained as a divine signal linked to immoral acts that three Roman Vestal Virgins had committed with the men of the cavalry. The stability of the Roman state was considered to depend on the virginity of the Vestals, and sins were therefore thoroughly investigated and harshly punished. In order to appease the gods, the Temple of Venus Verticordia was built.[13]

Both the dedication of the statue and foundation of the temple were motivated by efforts to carry out a moral renaissance, and the underlying situation in both cases was immorality. Stories that preceded the dedication of the statue and founding of the temple to Venus Verticordia shared themes of boundaries being crossed. In the first, matrons behaved like prostitutes, and in the second the Vestal Virgins did the same. Venus Verticordia was not called upon to uproot prostitution and immorality, but to reinstate the *status quo*.[14] Matrons, virgins, and virtue, along with prostitutes and sin, were integral parts of Roman reality. However, these social and moral categories

[9] See Erika Simon, *Die Götter der Römer* (Munich: Hirmer, 1990), 214, note 6.
[10] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.16.3-4. English translation W.H.S.Jones.
[11] Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, 8.15.12. English translation H. J. Walker.
[12] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 7.35.
[13] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.155-162.
[14] Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins*, 106.

needed to be clearly and mutually differentiated and their hierarchy had to be reinstated again and again. The role of Venus in Rome was similar to the role of Aphrodite in Greece – she linked what was essentially different without suppressing this diversity.

The Temple of Venus Obsequens (i.e. the obedient, respectful of the rule) allegedly built in 295 BC was probably the oldest temple in Rome devoted to this goddess. The temple was built by Quintus Fabius Gurges, who thanks to this goddess was victorious over the Samnites during Roman power struggles over central and southern Italy. Venus "obediently" granted his request, and therefore Gurges *assessed a fine of money against a number of married women who were convicted before the people of adultery, and with this money erected the temple of Venus which is near the circus*.[15] The fact that the temple was built from fines for adultery does not give us any specific information on the reasons why the cult of Venus was established in Rome. Nevertheless, it is certain that the goddess had something to do with sexuality and morality in this temple. We must bear in mind that it is not clear whether this Venus was identical to Greek Aphrodite. However, everything quickly changed, as Roman society radically transformed and adopted Greek culture in the 3rd – 2nd centuries BC.

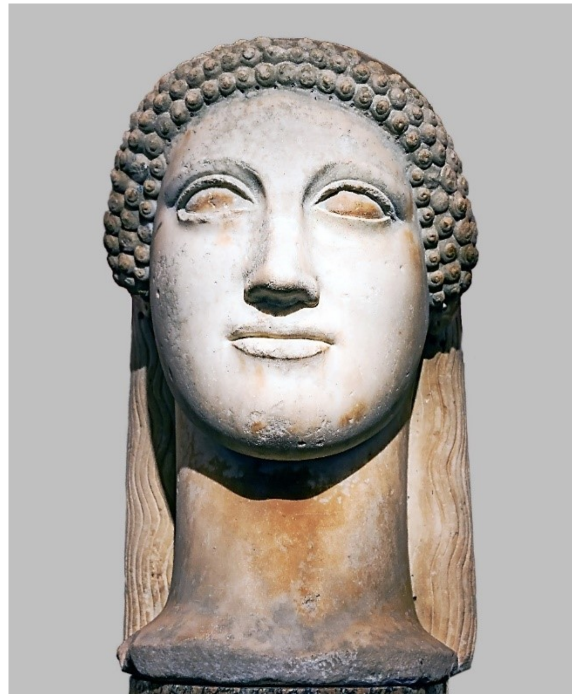
Venus was closely allied to the Roman state, which initiated her cult during the Punic Wars in connection to the catastrophic defeats that seriously threatened its existence. During the exceptional measures that were meant to secure the favor of the gods in 217 BC, two temples were built next to one another on the Roman Capitoline Hill – the temple of Venus of Eryx and Mens, the goddess of reason. In "Fasti," Ovid wrote that the Romans had conquered Sicilian Eryx at the end of the 3rd century BC and took the local cult of Venus back with them to Rome.[16] The temple that was built in Rome in Porta Collina in 181 was considered to be a copy of the Venus of Eryx (her statue, temple or both).[17] The colossal Greek marble head from the classical epoch, which was found near the Roman temple, may have come from within it.[18] If this was the case, it may have been an import from Eryx, where the statue of Aphrodite was created earlier than the oldest statue of this goddess in Greece.

The preserved head of the Venus statue from her temple in Porta Colina was originally richly decorated with metal jewelry, which is seen in the drilled holes that allowed them to be fixed on (**29**). The role of golden jewelry embedded into the stone sculptures during rituals is attested by a passage in Ovid's "Fasti," in which he describes rituals of Venus's festival celebrated in Rome on April 1st. *Duly do ye worship the goddess, ye Latin mothers and brides … Take off the golden necklaces from the marble neck of the goddess; take off her gauds; the goddess must be washed from top to toe. Then dry her neck and restore to it her golden necklaces.* [19] It was the greatest Roman festival of Venus and was celebrated by chaste Roman women and prostitutes alike. Ovid described the ritual in detail, as he was allowed to take part in it. The ritual acts were carried out exclusively by women, but men were not forbidden from attending. The intimate and intoxicatingly pleasant identification with Venus was a specific trait of the veneration

---

[15] Livy, *The History of Rome*, 10.31. English translation B. O. Foster.
[16] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.871-876. English translation J. G. Frazer.
[17] Strabo, *Geography*, 6.2.6.
[18] Cf. Simon, *Die Götter der Römer*, 306 (269).
[19] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.133-138.

of this goddess. The ritual consisted of three parts, the first two of which were perfectly symmetrical. The rituals began with washing, beautification and the wreathing statues of Venus, followed by female bathing. Finally, excited by the rituals and warmed by their bath, the women cool down while imbibing ritual drink. Every Roman woman became Venus on the 1st of April. Ovid calls on the celebrating women to decorate themselves with myrtle, which the bathing Venus used to cover her nakedness, and to drink an intoxicating drink that Venus drank before her wedding.[20] Absolute identification with the venerated deity and those who worshiped her is unprecedented among other members of the Roman pantheon.



29. Venus, colossal head of a Western Greek marble statue, h. 83 cm, 480-470 BC.

In Roman baths, Venus was venerated as Fortuna Virilis (literally "Manly Fortune"), which was not a separate goddess as scholars had hitherto assumed. Fortuna Virilis seemed too explicitly erotic to the prudish 19th century and so they divided her from the Roman Venus, although it was only one of the names under which the Romans worshiped her.[21] Ovid described Venus's function as Fortuna Virilis in detail – the goddess helped women enchant men just as she had captivated her own lovers.[22] For these means, she used a score of auxiliary tools and methods, like her magic belt with amulets of love; she also bathed, decorated herself and used perfume. The important fact is that Ovid tells of Fortuna Virilis while describing Venus's festival on April 1st, when Roman women embodied Venus. The fact that Venus is called Fortuna Virilis or "Manly" notes a change in perspective – the goddess is not viewed through the eyes of her worshipers, but primarily by men, who are intended to see their fortune in a woman.

---

[20] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.134-144.
[21] Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins*, 109-110.
[22] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.145-150.

Ovid stresses that Venus was venerated in Rome primarily in April because nature began to awaken from winter.[23] Another Venus holiday was celebrated at the end of this month. During the Venus of Eryx festival, which Roman prostitutes celebrated on April 23, the link between alcoholic intoxication and eroticism was emphasized. It was not only a festival of Venus, but also of wine, and Ovid invites prostitutes to visit the Temple of Venus of Eryx in Porta Collina.[24] Ovid's text explicitly claims that the Roman Venus of Eryx was a form of the Greek Aphrodite Pandemos. The connection between Venus and wine emphasized by Ovid is expressed for instance in a relief on a Roman sarcophagus of the 3rd century.[25] The naked Venus, characterized by a diadem, small Amors and a goose, is hugging Bacchus, who is offering her grapes, which can be understood as an illustration of Terence's verse: *When Ceres and when Liber fail, Venus is cold.*[26] The Roman duo of Venus and Bacchus (Liber), which followed on in the close link between Aphrodite and Dionysus, was later elaborated in Renaissance Italy.

For the Romans, Venus was principally the mother of Aeneas, the progenitor of the Roman nation, and thus her cult was a part of state ideology presumably from the beginning.The oldest evidence comes from the end of the 3rd century BC, when Venus was venerated in the aforementioned temple on the Capitoline Hill in Rome; also, between the tables that were publicly displayed for the three-day feast of the gods, there was also a table designated for Mars and Venus.[27] This gives proof of the fact that, at the time, these two deities were understood as the parents of the founders of Rome; Venus was the mother of Aeneas and Mars was the father of Romulus.[28] The Roman myth of the Trojan origin of the Romans was created in interaction with the Greeks and was promoted in connection with the Roman occupation of the Mediterranean in the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC. This Roman myth was created gradually via the transformation of the Greek tale of Aphrodite's mortal son, Aeneas, whom she gave birth to and whose father was Anchises from the dynasty of Trojan rulers.[29] Aeneas's expedition into Italian territory is mentioned for the first time in Greek sources as early as the 5th century BC.[30]

Venus as the progenitress of the Romans is depicted on a Chalcedon cameo from the early empire.[31] The half-naked goddess characterized by her magical belt, the kestos himas, is sitting on a rock on the bank of the Tiber, which is indicated by the amphora on the ground. She is embracing her grandson, Iulus, the son of Aeneas and

---

[23] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.115-129.

[24] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.862-872.

[25] Antalya, Archeological Museum 2003/172.

[26] Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 2.23.60. English translation H. Rackham. Cf. Shelley Hales, "Aphrodite and Dionysus: Greek Role Models for Roman Homes?" *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes* 7 (2008): 235–255.

[27] Livy, *The History of Rome*, 22.9-10.

[28] Simon, *Die Götter der Römer*, 227.

[29] Homer, *Iliad*, 2.819-821; 20.307-308; *Homeric Hymn* 5.196-197.

[30] Hellanikos fr. 84; Damastes fr. 3. Cf. Robert L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001-2013), 1: 187 and 2: 564. Cf. also Jenny Wallenstein, "Interactive Aphrodite: Greek Responses to the Idea of Aphrodite as Ancestress of the Romans," in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, ed. Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 269-284.

[31] Firenze, Museo archeologico 14436. Cf. Erika Simon, "Venus als Grossmutter," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts. Roemische Abteilung* 105 (1998): 305-314 (Simon 1998b)..

the founder of the Roman nation.[32] Venus and Iulus are looking at an eagle, the emblem of the Roman Empire, and behind it is Iulus's grandfather, Anchises. Both Anchises and Iulus are characterized as Trojans (Anchises with sleeves on his clothing and Iulus with a shield in the shape of a pelta). Identification of the Roman state with Venus is demonstrated in scenes showing the half-naked or naked Venus caressing an eagle. On the Roman carnelian gem of the 1st century BC – 1st century, the benevolent result of this connection is shown: in the background is a cornucopia.[33] The eagle may be larger than the goddess in order to make it completely clear that it is not one of the animals that Aphrodite controls, but Jupiter's sacred eagle, a symbol of the Roman state.[34]

The adoption of the Greek Aphrodite in Rome resulted from historical circumstances that also fundamentally influenced the sculptural form of the Roman Venus. In the 3rd – 2nd century BC, Romans clashed with the main power of the southwestern Mediterranean, the Punic Empire, and simultaneously with Greeks in the east. They conquered the Punic capital city of Carthage in Northern Africa in 146 BC and Greek Corinth in the same year, becoming the dominant Mediterranean power. They began to import Greek artwork from the eastern Mediterranean in large number and also copy it. Over the two centuries, when the existence of the Romans was under imminent threat, Romans built their own identity in which openness to external influences was a key element, allowing for their political expansion. The Romans did not view this openness as passive acceptance, but rather as the reformation of all external stimuli for the needs of the Roman state.[35] The cult of Aphrodite, which the Romans identified with Venus, was also adapted to fit their needs despite adopting Greek visual types for her depiction, which they usually only modified or elaborated upon.

Romans and Greek Statues of Aphrodite

The vast majority of statues of Venus preserved in our museums and galleries was created in Rome from the 1st century BC to the 3rd century.[36] However, the models for these statues were produced in Greece from the 4th to 1st century BC. And this must make us pause for thought. The Romans could be exceptionally open to outside stimuli. However, how is it possible that these sculptural types survived the fall of the Roman Empire? How is it possible that they can repeatedly enter new and often completely different religious, political and social contexts? How is its possible that they are an essential part of Western art culture even today?

We must seek the explanation in the Greek artistic revolution of which these sculptural types were the product. This artistic revolution was made possible by a fundamental transformation in understanding the relationship between the artwork

---

[32] Virgil, *Aeneid,* 8.628.

[33] St. Petersburg, State Ermitage ГР-21422.

[34] Roman sardonyx cameo, 1st century. St. Petersburg, State Ermitage ГР-1240.

[35] For Roman reception of Greek art cf. Michael Squire, "Reception: The Legacy of Greek Sculpture," in *Handbook of Greek Sculpture*, ed. Olga Palagia (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 725–767.

[36] See Evamaria Schmidt, "Venus" in: *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* VIII. 1 (Zurich: Artemis, 1997), 192–230..

and what it depicted. While in the 5th century BC deities were differentiated from the statues that depicted them, a no less prominent process took place in the following century of differentiation between statues and deities. Already at the end of the 5th century BC, Athenians began to return for political reasons to famous buildings, statues and paintings from their past.[37] The original references of these works, which had been canonized by tradition, may have been partially overshadowed by what they meant for the following generations, for whom these works became a part of their cultural heritage, which legitimized the present. Taking a work out of its original religious, political and social context was a basic prerequisite for the birth of what we call classical art. It is the art of the past to which later generations return, not because of what it depicts, but because of the associations that it evokes in the audience, which returns to this art as a generally binding model. For Aphrodite's statue, which became a part of classical art, it is no longer important only *who* is depicted, but also *how*: the form of depiction has also become the bearer of meaning.

In the Greek imagination, statues of deities in the 4th century BC began to live their own separate lives, which to a large degree were independent of the deities. In ancient Rome, the cult of famous Greek statues from the classical epoch, i.e. from a half-millennium earlier, became an integral part of culture and also of social and political life.[38] Thanks to this fact, depictions of Aphrodite ceased to be exclusively linked to religious rituals and also became a means of self-representation of members of the political elite, who publicly exhibited them and also used them to decorate their private residences. Owning famous originals or their copies heightened social prestige in Rome, which explains the existence of a vast number of Roman versions of famous Greek statues and variations of them made from different materials and in different sizes. The separation of the statue from the deity it depicts was also crucial for the reception of ancient statues in late antique Christian society, medieval Europe or modern civilisation.

In this context, it should again be stressed that the Romans never mechanically adopted Greek ideas and artistic forms, which is also evidenced by the form of the cult statues of Venus. We, unfortunately, know very little about the statues of Venus venerated in Roman temples, but we can draw certain conclusions about them. We have no indications of Romans placing statues of half-naked or naked Venuses in small shrines as is known from eastern Greece from the middle of the 4th century BC. An exception was the Greek-speaking southern-Italian Campania, which had belonged to Rome since 340 BC. Venus was venerated there in the gardens dedicated to her, which housed small shrines with statues of the naked goddess.[39] On the Campanian gem of the 1st century, she is shown styling her hair in the small shrine; the moon crescent in the tympanon of the shrine identifies the goddess as Heavenly Venus (**30**).[40] On the Campanian terracotta relief of the same century, she is tying a strophion (**31**).[41] Next to

---

[37] Cf. Andrew Stewart, *Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 191-227.

[38] Cf. Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

[39] See Cathrin Schmitt, *Aphrodite in Unteritalien und auf Sizilien: Untersuchungen zu ihren Kulten und Heiligtümern* (Heidelberg: Verlag Archäologie und Geschichte, 2016).

[40] Berlin, Staatliche Museen FG 3006. Cf. Schmidt, *Venus*, no. 117.

[41] Paris, Musée du Louvre CA 1832. Cf. Schmidt, *Venus*, no. 153b.

Venus is a column with clothing thrown over it; the background of the scene is made up of vegetation with flowers, and there is also a flower at the center of the tympanon.

30 (left). Aphrodite in a shrine, Campanian carnelian gem, 1st century.
31 (right). Aphrodite in a shrine, Campanian terracotta statuette, 1st century.

Campanian Pompeii was closely linked to Venus, its name – Colonia Veneria Cornelia Pompeianorum – indicated the city's affiliation with the goddess.[42] In 80 BC, Sulla transformed this Campanian city into a Roman colony bearing this name. Sulla also founded a temple to Venus on a prominent site on the Via Marina.[43] The temple's precinct was in close proximity to the city center and adjoined the rear side of the basilica in the forum; at the same time, it was on the edge of the city, as the temple was placed facing south away from the city. The location on the Via Marina was also convenient, as the goddess was venerated in the city as the Venus of Pompeii, who was primarily the goddess of seafaring. The close link between Venus, fertility and nature was evoked by a "sacred grove" of trees lining the colonnades surrounding the temple from three sides. No cult Pompeian statues of Venus have survived, but the Venus of Pompeii was depicted in paintings as a queen veiled in a magnificent robe with a scepter in her hand; she wore a diadem or crown in the shape of the city's walls. Venus may be holding an olive or myrtle branch and a ship's rudder with its larger end upwards. Amor, the counterpart of Greek Eros, stands next to her mother on a pedestal and, like her, he is also depicted clothed (**32**). Ovid explains Venus's patronage over seafaring, which is symbolized by the rudder, both because she came from the sea and because in April, which is her month, the season of seafaring begins.[44] Venus of Pompeii can also be standing on the bow of the boat, which is being carried by elephants, symbols of victory and luck, which seafarers needed more than anyone

[42] Cf. Carla Brain, "Venus in Pompeian Domestic Space: Decoration and Context," in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Rome 2016*. ed. Roberta Cascino et al. (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2017), pp. 51-66.
[43] Cf. Maureen Carroll, "Exploring the Sanctuary of Venus and its Sacred Grove: Politics, Cult and Identity in Roman Pompeii," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 78 (2010): 63-106, 347-351.
[44] Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.131-132.

else (**33**). In the second half of the 1st century BC, Venus began to de depicted in Pompeii differently than we know her from the wall paintings described above. Her clothing was much simpler and lighter – it had no attributes with the exception of a small Eros, who is not standing next to her but perched on her shoulder. However, she was still shown fully dressed.

32 (left). Venus of Pompeii, wall painting from Pompeii (VI.9.6, Casa dei Dioscuri), before 79.
33 (right). Venus of Pompeii, wall painting from Pompeii (IX.7.6, Verecunda House), before 79.

Statues of Venus in Roman temples also depicted her completely clothed, including a veil draped over her head. The Roman wall painting from around 10 BC may have been an echo of a famous statue.[45] Venus sits on a decorated throne with a flower in her hand, and before her stands the naked Amor with a scepter. The intimacy of their relationship is indicated only by the fact that Amor is standing on Venus's footstool and their legs are touching. Behind Venus stands Peitho, who is concealing the goddess's head in a veil (or is taking it off). The painting comes from the Villa Farnesina, the decoration of which was typical for Augustus's era, which programmatically returned to classical Greece. The wall painting evokes Athenian art of the end of the 5th century BC in its technique (painting on a white background) and theme.

A renaissance in Venus's cult in Rome took place during the philhellenic emperor Hadrian, who in 136-137 had the Temple of Roma Aeterna (Eternal Rome) and Venus Felix (Bringer of Good Fortune) built.[46] This largest temple of ancient Rome stood between the Roman Forum and Colosseum, and its ruins are visible today next to the Basilica of Maxentius. An echo of the statue in this temple may be the so-called Dea Barberini, a wall painting from the epoch of Constantine the Great (**34**).[47] The painting depicts fully clothed Venus or the personification of Rome (a helmet on her head and a decorated throne are 18th century additions). She is wearing golden

---

[45] Roma, Museo Nazionale 1128. Cf. Schmidt, *Venus*, no. 229.

[46] Cf. Claudia Del Monti, ed., *Il tempio di Venere e Roma nella storia* (Milan: Electa, 2010).

[47] Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano 124506. Cf. Stephanus Mols, "La cosiddetta Dea Barberini smascherata," in *Atti del X Congress Internazionale dell'AIPMA (Association International pour la Peinture Murale Antique)*, Napoli 17–21 Settembre 2007, ed. Irene Bragantini (Naples: Università degli Studi di Napoli, 2010), 347–353.

clothing with red stripes, and over it is a cloak. On her shoulder sits Amor and Psyche. In her lowered right hand, Venus holds a scepter; in her raised left hand is a small figure of Victoria holding a globe, a symbol of world supremacy. Another possible echo is the backside of Hadrian's gold coin.[48] On it, the depicted Venus is holding Amor in her outstretched hand and a scepter in the other. She sits on a chair, and the hand that holds the scepter is placed on the backrest in the way that we know from the Greek sculptural type from the third quarter of the 5th century BC.

34. Venus / Roma enthroned, mural from the Lateran Palace, Constantine the Great period?

So, where did the hundreds of surviving Roman statues of naked Venus, which are only a fraction of their original state, originally stand? The above mentioned Roman festival on the 1st of April explains why statues of naked Venus were a standard part of the decoration of Roman baths.[49] The baths had a unique position in this society; they were not just for hygiene but where Romans preferably spent all their leisure time. We find a statue of Venus in this original context on a gilded bronze mirror from the early 2nd century.[50] In the center is a vessel for water on a long stand, which had been used by the Greeks for bathing. On the left is a woman standing at a well with a rope in her hand, drawing up water. Another vessel for water is depicted at her foot. A woman stands at the water basin and pours perfumed oil into it from a container in her hand. At her feet is an askos, a vessel with a handle used for storing aromatic substances. In the background on a small column is a statue of the naked Venus, who is styling her hair. Another place where we can assume the existence of statues of naked Venus is a private Roman residence. However, wherever they were

---

[48] See Richard Abdy and Peter Mittag, eds., *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. II - part 3 from AD 117-138 Hadrian (London: Spink, 2019), no. 2366.
[49] See Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, "Baiarum grata voluptas: Pleasures and Dangers of the Baths," *Papers of the British School in Rome* 57 (1989): 16 and 24.
[50] Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 1978.158.

displayed in Rome, these representations' status was similar to that in Greece. These statues were always firmly connected to the goddess they represented. This is shown by the fact that the surviving Roman statues of naked Venus preserved the Greek taboo on the depiction of female genitalia.

Some prominent Romans had a special relationship with Venus, so it would not be surprising if they also had a statue of her in their residence, in a domestic sanctuary. Roman generals operating in the eastern Greek Mediterranean undoubtedly heightened their authority in the eyes of the Greeks by identifying with the Olympian deities. The first significant Roman commander and politician to choose Aphrodite as his protector was Lucius Cornelius Sulla.[51] According to Plutarch, he did not espouse the Roman Venus, but Greek Aphrodite in order to gain the favor of the Greeks.[52] On the frontside of a coin that Sulla had minted during his military campaign in the eastern Mediterranean in 84-83 BC, Venus wears a diadem and Amor holds a palm branch, a symbol of victory.[53] The center on the backside depicts ritual objects, a vessel and a staff (capis and lituus), and war trophies on both sides, a reference to victory at Chaeronea in 86 BC and at Orchomenus in the following year. Both ritual objects were symbols of the augur, which Sulla became in 82 BC. Thus, the coin does not depict the contemporary situation, but Sulla's political program, in which his divine protector Aphrodite played an important role.[54]

Pompeius followed on in Sulla's tradition of venerating Aphrodite/Venus, and built the first theater building in Rome in 55 BC, a part of which included the Temple of Venus Victrix (the Victorious), which is the first record of this epithet.[55] The temple was located in line with the theater building above a semi-circular auditorium. The ground plan of the temple was adapted to this auditorium, giving it a semi-circular apse at the rear. We can only speculate about which type of Venus statue was placed in it.[56] The leading Romans, who derived their origins directly from Venus, followed the Hellenistic monarchs. In this connection we may also mention that Demetrius I Poliorcetes was presented as the son of Aphrodite and Poseidon in a hymn performed in 291/290 BC.[57]

A whole score of elite Roman families claimed they were of Trojan origin and descended from Aeneas and Venus, the most famous of which was the gens Julia. In a funeral speech for his deceased aunt in 68 BC, Caesar proclaimed at a celebration in the Roman Forum: *The family of my aunt Julia on her father's side is akin to immortal Gods … the Julii, the family of which ours is a branch,* [goes back] *to Venus."*[58] The direct connection between Caesar and Venus Victrix is attested by a report from Cassius that

---

[51] Cf. Volker Fadinger, "Sulla als Imperator Felix und Epaphroditos (= Liebling der Aphrodite)," in *Widerstand - Anpassung – Integration: Die griechische Staatenwelt und Rom. Festschrift für Jürgen Deininger zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Norbert Ehrhardt and Linda-Marie Günther (Stuttgart: Steiner 2002), 155-188.

[52] Plutarch, *Sulla*, 34.4.

[53] Ghey and Leins, *A catalogue of the Roman Republican Coins*, no. 359.2.

[54] Plutarch, *Sulla*, 19, cf. Appian, *Civil Wars*, 1, 97.

[55] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 8.20.

[56] Cf., for example, John Pollini, "The Dart Aphrodite: A New Replica of the Arles Aphrodite Type the Cult Image of Venus Victrix in Pompey's Theater at Rome, and Venusian Ideology and Politics in the Late Republic-Early Principate," *Latomus* 55 no. 4, (Octobre – December 1996): 757-785.

[57] Cf. John Russell Holton, "Demetrios Poliorketes, Son of Poseidon and Aphrodite: Cosmic and Memorial Significance in the Athenian Ithyphalic Hymn," *Mnemosyne* 67, no. 3 (2014): 370-390.

[58] Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, 1.6. English translation J. C. Rolfe.

he wore a ring with an engraved image of the goddess and selected her name as a call to arms in the most dangerous situations.[59] Venus appears very often on Caesar's coins. The denarius minted on the Iberian Peninsula in 46-45 BC shows Venus's head with a diadem, and the bun of her hair has a star symbol.[60] A small Amor is on Venus's shoulder and in front of him there is a lituus, an attribute of pontifex maximus. Caesar kept the office from 63 BC until his death.

During his triumph in 46 BC, Caesar had the Temple of Venus Genetrix (the Mother) built in the Roman Forum.[61] According to Pliny, the prominent Roman sculptor Arcesilaus created the Venus Genetrix statue in Caesar's forum.[62] We have no further information on the appearance of the sculpture, but it may have had a shield at its feet and Victoria on its arm.[63] Another possibility for its appearance is found on later coins with the inscription of Venus Genetrix, on which the goddess is lifting up the edge of her cloak to veil herself. On one version of these depictions she holds an apple, a symbol of her victory in the contest of beauty with Juno and Minerva, but also a reference to the patronage of the goddess over nature and its prosperity.[64] The gesture on the coins would correspond to the Greek sculptural type, the most famous of which is the Louvre-Naples Aphrodite type from the end of the 5th century BC, which way have been adapted for the Venus Genetrix. However, the depiction of dressed Venus on a throne, which we find on gems, may have also been an echo of the Venus Genetrix statue.[65] The cosmic character of the goddess is emphasized in this composition. There are two busts with sunbeam diadems, a sun and a moon; stars are indicated in the background on the right and left. The goddess is holding a wreath with a butterfly, a symbol of the human soul, and a reference to the role of Venus in the afterlife. We will return to this topic again below.

In the 40s BC, we encounter a depiction of Venus and a small Amor nestling on her shoulder as a symbol of her motherhood. This pictorial type had a long tradition in Greece.We find Eros sitting on Aphrodite's shoulder in Greek art as early as the 5th century BC.[66] In Greek monumental sculpture, the motif appears for the first time around 100 BC on the group statue with Pan from Delos. The aforementioned Venus Genetrix may also have had Amor on her shoulder. Echoes of this were perhaps the wall paintings from Pompeii, one of which was contemporary with the foundation of the Roman temple of Venus Genetrix, and may have represented Cleopatra with Caesarion as the fully dressed Venus Genetrix with Amor on her shoulder.[67] The goddess is decorated with gold jewelry and walks out of the opened doors, perhaps from the Temple of Venus Genetrix. She is wearing a translucent tunic and purple cloak, and has a translucent veil over her head, on which she wears a gold diadem

---

[59] Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae*, 43.43.3.
[60] Ghey and Leins, *A catalogue of the Roman Republican Coins*, no. 468.2.
[61] Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae*, 43.22.
[62] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35, 156.
[63] Cf. Pablo Aparicio Resco, "La statua di culto di Venus Genetrix nel Forum Iulium di Roma," *Bollettino della Società Friulana di Archeologia* 17, no. 1 (Feruary 2013): 1-17.
[64] Abdy and Mittag, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, no. 2576.
[65] Roman carnelian of the late Republic or early Empire (München, Staatliche Münzsammlung A 2048).
[66] E.g. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 1271.
[67] House of Marcus Fabius Rufus (VII.16.17-22), in situ. See Susan Walker, "Cleopatra in Pompeii?" *Papers of the British School at Rome* 76 (2008): 35-46.

with a red jewel. Caesarion was born in 46 BC, a year before the foundation of the Roman temple, and Octavianus had him murdered in 30 BC. This may have been the reason why this high-quality Pompeiian fresco of 50-40 BC was not destroyed, but hidden behind a fake wall.

We also find Venus with Amor on her shoulder on the Roman coin from 46 BC. Venus holds scales in one hand and a spear in the other, the scales are a symbol of judiciary power and the spear symbolizes the enforcement of the law.[68] Amor may have been depicted in this position to emphasize the fact that the crime being judged by Venus is sexual in nature. Amor initiated the act that has taken place, but now it is exclusively up to Venus to judge the consequences and make atonements. A similar motif is found on a marble relief from the Temple of the Nymphs, which was a part of Emperor Tiberius's villa in Capri.[69] Venus is characterized by her diadem and revealed shoulder. Behind her bare shoulder is the small figure of Amor, who is embracing Venus with his right hand around her neck; in his left hand he holds a fan which he uses to cool her.

35. Venus Triumphant, denarius, inscription CAESAR IMPER(ATOR) on the obverse, Venus Triumphant on the reverse, 44 BC.

The adaptation of the Greek sculptural type of armed Venus in Rome was primarily the work of Julius Caesar, as the iconography of Venus Victrix was created during his reign. The backside of the denarius minted in the beginning of the year 44 BC shows the likeness of Caesar; on the back is Venus with a shield (**35**).[70] Her majestic nature is emphasized by a scepter and the fact that the shield upon which she leans her elbow leans is resting on a globe, a symbol of world supremacy. The goddess of victory stands on Venus's outstretched hand. Victoria is depicted in long clothing that flutters behind her as she has just landed on Venus's hand. Caesar's Venus distinctly differs from Hellenistic Aphrodites in the fact that she is dressed. She wears clothing ending above her knees, which was typical for female hunters and warriors – one of her breasts is bare, but is covered by the scepter. Her proportions are boyish; she has narrow hips, practically no breasts, and her head is bowed to indicate her chastity.

[68] Ghey and Leins, *A catalogue of the Roman Republican Coins*, no. 463.1.

[69] Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Cf. Schmidt, *Venus*, no. 257.

[70] Ghey and Leins, *A catalogue of the Roman Republican Coins*, no. 480.17. Cf. Michael Speidel, "Venus Victrix – Roman and Oriental," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2, 17, 4, (1984), 2225-2238.

In 27 BC, Octavianus Augustus became the absolute ruler of Rome. By the time he died in 14 , Rome had been completely transformed thanks to his lengthy reign – the republic was transformed into an empire, Roman culture was systematically Hellenized and the veneration of Venus became a part of the emperor's cult. Augustus realized the massive significance of the visual element of political publicity. He differed from his political opponents, who stylized themselves as Greek monarchs and identified with the Hellenistic canon, by clearly giving preference to the artistic canon of the 5th to 4th century BC. Augustus's characteristic link between politics, visuality and an emphasis on religion and spiritual values is attested by the aforementioned display of Apelles's famous Greek painting of Aphrodite Anadyomene from the 4th century BC in Caesar's temple in the center of Rome. By acquiring the painting, which at the time evidently had an aura comparable to Leonardo's Mona Lisa today, and displaying it in Rome, Augustus announced his promotion of classical Greek art and his respect for Venus. His placement of the painting pointed to the divine origin of the Iulus clan of which he was a member.

Given the strong republican tradition, Augustus presented his unique position very carefully. He referred to his divinity exclusively indirectly by denoting himself as the son of the deified Caesar. During Augustus's reign, the myth of Venus as the progenitress of the Romans took on its definitive form – Aeneas not only became a forefather of the emperor, but also his model as the divine son and embodiment of virtue and piety. We know the myth from a number of authors of Augustus's era, who gave a sophisticated form to the concept of the first Roman emperor.[71] In his pro-Roman revision of the traditional myths, Virgil also attributed the foundation of the Temple of Venus on the peak of Eryx to the Trojan Aeneas, who settled in Latium and became the progenitor of the Romans.[72]

Augustus initiated not only a new literary form of the Roman myth of Venus, but also her new artistic conception. The aureus and denarius minted during the Triumvirate around 42 BC show a half-naked Venus from behind as she looks into a mirror on the backsides of the coins. The goddess is wearing a cloak wrapped around her legs and stands at a column.[73] This concept is distinctly different from the depiction of Venus on Caesar's coins – the goddess is half-naked and active, and the effect of reality is strengthened by the fact that she is depicted in perspective view. During the reign of Augustus, this image type was perfected; the goddess is leaning on a column with her left elbow, which evokes the boundary-post a sports track; it is a target that the goddess has reached, and so she can now rest (**36**). As we have shown in the previous chapter, the rest implied by the relaxed pose was one of the essential attributes of the sculptural types of Greek Aphrodite.

---

[71] Livy, *The History of Rome*, 1.1-2; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 13, 623-627; 14, 607-608; Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1.257-279, 286-287. Cf. Rachel Meredith Kousser, "Augustan Aphrodite: The Allure of Greek Art in Roman Visual Culture," in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, ed. Amy S. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 287-306.

[72] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 5.22, 759-761.

[73] Ghey and Leins, *A catalogue of the Roman Republican Coins*, 494/34.

36. Armed Venus, backside of a denarus of Augustus minted in 32-29 BC.

A shield leans against the column, denoting that this target was a military victory. The goddess wields a scepter or spear in her left hand and holds a helmet or sword in her outstretched right hand. Weapons are used to characterize Venus as the goddess who brings victory – the "Venus Victrix." Thus, on a later coin of Julia Domna, victory is explicitly indicated in the accompanying inscription and, in place of weapons, she now holds the symbols of completed victory – an apple and a palm branch.[74] However, Venus may have taken the weapons away from Mars, and so she is simultaneously "Venus Genetrix," the progenitress of the Roman nation who on the contrary brings peace and prosperity. There is no conflict in this dual role – in Roman political imagery, military victory means death to the defeated, but brings peace to the whole world.

We know this visual type from Hellenistic art and find a similarly depicted half-naked Aphrodite taking off or putting on her shield on the gem made by Gelon mentioned above (**26**). The goddess is bowed in an unsteady position caused by the weight of the shield that she holds before her. The composition is based on two symmetrically placed arches evoking contrasting ideas – the bulge of the metal shield is placed in contrast to the graceful curve of the goddess's naked back. Augustus's Venus abandoned this typically Hellenistic playfulness and endorsed the tradition of classical Greek art. The goddess has a differentiated free and supporting leg, but her poise is firm, just like her moral principles.

Not only Venus's pose was inspired by classical Greece, but also the depiction's unmistakably educational dimension; the goddess is active, but her movement is restrained and she is pursuing a clear goal. The movement that is denoted by her striding legs is neutralized by the fact that the goddess is leaning her left elbow on the column. Venus is naked, but no one can see her genitals or breasts. She is displaying her naked body only in order to prove how perfectly she can control herself and those that are looking at her. She is showing her nakedness, but only to make it clear that her goal is in no way to offend or evoke undesired ideas. According to the generally held opinion in Rome, Greek nakedness was linked to the homosexuality cultivated in gymnasia there, and nothing of the sort existed in Roman cities. Ennius, who lived in

[74] Harold Mattingly, Carol Humphrey Vivian Sutherland, and Robert Andrew Glendinning Carson, eds., *The Roman imperial coinage, vol. 4: Pertinax - Uranius Antonius* (London: Spink, 1986), no. 536, p. 165.

Rome at the beginning of the 2nd century BC, claimed that taking off one's clothing was the first step to sin.[75]

37. Armed Venus with Amors, Roman mirror from gilded bronze from Beirut, 2nd century.

Augustus's Venus type that we know only from coins reproduced a model from monumental art, but we have no further knowledge of it. In any case, it took firm root in Roman visual culture and can be found for instance also on Roman bronze mirrors from the 1st to 2nd century (**37**). On them, the erotic character of the depiction is emphasized by the small Amors who surround the goddess, and the Priapi standing by on pedestals. On one mirror, there is a phallus above the goddess.[76] Augustus's Venus not only brings victory and peace, but also encourages sexual activity of married couples and heightens birth rate.[77] In 18 – 9 BC, Augustus issued a whole series of laws, the aim of which was to prevent adultery, support marriage and increase the number of children from the upper classes. The goal was to ensure a sufficient number of candidates for functions in the army and administration of the state. Single and childless Romans were also penalized and received only half of the inheritance that would otherwise belong to them. Material offers were aimed at heightening the birth rate – a woman who bore a child after being released from slavery was freed from her obligations to those who released her; after having three children, she was wholly free and did not need a guardian.

Monumental structures initiated by Augustus were all created in the Corinthian order, the evolution of which culminated in this period. The Corinthian order differs from the other alternatives, i.e. the Doric and Ionic, in the vegetative ornaments inspired by acanthus leaves. Thanks to this, it could become an attribute of Venus, fertility and Augustus's golden era.[78] The Corinthian Temple of Mars Ultor (the Avenger) in Augustus's forum in the center of Rome was completed in 2 BC and was

---

[75] Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, 4.70.

[76] Cf. Demetrios Michaelides, "A Decorated Mirror from Nea Paphos," in *Engendering Aphrodite. Women and Society in Ancient Cyprus* ed. Diane Bolger and Nancy Serwint (Boston MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2002), 351-363.

[77] Cf. Carol U. Merriam, *Love and Propaganda: Augustan Venus and the Latin Love Elegists* (Brussels: Éditions Latomus, 2006).

[78] Vitruvius, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, 1.5.

one of the largest temples of its time. It was furnished with an apse just like Caesar's aforementioned Temple of Venus Genetrix, which adopted this element from the temple in Pompeius's theater in Rome that was also mentioned previously.[79] On the tympanon of the Temple of Mars Ultor, Mars was evidently located in the center; to the left of him was the clothed Venus with Amor on her shoulder, a diadem on her head and scepter in her hand. Her posture corresponds to Greek models from the mid-5th century BC. We know the sculptural decorations of the tympanon from a relief that was found in 1583 in Rome and embedded into the Villa Medici's façade (**38**). We find a similarly depicted Mars and Venus duo on a relief from Ravenna of 41-54, where Augustus is depicted as the half-naked Mars, while Livia takes the form of a clothed Venus.[80]

38. Relief reproducing the tympanon of the Temple of Mars Ultor (detail), Rome, Claudius epoch.

The relief from Carthage of 41-54 is considered to be an echo of the sculptural group in the Temple of Mars Ultor or in the Pantheon.[81] Venus, dressed in a seemingly transparent peplos, has one shoulder bared. She has a distinct contrapposto and is leaning against a column with her left leg over her right as we know from the Greek sculptural type from the end of the 5th century BC, most likely created by Alcamenes. Over the peplos she wears a cloak, the end of which is held by Amor. Mars stood in the middle and on the right was the emperor or member of the imperial family. Amor is hiding from Mars under Venus's cloak and handing the goddess the sword which he has stolen from the god of war. The scene is thus a celebration of the peace that Venus's reign will bring.[82] Augustus adopted the Greek sculptural type of naked Aphrodite for Roman use while preserving the traditional Roman form of Venus statues placed in temples. She appeared here, as a rule, fully clothed. In ancient Rome, the naked Venus was primarily associated with the private sphere, but this in no way meant that it was removed from the religious context. Portraits and funerary statues prove this beyond any doubt.

---

[79] Cf. Simon, *Die Götter der Römer*, 225-226.

[80] Ravenna, Museum San Vitale.

[81] Alger, Musée National des Antiquités. Mars Ultor: Zanker, *The Power of Images*, 196-197; Pantheon: Edmund Thomas, "The Cult Statues of the Pantheon," *Journal of Roman Studies* 107 (2017): 146–212.

[82] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 1.29-37.

Promise of Rebirth

In the Roman Empire, prominent Roman women had themselves depicted as naked Venus.[83] This new direction was initiated by empresses, beginning with the first, Augustus's wife. Greek Hellenistic queens may have served as a model, the most famous of which was Arsinoe II (316-270 BC), the wife and sister of the founder of the Ptolemaic Empire, who let herself be venerated as Aphrodite.[84] On the fragmented turquoise cameo of 14-37, Livia is depicted as Venus the Mother with one shoulder bare, just like Aphrodite was depicted from the second half of the 5th century BC.[85] In her hand she holds a sculptural bust of her deceased husband or one of her sons.[86] Antonia Minor, the mother of Emperor Claudius, also had herself depicted as Venus the Mother with a small Amor leaning on her shoulder. This statue was found in the imperial villa in Punta Epitaffio.[87]

The sculptural type of the Capitoline or Cnidian Venuses were used most often as models for Roman women depicted as naked Venuses.[88] In the past, these statues were commonly interpreted as the depiction of various empresses; however, not a single case exists that could prove this theory. Empresses set the tone in portrait art, and therefore it is difficult to differentiate the portrait of an empress from a portrait of a common Roman woman likening herself to her. The oldest preserved statue of this type depicts an older woman with wrinkles under her eyes and over her mouth, which is unattractive and wide. She has an aquiline nose and a grave expression on her face (**39**).[89] However, her body corresponds to the Capitoline Venus type, and was originally accompanied by Amor, of which only fragments by her feet have been preserved. A somewhat younger sculpture of an older woman also closely adheres to the way in which Venuses were depicted, including the bracelet on the left arm, a dolphin at the feet and a gesture of the right hand, which points to the nipple.[90] Another variation on the theme of the Cnidian goddess was the portrait statue of

---

[83] Cf. Sadie Pickup, "Venus in the Mirror: Roman Matrons in the Guise of a Goddess, the Reception for the Aphrodite of Cnidus," *Visual Past* 2, (2015): 137-154; Stephanus Mols, "From Phidias to Constantine. The Portrait Historié in Classical Antiquity," in *Example or Alter Ego? Aspects of the Portrait Historié in Western Aart from Antiquity to the Present* ed. Volker Manuth et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 39-47.

[84] Cf., for example, Agnieszka Fulińska, "Divae Potentes Cypri: Remarks on the Cult of the Ptolemaic Queens as Aphrodite," Eos 99 (2012): 47-73.

[85] Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 99.109.

[86] See Elizabeth Bartman, *Portraits of Livia: Imagining the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 83.

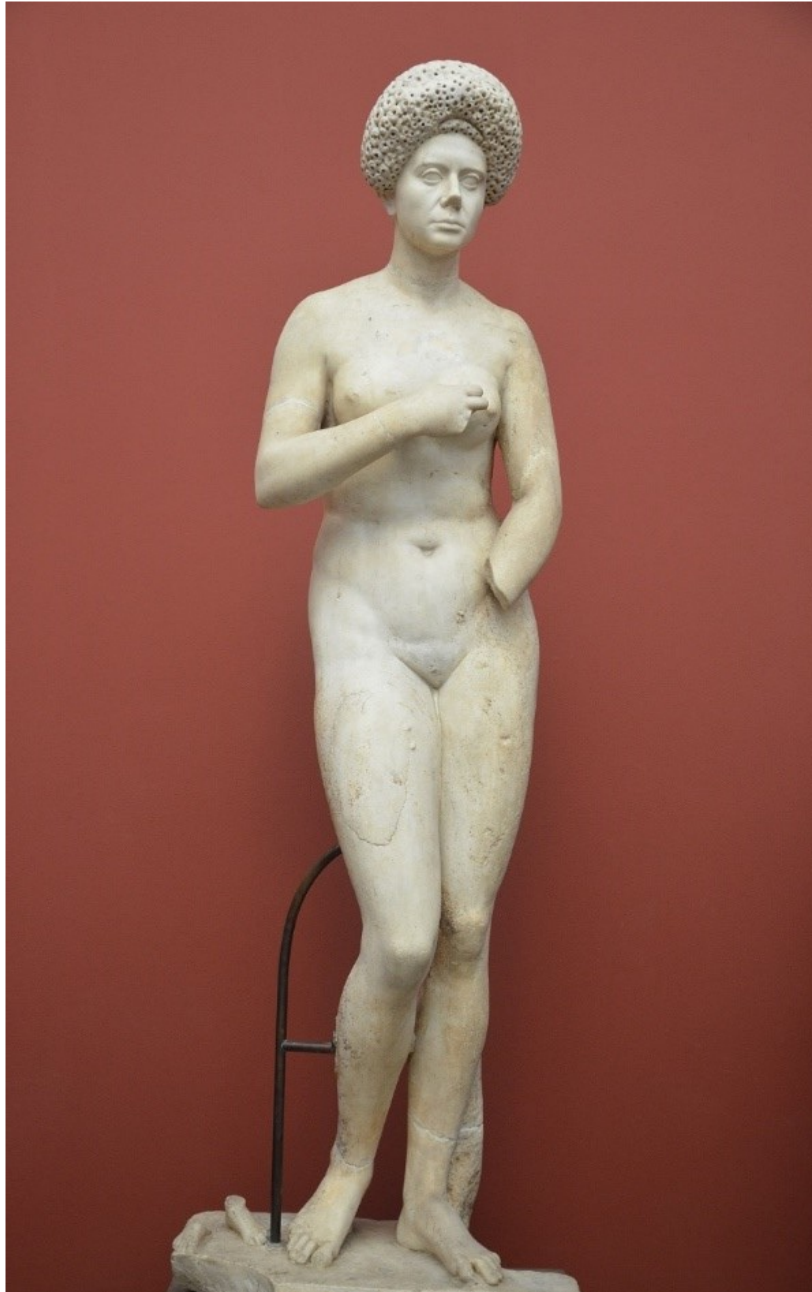
[87] Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei, Baia 222738. Cf. Maria Friedrich, "Eine Kaiserin im Gewand der Aphrodite? Die Antonia Minor mit Kind," in *Ansichtssache: Antike Skulpturengruppen im Raum,* eds. Jens-Arne Dickmann and Ralf von den Hoff (Freiburg: Albrecht-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, 2017), 94-99.

[88] Cf., for example, Christopher H. Hallett, *The Roman Nude: Heroic Portrait Statuary 200 B.C. – A.D. 300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 199, 217-222; Annetta Alexandridis, "Mimesis oder Metapher? Aphroditekörper im römischen Frauenporträt," in *Formkonstanz und Bedeutungswandel*, ed. Dietrich Boschung and Ludwig Jäger (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2014), 67-102; Mols, *From Phidias to Constantine*, 45-47.

[89] See Hallett, *The Roman Nude*, 199.

[90] Napoli, Museo archeologico nazionale 6291. Cf. Tomasz Mikocki, *Sub specie deae: Les impératrices et princesses romaines asimilées à des déesse. Étude iconologique* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1995), 191, no. 273.

Venus with a vessel of water next to her on the ground with clothing thrown over it, an attribute of the goddess.[91] The ideal body of the young Venus contrasts with the portrait of a mature woman with sharp features and a sophisticated wig with peacock feathers on the forehead. Portrait sculptures with the body of the naked Venus were limited to the Roman elite living in Rome and its surroundings, and were not a very widespread custom. Next to several hundred statues of Roman men with heads depicting a specific individual and an ideally beautiful and young body, only sixteen statues depicting naked Roman women as Venus have been recorded.[92]



39. Roman Woman as Venus, h. 191 cm, Roman marble statue from Lago Albano, ca. 90.

[91] Napoli, Museo archeologico nazionale 6299.
[92] See Hallett, *The Roman Nude*, p. 331-332 no. 327-342.

The Greeks understood the person as an indivisible whole. Romans, however, did not share this concept and created a genre of sculptural busts that began to develop the Roman physiognomic portrait from around 100 BC.[93] At that time, the Romans also began to combine realistically depicted heads with ideally beautiful bodies in a Greek style. Roman portraits capturing the appearance of an individual down to the tiniest details give us the impression of an additional step in artistic development leading towards the way we understand sculpture today. However, we may perceive the portrait of an older lady with the body of a naked girl, who also has attributes of a goddess, as something bizarre or even comical.[94] Until only recently, portraits of Roman women in the form of Venus did not surprise anyone, as Roman art was considered to be a degenerate version of Greek art. The existence of unique Roman art was discovered for the first time at the end of the 19th century, and it took a very long time for this opinion to take hold. Today we know that the Romans had their own unique visual art culture. However, what we are missing is the knowledge of the idioms which the Roman artists used to express themselves.

Portrait statues of Roman matrons as naked Venuses can be divided into two components – the physiognomic portrait and the idealized naked body. We know that Roman art was a sophisticated semantic system, which expressed itself by using specifically Roman ideas on various stylistic levels and were taken from local artistic tradition ("Italic" or "plebeian") and Greek art. However, we still cannot form an idea of how these combinations functioned and the way they were perceived by the Romans. The head clearly identified the depicted figure by capturing its unique physiognomic traits; however, the ideal body denied this identification and placed the given individual into a mythical context among the gods. These statues are usually understood in a figurative sense as a convention that makes use of the huge prestige that ancient statues of naked deities held in the ancient world. According to this interpretation, a Roman woman with the body of Venus was celebrated by the fact that the statue denoted her as being *as beautiful as* a goddess. Similarly, a Roman woman with the body of Diana was virtuous and a Roman woman with the body of Ceres was *as fertile as* a goddess whose body and attributes they had borrowed.

How then should we interpret portrait group sculptures that depict a naked Roman woman as Venus embracing her lover Mars (**40**)?[95] We cannot imagine what virtues this statue group should celebrate; here Venus and Mars are depicted as adulterers.[96] What if these statues were not understood in their time in a figurative sense? We cannot rule out the possibility that they truly celebrated them as gods. Laura Salah Nasrallah has recently pointed out that the works of Christian authors from the time when these statues were created, i.e. the 2nd century, have yet to be fully

---

[93] Cf. Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 53-59.

[94] See, for instance, Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (London: John Murray, 1956), 43-44; Nancy H. Ramage and Andrew Ramage, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Roman Art*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 134.

[95] Cf. Rachel Meredith Kousser, "Mythological Group Portraits in Antonine Rome: The Performance of Myth." *American Journal of Archaeology* 111, no. 4 (October 2007): 673-691.

[96] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.169-189.

explored.[97] These authors are highly qualified as witnesses, as they intimately knew the society of the time and its conventions and artistic culture, and they strongly criticized it for blurring the borders between the mortal and divine, endangering the salvation of the soul. The absence of self-control, immodesty, overindulgence, and (primarily) undesirable visual stimulation awakens base instincts that endanger the god in a person. As Clemens of Alexandria wrote, *we are rational formations of God's Logos, through whom we have our origin*.[98] According to Christians, the rich and powerful were flaunting themselves in Roman society in the form of unliving statues of fake gods, while each person in the Christian community was a walking statue of the real God.[99]

40. Roman portrait group statue of woman and man as Venus and Mars, ca. 180.

[97] Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second–Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[98] Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 1.6.4. English translation G.W. Butterwoth.
[99] Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 4.59.2.

In order to interpret portraits of Roman women as Venuses, we must also take into consideration their sepulchral contexts, which are recorded in exemplars from the beginning of the 2nd century found in tombs.[100] In Roman thought, Venus was much more closely linked to war and death, and the afterlife than Greek Aphrodite was.[101] On the grave relief from Rome, the deceased is not only depicted as Venus, but was explicitly identified in the inscription, which has been preserved only in fragments.[102] The departed woman is depicted naked, and her hands cover her breasts and loins in the model of Venus statues. However, she is not depicted in contrapposto, which was typical for these statues. On a grave stele from Latium, which is now in The British Museum in London, the deceased woman with stylish hair was depicted as a half-naked Venus Victrix, which is indicated by the palm branch in her left hand.[103] The dove in the bottom left corner emphasizes that the depicted woman is Venus. The funereal function of the relief is indicated by the opened doors leading to the realm of the dead, which are at both sides at the bottom. The empty surface between the half-opened doors was meant to bear an inscription, which was ultimately never engraved.

On the grave stele that Onesimos had erected for his wife Neike in Macedonia in the 2nd century, the deceased woman is also depicted in the form of Venus.[104] It is of the Louvre-Naples type with one breast unveiled, which was quite common for tomb stones. While the departed woman is compared to the goddess, the members of her family who were evidently still alive at the time of the stele's creation are depicted in the common scheme for tomb steles, i.e. at an eternal feast. Onesimos lies on a couch with a cup in his left hand and a wreath in his right; the veiled women sitting on either side of him are his mother and daughter.

On the front side of the sarcophagus from the 3rd century, the naked Venus is depicted kneeling in a seashell. At the same time, however, she is the deceased, as her hairstyle is the same as the one known from portraits of Empress Julia Domna.[105] With her left hand, she is covering her genitals, and with her right she is holding her billowing clothing, the end of which is held by Amor with a torch. The seashell with Venus is held by sea Centaurs, and on their backs sit Nereids, which are another tool used to transfer the departed woman to mythical timelessness. The procession of mythical sea beings is commonly found on tomb stones as a reference to the post-mortal pilgrimage to Elysium, the island of the blissful, which was located in the West somewhere in the ocean. A similar scene can be found on the funereal altar in Capitoline museums, which depicts Venus's bath (**41**).[106] Amor is pouring water on the back of the crouching goddess. The scene thus explicitly refers to the birth of the

---

[100] Roma, Musei Vaticani, Magazino 2952 (from the tomb of the Manilii family on the Via Appia near Rome); Roma, Musei Capitolini 245 (from the tomb near Porta San Sebastiano in Rome).

[101] See Marion Bolder-Boos, "Der Krieg und die Liebe – Untersuchungen zur römischen Venus," *Klio* 97, no.1 (2015): 81–134.

[102] Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano. Cf. Schmidt, *Venus*, no. 123.

[103] London, The British Museum 1948,0423.1. Cf. Schmidt, *Venus*, no. 193.

[104] Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum 1524. Cf. Björn Christian Ewald, "Minding the Gap: Issues of Cultural Translation in Graeco-Roman Art," in *Visual Histories of the Classical World. Essays in Honor of R.R.R. Smith,* ed. Catherine M. Draycott et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, , 2018, 243-251.

[105] Roma, Museo e Galleria Borghese 81. Cf. Paolo Moreno and Antonietta Viacava, *I marmi antichi della Galleria Borghese: La collezione archeologica di Camillo e Francesco Borghese* (Rome: De Luca, 2003), no. 137.

[106] Cf. Schmidt, *Venus*, no. 248.

goddess, who in this case is the promise of rebirth after death, after which a person will live eternally. In this specific case, Venus was not the alter ego of the deceased, but pointed generally to post-mortal bliss, as the funereal altar belonged to a man.[107] The inscription on it meant: *For A. Albius Graptus. Ciartius Sergianus had this created for his friend*.

41. Venus, Roman marble urn with relief decoration (Aulus Albius Graptus), 1st-2nd century.

Venus also appears on the relief of a funereal altar from the end of the 2nd century, the inscription of which designated it to a male individual, a certain "Tiberius Claudius Faventino."[108] Under the inscription is an illustration of Venus's infidelity, which is otherwise only rarely depicted in ancient art.[109] The chained Venus sits on a bed next to her lover Mars, who is hanging his head in shame. The mythical tale is pointed out at the top by Helios, who has exposed the adulterers, and Hephaestus, who has bound them with chains. The scene could not have served as a form of

[107] Cf. Verity Platt, "Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi," *Res. Anthropology and Aesthetics* 61-62 (2012), 213-227.

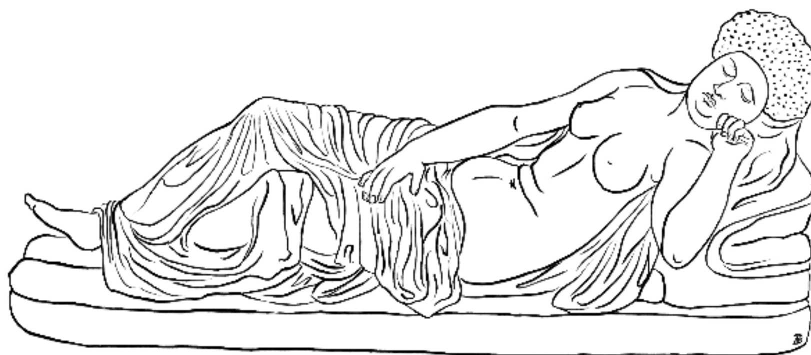
[108] Città del Vaticano, Museo Pio Clementino 1186.

[109] Cf. Monica Salvadori and Monica Baggio, "Lo svelamento di Marte e Venere, tra repertorio iconograffico e narrazione ovidiana," *Eidola. International Journal of Classical Art History* 8 (2011), 79-96.

amusement and we must understand it as a part of the stories that decorate the sides of the altar, which commemorate the Trojan War and the beginning of Roman history. The scene on the front plate is thus evidently a reminder of Venus as the foremother of the Roman nation.

The Roman sepulchral context also includes sculptures or reliefs that depict a deceased woman in the form of Venus sleeping in a bed. This sculptural type appeared in Rome already in the early empire and the last exemplars are from around 300. The individualized traits of the face correspond to the true form and age of the departed, whose identity is also made visible by their hairstyles, which were fashionable at the time. The deceased woman is in a half-reclining position on her side with her chest facing the viewer; the fact that she is asleep is denoted by her closed eyes, crossed legs and head comfortably resting on her hand. Her other hand can be placed over her chest and holding her shoulder, or her arm can be lifted and resting on the crown of her head. Her inert state can also be indicated by her head tilted backwards. The bedroom is evoked by a pillow or the backrest of the sofa (**42**).

An important attribute of sleeping women on Roman tomb stones is the fact that they have either partially or fully unveiled the whole upper portion of their bodies, making them similar to Venus. Erotic attraction was part of the ideal of Roman matrons, just as a basket of yarn symbolized diligence or a dog loyalty (**43**).[110] Portrait characteristics of the deceased and the depiction of sleep commemorated their life and death. The beautiful body that was compared to a goddess was the promise of post-mortal bliss. In the 1st century, Tibullus expressed this belief in a colorful description of Venus's garden of love: *But me, for I have been ever pliable to gentle Love, shall Venus' self escort to the Elysian fields. There … troops of young men meet in sport with gentle maidens, and Love never lets his warfare cease. There are all, on whom Death swooped because of love; on their hair are myrtle garlands for all to see.*[111] This idea could not be farther from the Christian ideal of eternal life. The sculptural type with sleeping naked Roman women is on the contrary very close to famous paintings of sleeping naked Venuses from the beginning of the 16th century, when efforts to revive the ancient goddess culminated.



42. Deceased Roman woman, Roman statue on the lid of a sarcophagus made of Luna marble, 2nd century. Villa d'Este.

[110] Cf. Mols, *From Phidias to Constantine*, 44-45.
[111] Tibullus, 1.3.57. English translation J. P. Postgate.

43. Ulpia Epigone, Roman portrait relief on the lid of a sarcophagus in Luna marble from the facade of the tomb of Volusia on Via Appia, c. 100.

3. SURVIVAL. 4th to 14th Century

Demon

Reception of ancient statues of Venus in post-ancient Europe was forever negatively affected by their explicit and uncompromising refusal after the onset of Christianity, when the statues of Venus became not only the antithesis and offence to the new faith but new morals as well. To Eusebius of Caesarea, the statue of Aphrodite on Golgotha is the antithesis of the Christian cross, the symbol of Christ's crucifixion, death and resurrection. In the "Life of Constantine" from 337-340, Eusebius writes about how the pagans intended to erase the memory of Christ's tomb by covering it up. *Above the ground they constructed a terrible and truly genuine tomb, one for souls, for dead idols, and built a gloomy sanctuary to the impure demon of Aphrodite; then they offered foul sacrifices there upon defiled and polluted altars.*[1] According to Eusebius, Aphrodite was not only a goddess of the pagans, but the embodiment of their immorality and moral depravity – the opposite of everything that the sign of the cross brought with it. The fact that the sculpture of Aphrodite appears in symbolic topography of the most holy place in the Christian world, Golgotha in Jerusalem, is also no coincidence.[2] At the time of Jesus's crucifixion, Golgotha was not yet a part of Jerusalem; it became one after the construction of the third system of Jerusalem's walls during Herod Agrippa's reign (41-44). Areas beyond the walls of ancient cities were traditionally the place where the dead were buried and also where Aphrodite was venerated, emphasizing her privileged link to fertility and natural life-giving powers.

As we have shown in the previous chapter, the depiction of Venus already in Imperial Rome became an important part of funereal symbolism, in which her sexuality pointed not only to fertility, but a renewal of life and thus a post-mortal life as well. According to Christian authors, the pagans had attempted to replace Christ's tomb, a symbol of the true eternal life in Christ, with a false promise of eternal life that was to be emphasized by a statue of Aphrodite. Eusebius's symbolism of Golgotha around 400 was elaborated upon by Saint Jerome – the statue of Venus erected on the site of Jesus Christ's crucifixion in this version became a memorial to the death of the Son of God as it replaced the Virgin Mary mourning his departure.[3] Saint Jerome indicated this in a manner similar to Eusebius, as his description of the course of events of history begins with Jesus. In Bethlehem, on the site where the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, Venus and the pagans mourned the death of her lover Adonis. However, this god of vegetation, whose death and rebirth were worshiped by the pagans, was only a false deity. The antithesis of the cross, the symbol of Christ's crucifixion and the statue of Venus also appear in the biography of Saint Porphyrius. In 402, the saint walked at the head of Christian processions carrying the cross to Gaza

---

[1] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3.26.3. English translation A. Cameron and S. G. Hill.

[2] Cf., for example, Wendy Pullan, "Regeneration and the Legacy of Venus: Towards an Interpretation of Memory at Early Christian Golgotha," in *Memory & Oblivion*, eds. Wessel Reinink and Jeroen Stumpel (Dordrecht: Springer, 1999), 595-601.

[3] St Jerome, *Epistula ad Paulinum*, 58.3.

and confronted a statue of Aphrodite there. This is described in detail by the saint's biographer, who was a witness to this event.[4]

Christian authors vehemently criticized the veneration of Venus not only as pagan idolatry, but also because of the depiction of the naked female body, which aroused sexual desires. Visual arts and primarily the statue of Venus were presented as the craftiest obstruction that the devil had ever placed before Christians, who were striving to save their souls by suppressing bodily yearnings. An extreme stance was taken by Tertullian, who claimed that statues depicting the naked body must lead to sin, as a person cannot resist their erotic attractiveness. According to this founder of Western theology, the sight of the statue led not only to adultery, but eventually even to murder.[5] This was not only about the statues' erotic attractiveness; their existence alone was mortally dangerous. A person has an inherent tendency to worship idols, a fact which the devil utilized by bringing artists into the world and creating art. Each statue and each image is a potential idol and thus the seat of the demon, and therefore it is necessary to forbid any depictions. Byzantine anecdotes about ancient statues often repeat a warning against destroying or removing them, which would lead to catastrophe. The reason they were sometimes left where they were may have been the fear of the demons that hid inside them.

Tertullian and other early Christian theologians produced a new and highly effective argument against depictions – they were the potential residence of a demon that otherwise had no name or body. The demon found both of these in the statue, which people themselves activated through their worship.[6] Venerated statues were portals to darkness, which unsuspecting people were opening and by doing so bringing doom upon themselves. For example, a story about an event that allegedly took place in the 5th century in the baths of Carthage tells of this. An unaware female visitor saw the statue of the naked Venus and imitated its pose.[7] The Carthaginian girl was connected with the statue through her pose, allowing the evil force that had settled in it to enter her. Fortunately, it was quickly repelled and the statue was destroyed. The story of the unfortunate Carthaginian girl proves that statues of Venus in the 5th century were still a part of public space and were understood as they were in pagan antiquity, i.e. as models of female stances that were worth following.

Tertullian's contemporary, Clemens of Alexandria, made the statue of Aphrodite into the primary topic of his propagandist work "Exhortation to the Greeks."[8] In his view, statues of this goddess represent the most dangerous threat: *if one sees a woman represented naked, he understands it is "golden" Aphrodite. So the well-known Pygmalion of Cyprus fell in love with an ivory statue; it was of Aphrodite and was naked. The man of Cyprus is captivated by its shapeliness and embraces the statue ... There was also an Aphrodite in Cnidus, made of marble and beautiful. Another man fell in love with*

---

[4] Marcus Diaconus, *Vita S. Porphyrii*, 59-61.

[5] Tertulianus, *De pudititia*, 5. Cf. Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 108-123.

[6] Tertullianus, *De idolatria*, 15.

[7] See, for example, Lea Stirling, "Patrons, Viewers, and Statues in Late Antique Baths," in *Patrons and Viewers in Late Antiquity*, ed. Stine Birk and Birte Poulsen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2012), 67-81.

[8] Cf. Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second–Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 272-295.

this and has intercourse with the marble, as Poseidippus relates. The account of the first author is in his book on Cyprus; that of the second in his book on Cnidus. Such strength had art to beguile that it became for amorous men a guide to the pit of destruction.[9] By attacking statues of Aphrodite, Clemens was condemning not only pagan religion and the worship of statues, but also the immorality of Roman society. Statues are human creations, but nonetheless they lead people to consider the depicted gods as true deities and see their immorality as morality inspired by the real god. The form of statues itself is immoral, which is proved by Aphrodite, who is depicted naked.

Statues of deities are merely things created by specific people under generally known circumstances that are in no way sublime, as Clemens emphasizes. Praxiteles created a semblance of Aphrodite in Cnidus according to his lover Kratina; painters painted Aphrodite according to the prostitute Phryne, and thus venerating the statue of Aphrodite is the same as venerating a prostitute.[10] According to Clemens of Alexandria, the viewer was not seduced by Aphrodite, but by the semblance of a naked woman that the sculptor had created. After the onset of Christianity, ancient statues were therefore destroyed or deformed. By doing so, they were ritually cleansed of their demonic powers, a fact which is revealed in the destruction of the eyes, nose and mouth so the statue could not see, smell or talk. The heads, arms and legs were cut off of the statues. The penis was removed from male statues while the breasts and vulva were chiseled off sculptures of Aphrodite. Finally, they were deposited headfirst into the ground, weighed down, and then buried.[11]

Work of art

Statues of Olympian gods continued to be made in the 4th century, but their production begins to drop steeply in the following century.[12] Faith in Venus was evidently very strong and in some communities continued on for centuries after the onset of Christianity. From as late as the mid-6th century, we have proof of the fact that the statue of Aphrodite was perceived as a manifestation of the goddess herself. Damascius, the last promoter of Neoplatonism who died in the 6th century wrote that he was overcome by a paralyzingly devout reverence when he saw a statue of Aphrodite in Athens: *Upon seeing it, I fell into a sweat through the influence of divine terror and astonishment and my soul was filled with such joy that I was quite unable to go back home. I went away several times only to return to that sight again. The sculptor has blended into it so much beauty - nothing sweet or sensual, but something dignified and virile: armed and as*

---

[9] Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 4.57.2-3. English translation G.W. Butterwoth.

[10] Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 4.53. 5-6. Cf. Helen Morales,"Fantasising Phryne: The Psychology and Ethics of Ekphrasis," *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 57 (2011): 71–104.

[11] Cf., for example, Rachel Meredith Kousser, *The Afterlives of Greek Sculpture. Interaction, Transformation, and Destruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Troels Myrup Kristensen, "Statues," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Archaeology,* ed David K. Pettegrew et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 333-350; Rachel Meredith Kousser, "Mutilating Goddesses: Aphrodite in Late Antique Aphrodisias," in *Prähistorische und antike Göttinnen*, ed. Julia Katharina Koch et al., (Münster: Waxmann, 2020), 147-162.

[12] Cf., for example, Roland R. R. Smith and Bryan Ward-Perkins, eds., *The Last Statues of Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

if just returning from a victory, with an expression of joy. [13] However, the quickly thinning ranks of worshippers of the Olympian religion definitely died out in the 7th century in the Byzantine Empire.

The fact that the tradition of Greco-Roman artistic culture continued on after the onset of Christianity is one of the most interesting aspects of the development of world art.[14] Archeological digs and written sources have given proof of differing and variously motivated attitudes towards ancient sculptures in the Christian eastern Mediterranean. There is, however, no doubt about dominant tendencies and chronological developments. Pagan statues were largely destroyed; nonetheless, these statues may have also been understood as a part of cultural heritage, the preservation of which heightened the prestige of the city and the whole state. This applies primarily to Constantinople, which was founded in 330. For this reason, statues of ancient deities from around the whole eastern Mediterranean were imported to this city without a past to become a part of the image of the new Rome. Statues of Aphrodite and other Olympian deities survived the rise of Christianity's power for the very same reason that they evoked Christian hatred, i.e. their close connection to the ancient Roman Empire.

In 399, an imperial decree ordered to have pagan statues torn down, but their destruction was not allowed if it endangered public property. *No man by the benefit of Our sanctions shall attempt to destroy temples which are empty of illicit things* [i.e. altars and statues]. *For We decree that the condition of the buildings shall remain unimpaired; but if any person should be apprehended while performing a sacrifice, he shall be punished according to the laws. Idols shall be taken down under the direction of the office staff after an investigation has been held, since it is evident that even now the worship of a vain superstition is being paid to idols.* [15] Concerning this passage, it is important to mention that demolition could take place only after thorough investigation proving that the statue was indeed the subject of religious worship. Imperial decrees from the time around 400 clearly show that differentiations were made between the content and function of pagan statues.[16]

The extraction of these statues from the ideological framework in which they were created and originally served is explicitly formulated in the imperial decree from 407. The decree states that forbidden pagan rituals were still taking place and therefore orders the following: *If any images stand even now in the temples and shrines, and if they have received, or do now receive, the worship of the pagans anywhere, they shall be torn from their foundations.* [17] The decree did not target pagan sculptures as such, but rather their worship; on the contrary, they were under imperial protection just like pieces in today's museum exhibits. Clear proof of this is found in a decree from 382, which

---

[13] Damascius 63A. English translation P. Athanassiadi. Cf. Damascius, *The Philosophical History*, ed. by Polymnia Athanassiadi (Athens: Apamea, 1999), 170-173.

[14] Cf., for example, Norberto Grammaccini, *Mirabilia: Das Nachleben antiker Statuen vor der Renaissance* (Mainz Von Zabern, 1996); Anthony Kaldellis, *The Christian Parthenon. Classicism and Pilgrimage in Byzantine Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Luke Lavan and Michael Mulryan, *The Archaeology of Late Antique Paganism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[15] *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.10.18. English translation C. Pharr.

[16] See Lea M. Stirling, *The Learned Collector: Mythological Statuettes and Classical Taste in Late Antique Gaul* (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 158-163.

[17] *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.10.19. English translation C. Pharr.

dealt with Edessa: *We decree that the temple shall continually be open that was formerly dedicated to the assemblages of throngs of people and now also is for the common use of the people and in which images are reported to have been placed which must be measured by the value of their art rather than by divinity*.[18] These formulations, which unambiguously differentiated religious, historical and aesthetic function, were given enormous and lasting publicity. In 438, the imperial decrees were incorporated into Theodosius's codex, which was required reading for lawyers in medieval Europe. This had a fundamental significance for the reception of statues of Aphrodite in post-ancient Christian Europe.

In Byzantine Constantinople, a whole score of ancient statues of Aphrodite was exhibited in high-profile sites around the city center.[19] The largest collection of ancient statues was located in the Augustaion and on the square next it, and among them were also statues of Aphrodite.[20] An exalted description of three statues of Aphrodite exhibited in the famed Zeuxippos baths, which were in the center of Constantinople, is dated roughly to 500. Judging by the description, the first Aphrodite was of the same type as the Venus de Milo. With the next two, one of which was naked and made out of gilded bronze, the writer had no problem recognizing their attribute – on their necks they wore a cestus, the magic belt of love.[21] In the Forum of Constantine, there were also two statues of Aphrodite; one stood coupled with Artemis until at least the 8th century.[22] The second was made of bronze and was probably naked, because she was a part of the group depicting the Judgment of Paris. The statue stood here until 1204, when the crusaders had it melted down.[23] Statues of pagan deities had their respective collectors among the Christian political elite, who used references to the luxury, elegance and sophistication of ancient Greece and Rome for their own self-representation.

In the 5th century, when ancient temples were being dissolved on a large scale, those with money could acquire a great amount of exceptional ancient statues cheaply and use them to decorate their private residences. The most famous collection was owned by Lausos, a dignitary in the court of Theodosius II; however, the collection in the portico on the main avenue of the Forum of Constantine was destroyed by a fire in 475. Famous statues in the collection included: *The Cnidian Aphrodite of white stone, naked, shielding with her hand only her pudenda, a work of Praxiteles of Knidos*.[24] This statue was not necessarily an original created by Praxiteles. In late antiquity, there is proof of a whole score of places where statues considered to be originals by Praxiteles were

---

[18] *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.10.8. English translation C. Pharr.

[19] See Alessandra Bravi, "Ornamenta, Monumenta, Exempla: Greek Images of Gods in the Public Spaces of Constantinople," in *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Joannis Mylanopoulos (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 289-301; Lea M. Stirling, "Collections, Canons, and Context in Late Antiquity: The Afterlife of Greek Masterpieces in Late Antiquity," in *Using Images in Late Antiquity,* ed. Stine Brink (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 96-114, 101-105.

[20] See Sarah Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Constantinople* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 139-249, cat.no. 7.

[21] See Bassett, *The Urban Image*, cat.no. 38, 39, 40.

[22] See Bassett, *The Urban Image*, cat.no. 106.

[23] See Bassett, *The Urban Image*, cat. 113.

[24] See Georgius Kedrenos, *Compendium historiarum,* 1, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: L. Weber, 1838), 564, English translation S. Bassett. Cf. Bassett, *The Urban Image*, cat. no. 113 and p. 98-120. Cf. Sarah Bassett, "Excellent Offerings: The Lausos Collection in Constantinople," *The Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (2000): 6-25.

exhibited.[25] The description of the Cnidia in Lausos's collection gives proof that Byzantine writers had adopted their approach to works of art from Greco-Roman antiquity. The Cnidia is characterized by whom the statue represented, what innovations it brought to the development of the depiction of Aphrodite, and which artist created it. However, we must not use our present understanding to interpret the concept of the time; in the Christian context, naming the author of a pagan statue may have been an argument for its condemnation as a mere work of the human hand.

The fact that the ruling class of the Christian Roman Empire tolerated pagan statues, which were by their very essence a contradiction to the new world view, was naturally a problem for Christian theologists. Eusebius from Caesarea had already solved this problem before 340 by writing that Constantine had left ancient statues in Constantinople *for the laughter and amusement of the spectators.*[26] Similarly, Constantine of Rhodes also defended the existence of pagan deities in Constantinople in the 10th century, which also proves that they were still an unmistakable part of public space in the Byzantine capital.[27] As they had been taken out of their original historical context, all kinds of fantastic legends were told about them. These are recorded in "Parastaseis" (Brief Historical Expositions), a guide to the city's attractions from the mid-8th century, which was subsequently incorporated into the more extensive "Patria" (Traditions of Constantinople) at the end of the 10th century.[28] Evidence of Lausos's collection from the 5th century mentioned above also comes from the 11th to 12th century, when ancient statues were understood as an important part of Byzantine cultural heritage.

At the time when Constantinople was conquered by crusaders in 1204, ancient statues of Olympian gods were a part of the identity of the city, and therefore their destruction by the occupying forces was not only motivated by Christian zealotry, but was also a tool that served to demoralize the conquered city. Byzantine historian Niketas Choniates sharply criticizes the crusaders: *These barbarians, haters of the beautiful, did not allow statues standing in the Hippodrome and other marvelous works of art to escape destruction … rare and excellent works of art everywhere were given over to total destruction.*[29] The fact that the statues destroyed by the crusaders depicted naked ancient deities did not evidently bother Byzantian intellectuals. However, we may only speculate on how they viewed them. In Aphrodite's case, we can assume that erotic attraction was perceived as her primary message, similarly as in ancient Rome. Allegedly, a statue of Aphrodite stood on a column before Constantinople's brothel.[30] However, the naked Aphrodite may have also been perceived as the patroness of

---

[25] See Stirling, *Collections*, 100.

[26] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3.54. See Cyril Mango, "Antique Statuary and Byzantine Beholder," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963):, 57.

[27] Cf. Glanville Downey, "Constantine the Rhodian: His Life and Writings," *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honour of A. M. Friend, Jr.*, ed. Kurt Weitzman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 214-221.

[28] See Theodor Preger, ed., *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanum*, I-II (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1901-1907), 1-18 (Patria), 19-73 (Parastaseis). Cf. Helen Saradi-Mendelovici, "The Antiquities in Constructing Byzantine Identity: Literary Tradition versus Aesthetic Appreciation," *Hortus Artium Medievalium, International Research Center for Late Antiquity and Middle Ages* (Zagreb) 16 (2011): 209-227.

[29] Choniates, *Annals*, 650, 652, English translation H. J. Magoulias.

[30] See Bassett, *The Urban Image*, cat.no. 168.

fertility, which was the goal and meaning of marriage; her seashell may have also referenced the ritual of baptism with water, symbolic death and the promise of resurrection.

44. St. Nicholas orders the destruction of the statue of Venus, Byzantine mural, 1259.

The attitude towards statues of Aphrodite in the Byzantine Empire in the 13th century is evidenced by the wall painting depicting the destruction of the statue by St. Nicholas in the Boyana Church in Sofia, which differs from both Byzantine and Western depictions of the destruction of idols (**44**). The Byzantine painter depicted the saint by the statue on a column, which was a standard method used in Christian art to indicate a venerated pagan idol.[31] The saint is instructing two young men on how to destroy the statue; the one on the left is raising an axe and the one on the right is pulling a rope tied around the statue's neck. The scene is highly uncommon in that it gives a detailed depiction of the ancient statue of Aphrodite, who is moreover portrayed in the pose of a martyr. Her upraised hands correspond to the manner in which the suffering Christ was depicted in the Italian art of the 13th century. Nancy P. Ševčenko concludes her analysis of this scene with a question: *Is it possible that this striking fresco reflects a recent reality, the pillage of antique statuary in Constantinople by the Crusaders?* [32] The fact that St. Nicholas was never depicted destroying idols in Byzantine art can serve as an argument for this theory. We know of only several depictions of this topic, all of which originate in the Balkans, to where Constantinople's artists departed after their city was conquered.

The Boyana fresco painting is unique in that it depicts a specific sculptural type of Aphrodite despite the fact that the last monumental statues of the goddess were created a millennium before, at the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th century. The goddess on the Boyana fresco is wearing a type of Phrygian cap painted in gold; she is half-naked with her clothing wrapped around her waist. On the left side, the

[31] Cf. Troels Myrup Kristensen, "Using and Abusing Images in Late Antiquity (and Beyond): Column Monuments as Topoi of Idolatry," in *Using Images in Late Antiquity*, ed. Stine Birket al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 268-282.
[32] Nancy P. Ševčenko, *The Life of St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art* (Bari: Centro Studi Bizantini, 1983), 133.

clothing has fallen, and only the upper hem reaches just above her loins. Her contrapposto is emphasized, and thus her body is bent into an "S" shape. Her free leg is placed forward and is bent at the knee; her hip above the supporting leg is pointing out to the side. Her left arm is at ease, but is bent at the elbow and holds up a mirror. This is thus the ancient sculptural type of the Capuan Venus or Venus de Milo. Only in the depiction of the goddess's right hand did the painter deviate from this sculptural type; the goddess is lifting her hand upward and holding a scepter or spear. At the same time, the first documents of the reception of the ancient Venus image type also appear in the West, which is proven by the Eve carved around 1240 by sculptor Radovan into the portal of the Cathedral in Trogir, Croatia.[33] In Italy, an echo of this can be found in the Eve from the ciborium in Rome's Church of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, which was created by Arnolfo di Cambio around 1285.[34]

Memory of Venus

Statues of Venus have never completely disappeared from cultural memory in Western Europe. The legend of the ball, ring and Venus was once one of the most popular medieval legends.[35] The oldest version is known from William of Malmesbury, who died sometime around 1143, in which Venus is explicitly portrayed as an evil demon. The story took place in Rome, and it was general knowledge that statues of the ancient deities could still be seen there.[36]

A young Roman aristocrat, who has just been married, is playing a ball game outside the city with his friends. So as not to lose his wedding ring, he has placed it on the finger of a bronze statue of Venus which stands there. When he goes to pick up the ring, however, he finds that it will not budge, as the statue's fingers are now clenched. When he returns to the statue that same night, the fingers are once again straight, but the ring is gone. He returns to the bedroom to his wife, but when he lies down next to her, he stumbles upon an invisible being lying between them. The apparition then speaks to him: *"Lie with me, whom you have married today. I am Venus on whose finger you placed your ring, and I will not give it back."*[37] The unfortunate young man turns to a certain Palumbus, a lost priest versed in necromancy. The priest arranges for the devil to force Venus to give him the ring, and so the young man gains back both the ring and his wife. The legend demonstrates the danger that the statue of Venus poses. The life of anyone who takes her power lightly can be destroyed. In the mid-13th century, this legend was retold by Vincent of Beauvais and placed it in Rome under the reign of Henry III.

---

[33] See Fritz Saxl, "Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Ziel" in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* (1921-1922): 3.

[34] Cf. Peter Seiler, "Schönheit und Scham, sinnliches Temperament und moralische Temperantia: Überlegungen zu einigen Antikenadaptionen in der spätmittelalterlichen Bildhauerei Italiens," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 70, no. 4 (2007): 473-512.

[35] Cf, for example, Berthold Hinz, *Aphrodite: Geschichte einer abendländischen Passion* (Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1998), 116-123; Maurizio Bettini, *The Portrait of the Lover* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 131-134.

[36] Cf. Veronika Wiegartz, *Antike Bildwerke im Urteil mittelalterlichen Zeitgenossen* (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2004).

[37] *De gestis Regum Anglorum libri quinque*, 2.205.1124-1125. English translation P. F. Baum.

After the mid-12th century, the legend of the ball, ring and Venus is also found in the German-speaking environment. This version accentuates the erotic attraction of Venus's statue, which is absent in the older version. During the rule of ancient Emperor Theodosius, there were two brothers in Rome who refused to be baptized.[38] During a game, their ball accidentally flew over the wall of the abandoned temple precinct of Venus. One of the young men named Astrolabius climbed over the wall and found a beautiful statue of Venus on the other side, which asked him to come to her. His love burned so strong for the statue that he put a ring on her finger as a sign of loyalty, an act which began his suffering. His friend requested help from the emperor's chaplain, who in turn forced the devil to reveal to him that the pagans who had created the statue had planted a magic plant next to her, which caused every person to fall in love with the statue. Therefore, they moved the statue immediately to Castle Sant'Angelo, where Pope Ignatius ritually cleansed it and dedicated it to St. Michael. Astrolabius and many more with him were then baptized. It is worthy to note that the statue caused harm as the result of black magic (i.e. a magic plant). Thanks to this fact, the statue did not need to be destroyed, but only "reprogrammed". When it was placed into the services of the archangel Michael, it began to function in the opposite manner.

In the legend of Venus and the ring in the French environment, the pagan goddess was replaced by the Virgin Mary. Young men were playing with a ball before the ruins of a church and one of them wanted to leave his ring on the statue of the Virgin Mary that stood there.[39] However, she was so beautiful that he professed his love to her, and confirmed this by placing the ring he received from his fiancée on her finger. As soon as he did so, the statue bent its finger, making it impossible to remove the ring. This scared the young man, but after a time he nonetheless married his fiancée. As soon as he lied down in his marital bedroom, he fell asleep and dreamed the Virgin Mary was lying next to him, reprimanding him for being unfaithful to her. Every time he awoke, however, he saw his wife lying next to him. The promise symbolized by the ring could not be broken with the Virgin Mary. Thus, the carefree young man was forced to uphold the promise and enter a monastery.

Another version of the legend of the ring comes from the mid-13th century, in which the connection between Venus and the Virgin Mary is even more greatly emphasized. In this legend, young men are playing with a ball in the Colosseum, where St. Gregory had gathered all the pagan statues of Rome. A newly married young man puts his ring on the finger of a statue so as not to lose it during the game. Once the game ends, however, the young man finds out that the statue's finger has bent and the ring cannot be removed. In addition, the statue appears at night in his marital bedroom between him and his wife and reproaches him for his infidelity. A curate is called in and the statue mocks him; thus, he realizes that the devil has overtaken the statue. Upon the recommendation of a wise hermit, the young man renounces his marital bedroom and, a year later, is rewarded for doing so as the Virgin Mary manifests herself to him. She asks him to make a statue of her that is as beautiful as the one that first enchanted him. At the time, the production of statues was

---

[38] *Kaiserchronik*, 2, 13102-13392, ca. 1150.

[39] See Paull Franklin Baum, "The Young Man Betrothed to a Statue," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 34, no. 4 (1919): 529-530.

forbidden, and thus the pope does not allow the young man's first request to do so. However, the dream repeats itself and the pope finally agrees. The young man makes a statue of the Virgin Mary, and a ring appears on her finger, a clear sign that the work has been successful. The young man is given back both the ring and his wife, and the pope orders for statues of the Virgin Mary to be made everywhere.[40] These legends are proof of three things. Firstly, statues of Venus have never disappeared from the European cultural horizon, even though only a small number of remains are left of the massive fund of monumental statues made from stone and metal that were collected on the territory of the ancient Roman Empire during previous millennia. Secondly, these legends are proof of the fact that Venus was irresistibly attractive but repulsive at the same time. Thirdly, the legend is proof of the fact that the statue of Venus can be used for good, and in this case as a model for depicting the Virgin Mary.[41]

Legend of the ball, ring and Venus is not the only proof that the pagan goddess played an important role in medieval imagery. In the 12th century Magister Gregorius of Oxford visited Rome, where he was captivated by the statue of Venus.[42] Gregorius named Pope Gregory I (590-604) as the primary culprit of the destruction of ancient statues who, to his great delight, had failed to take notice of the statue of Venus. Gregorius approached the statue as a highly informed expert and, in his words, the goddess was depicted in the same manner as when she competed with Juno and Minerva in the Judgment of Paris. He explained the nakedness that was the primary attribute of the statue by claiming that Venus was the patroness of sexuality, and was therefore depicted undressing. Gregorius cites Paris's words on how Venus won over both goddesses, which was a paraphrase of Ovid's formulation.[43] The fact that the Oxford priest identified the statue is no surprise. In medieval Western Europe, the ancient myths were known from Ovid's "Metamorphoses," in which readers learned of Venus's birth from the sea foam, the golden apple that she won in the competition among three goddesses, the doves and swans that she harnessed to her chariot, and much more. In addition to ancient literary works, medieval writings summarizing the ancient myths were also a source on Venus.[44]

Gregorius thoroughly strove to view the ancient statue from an ancient perspective. He may have taken inspiration from Pliny's "Natural History" not only for the praise of art imitating nature, but also for the potential erotic attractiveness of statues and his mention of Parian marble, as Pliny often mentions this white type of

---

[40] See Baum, *The Young Man*, 556-557.
[41] Echoes of the legend can be found in Renaissance art, see Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 72.
[42] Cf., for example, Wiegartz, *Antike Bildwerke*, 32-34; Dietrich Boschung, "Die Narracio de mirabilibus urbis Romae des Magister Gregorius: Die Ewige Stadt im Blick des gelehrten Romreisenden," in *Wunder Roms im Blick des Nordens,* ed. Christoph Stiegemann (Petersberg: Dr. M. Imhof, 2017), 76-89.

.
[43] Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, 1.248.
[44] Cf., for example, John Mulryan, "Venus, Cupid and the Italian mythographers," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 23 (1974), 31-41; Earl G. Schreiber, "Venus in the Medieval Mythographic Tradition," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 74 (1975): 519-535.

marble in connection with famous statues.[45] In addition to Pliny, Valerius Maximus, who wrote about Cnidia in a similar spirit, may have also served as a source for Gregory.[46] Gregory's enthusiasm for the statue of Venus was not necessarily the consequence of a personal experience, but rather a literary motif. In regard to the genre, the work is not so much a report from his travels as it is a praise of the city. An indication that the description of his encounter with a statue of Venus may have been literary fiction can be seen in the site where he allegedly saw it. He claimed it was in the Quirinal, next to the famous and gigantic group sculpture of Castor and Pollux reigning in their horses. We find no mention of a statue of Venus on this site in any other description of Rome. However, the veracity of Gregorius's story is unimportant; what is of consequence is the fact that it points to an awakened interest in ancient statues, moreover in a land as remote as England. In this respect, his testimony was nothing out of the ordinary. In the same period, i.e. around the mid-12th century, Henry, Bishop of Winchester (the brother of English King Stephen) bought ancient statues in Rome and had them taken to Winchester.[47]

We have two documents regarding the reception of ancient statues of Venus from Italy in the second half of the 14th century. In the case of the statue of Venus found around 1340 in Siena, the attitude towards the statue first went through a phase of excited admiration. The excavated statue was festively exhibited in the fountain of the main square, but soon became the subject of sharp criticism and was removed.[48] Ghiberti, a native of Florence, wrote in 1416 about an event that took place sometime before 1348,[49] and is also mentioned in an even older record from a session of the Siena government, which decided on 7 November 1357 that the marble statue in the fountain had to be removed as it was indecent (*inhonestum videatur*).[50] Neither Ghiberti's report nor the clerical record make mention of the statue's sex, but the fact that it was a statue of the naked Venus rising from the sea is indicated by a note about a dolphin at the statue's feet. This also proves that it was definitely a marble statue, which needed to be supported by something at its base. The excited reaction of the city's inhabitants to discovering this statue had political overtones. Since the 12th century, Italian communes were dominated by local patriotism in regard to objects of antiquity, which was especially intense in places where the community could not pride itself on its ancient past, as it in fact had none. Siena was an Etruscan city which became a Roman colony during Augustus, but no ancient structures or statues were found on its territory. The random find of an ancient statue could draw attention to the connection

---

[45] See Dietrich Boschung, "Fragmentierung und Persistenz: Antike Statuen im Mittelalter," in *Persistenz und Rezeption: Weiterverwendung, Wiederverwendung und Neuinterpretation antiker Werke im Mittelalter*, eds. Dietrich Boschung and Susanne Wittekind (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2008), 347.

[46] Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, 11.11, ext. 3.

[47] See Jeffrey West, "A Taste for the Antique? Henry of Blois and the Arts," in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXX: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2007*, ed. Chris P. Lewis (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 213-230.

[48] See Wiegartz, *Antike Bildwerke*, 195-201; Lynn Catterson, "Finding, Fixing, and Faking in Ghiberti's Third Commentarii," in *Inganno –The Art of Deception: Imitation, Reception, and Deceit in Early Modern Art*, eds. Sharon Gregory and Sally Anne Hickson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 123-149.

[49] See Lorenzo Ghiberti, *I Commentari*, ed. Ottavio Morisani (Naples: Ricardo Ricciardi 1947), 56. English translation: Elizabeth Basye Gilmore Holt, *A Documentary History of Art, 1: The Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 165–6.

[50] Anonym, "Una statua greca trovata in Siena nel sec. XIV." *Miscellanea storica senese*, 5 (1893): 175-176.

with the ancient Roman Empire, even when this involved a depiction of Venus as a naked woman, and therefore the statue was placed in the city's main fountain. The fact that statues of naked women (probably Venuses) could be placed in fountains in Italy is proven by an Italian book illustration from around 1370, which depicts a fountain in a private villa.[51]

We have no further information on the reasons leading to such a radical change in opinions on the nakedness of ancient statues in Siena and can only speculate on them. The statue of Venus likely became a part of a political struggle, and condemnation of the statue was either meant to draw attention away from the present situation in Siena's community or directly accuse those who had it installed in the fountain. Arguments of the opponents of the Venus statue show a generally widespread belief that admiration for it was in fundamental disagreement with the Christian faith. At the same time, however, it shows that a group of artists and experts existed in Siena around 1340 who were able to appreciate the value of the ancient artwork that had been unearthed and carefully analyze the circumstances surrounding its discovery. This is attested by a report stating that a pedestal was attached to the statue and contained the name of the statue's author, Lysippos. Ghiberti knew from Pliny's "Natural History" that this was the name of a famous ancient sculptor; the experts who were called to the site of the statue's discovery (and also recorded the name of its author) were likely to have known the same. The statue was allegedly drawn by Siena painter Ambrogio Lorenzetti and carefully deposited by a Carthusian monk, who showed it to Ghiberti. Justifiably, Ghiberti admired Lorenzetti as a pioneer of a new artistic style influenced by antiquity.

Proof of the intensity of interest in Venus among Italian intellectuals of the 14th century is found also in the testimony of Benvenuto da Imola, professor at the University of Bologna, a literary scientist who associated with Boccacio and Petrarca. His text written in the 1370s describing his experience with an ancient statue of Venus is one of the first records of an art history analysis. Benvenuto incorporated his mention of the Venus statue into his commentary on Dante's Divine Comedy. In describing Purgatory, Dante writes of a stone wall that he approached: *To be marble white, and so adorned with sculptures, that not only Polycletus but nature's self, had there been put to shame*.[52] Benvenuto ends his commentary on Dante's verses with a note on the ancient statue of Venus which he saw in a house in Florence.[53] It is also worth mentioning Benvenuto's evaluation of the statue's beauty and his antiquarian skill – he claims to have learned that the work was attributed to a famous sculptor from the classical epoch, Polykleitos. He does not agree with this, however, citing the fact that Polykleitos worked in bronze. He knew this from Pliny's "Natural History." From the same source, he drew information claiming that marble statues were made by

---

[51] Boccaccio, Decameron, Paris, Bibl. Nat. MS ital. 482 (7260), fol. 4v. See Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, *Corpus der Italienischen Zeichnungen 1300-1450: Süd und Mittelitalien* (Berlin: Mann, 1968), fig. 190 on p. 135.

[52] Dante, *Divine Comedy*, Purgatorio, 10.31-33. English translation H. W. Longfellow.

[53] See Benvenuto da Imola, *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*, 3. ed. William Warren Vernon and Giacomo Filippo Lacaita (Florence: G. Barbera, 1887), Canto X, 279-280. Cf. Wiegartz, *Antike Bildwerke*, 35-38; Seiler, *Schönheit und Scham*, 491-492.

Praxiteles, whose beautiful statue of Venus drew viewers from afar to view it in Cnidus.

Benvenuto did not determine the identity of the ancient statue that he saw in Florence based only on literature but also from his knowledge of ancient visual tradition. Neither Pliny nor Valerius Maximus, whom Benvenuto also knew, described the posture of Praxiteles' Cnidia. [54] The fact that she was covering her loins with one hand and had the other over her breasts is mentioned for the first time by Lucian in the 4th century, but Benvenuto could not have known this.[55] The fact that medieval Europe knew the visual type of Venus covering her loins with one hand and her breasts with the other is attested for instance by a drawing in the encyclopedia of Hrabanus Maurus, which was made after a 10th century model in 1023 in the Abbey of Montecassino, which at the time was an important center of the renewal of ancient grandeur.[56]

Benvenuto writes of the Florentine statue of Venus exclusively as a work of art, making no mention whatsoever of its negative magical power, which played an important role in the history of the Siena statue. We cannot rule out the fact that Benvenuto fabricated the idea that the statue was attributed to Polykleitos only so he could refute the fact later. Perhaps he saw no statue of Aphrodite and merely created his antiquarian commentary in the form of a story about a personal experience to make a greater impression on readers. Nonetheless, it is likely that some private collection of ancient statues existed in Florence. A programmatic return to ancient artistic tradition began in this city at the end of the 14th century and could not have happened without the presence of authentic works of art. From 1391 to 1397, an echo of the statue of the naked Venus appeared in the sculptural decoration of the Florence Cathedral among the reliefs on the Porta della Mandorla, coincidentally the same type of statue seen by Benvenuto da Imola.[57]

Renewed interest in antiquity was the result of the concurrence of many tendencies, including those political. In the 14th century, Francesco Petrarca and Giovanni Boccaccio built upon the work of Dante. Contrary to medieval scholastics, Petrarca placed emphasis on reason, but also on beauty, which he understood as the main tool to finding God, which became one of the primary attributes of Italian Renaissance culture. However, Giovanni Boccaccio had a much greater impact on the subsequent development of the visual arts and was the first to return to the ancient theory that the primary task of art is to imitate nature, by which he set the theoretical foundations for a depiction of the human body that would correspond to visual experience. Through this epochal act, Boccaccio rehabilitated ancient statues and called upon visual artists to follow this model and strive towards a faithful depiction of the naked body. His "Genealogy of the Pagan Gods" from 1371 (published in 1472) had a fundamental impact on the reception of ancient mythology in the visual arts.

---

[54] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 36.6; Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, 8.11.11, ext. 3.

[55] Lucian, *Amores*, 13. See Irene Fantappiè, "Rewriting, Re-figuring: Pietro Aretino's Transformations of Classical Literature," in *Renaissance Rewritings*, eds.Helmut Pfeiffer. et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 56-57.

[56] Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*, 15, 6. MS. Montecassino, Archivio dell'Abazzia Cod. Casin. 132, p. 398.

[57] See Nikolaus Himmelmann, *Ideale Nacktheit* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 1985), fig. 27.

Until the mid-16th century, it remained the primary source of education on ancient mythology and also an inspiration to sculptors and painters.

4. FAILED RETURN. 15th to 16th Century

Collectors of statues of Venus

As Jane C. Long has recently emphasized, *there was no need to revive Venus in the fifteenth century, for she had never died. Her status as a pagan goddess, her ties to erotic pleasure, even her ideal nude form survived throughout the Middle Ages. It is absolutely true that Venus, as a pagan goddess of sexuality, was frequently reviled in medieval literature and art. It is also true that she was sometimes enjoyed.*[1] Even the collection of ancient statues, which is considered to be a phenomenon specific to the Italian Renaissance, had its medieval precursors.[2] Ancient statues must have been systematically collected in Western European workshops since the 12th century. This is the only way to explain their numerous echoes in the work of the period.[3] Collections of the first sculptors of the Florentine Renaissance, Ghiberti and Donatello, included ancient statues as models for their own work, which was heavily inspired by antiquity.[4] In the 1480s, Lorenzo dei Medici installed a collection of statues in the garden of the San Marco Church in Florence, which became an informal center of artistic education for sculptors and painters working for the Medici clan.[5] Rome naturally offered the ideal conditions in which to become acquainted with ancient sculptures, and therefore both Ghiberti and Donatello set off for the city in search of ancient sculptures.[6]

The interest in ancient sculptures and their inaccessibility is colorfully described by Manuel Chrysolaras, a Byzantine scholar operating in Western Europe. During his stay in Rome in 1411-1412, he wrote a letter to his relative, Demetrios Chrysolaras: *Can you believe of me that I am wandering about this city of Rome, swivelling my eyes this way and that like some boorish gallant, clambering up palace walls, even up to their windows, on the chance of seeing something of the beauties inside? … I am doing all this in the hope of finding in these places beauty not in living bodies but in stones, marbles and images. These are the things that men take pleasure in. Many people would willingly have given many living and faultless horses to have one stone horse by Phidias or Praxiteles, even if this happened to be broken or mutilated. And the beauties of statues and paintings are not an unworthy thing to behold; rather they indicate a certain nobility in the intellect that admires them. It is looking at the beauties of women that is licentious and base.*[7] Admiration for a statue of a naked

---

[1] Jane C Long, "The Survival and Reception of the Classical Nude. Venus in the Middle Ages," in *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art*, ed. Sherry Lindquist (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 47-64.

[2] Cf., for example, Kathleen Wren Christian, *Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

[3] Cf. Laurence Terrier Aliferis, *L'imitation de l'antiquité dans l'art médiéval (1180-1230)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

[4] For Donatello cf. Michael Greenhalgh, *Donatello and his Sources* (London: Duckworth, 1982). For Ghiberti cf. Marylin Aronberg Lavin, *Artists' Art in the Renaissance* (London: Pindar, 2009), 26-29.

[5] See Caroline Elam, "Lorenzo de'Medici Sculpture Garden," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 36, no. 1-2 (1992), 41-84.

[6] See Antonio Manetti, *Vita di Filippo Brunelleschi*, ed. Carlachiara Perrone (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1992), 63-68; Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de'più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed archittettori*, *Firenze 1568*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, vol. 1-9 (Florence: Sansoni, 1878-1885), vol. 2, 337-338.

[7] See Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca* 46 (Paris: Garnier,1866), 81-82 (column 57-60). Cf. Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1971), 81-82.

woman is not a sin, but a virtue, as the depicted nakedness brings the joy of cognition, Chrysolaras claims while referring to Aristoteles.[8] Italian humanist Cencio de'Rustici expressed himself in a similar spirit in a letter from 1416. In it, he condemns the destruction of ancient statues and explicitly mentions statues of Venus amongst them, the study of which is in his words not contradictory to the Christian faith.[9] Both letters clearly show that the opinion claiming that admiration of ancient statues of the naked Venus was at odds with the Christian faith was still very strong.

In the elite Roman society of the time, however, everything was subordinated to the desire to increase the social prestige. Collections of ancient statues could be used to demonstrate the antiquity of one's lineage reaching back to ancient Rome. In this way, merchants and landowners could stylize themselves into the descendants of the ancient Romans and thus legitimize their present political ambitions. The hitherto ignored fragments of ancient statues, which often lacked heads or arms, now made their owners out to be the chosen restorers of Rome's lost magnificence.[10] This new custom may have been the subject of ridicule, as is seen in Poggio Bracciolini's frequently cited passage from "De nobilitate" (On Nobility), which he wrote in 1440. Nicolò Niccoli and Lorenzo de' Medici, brother of Cosimo il Vecchio, visited Poggio's garden past the walls of Rome in which he kept ancient statues. The guests found it inappropriate and Lorenzo commented on this derisively: *Our host has read about that ancient custom of adorning houses, villas, gardens, porticoes, and gymnasia with signa (images) and paintings and statues of ancestors to glorify their families, and since he has no images of his ancestors he has ennobled this place with these little broken bits of marble, so glory shall remain to his posterity through the nobility of these things*.[11] It is worth mentioning, however, that Lorenzo does not doubt the aesthetic perfection and value of the ancient statue fragments.

After the mid-15th century, a half a century after the return of the papal court to Rome, the city once again became a world-renown metropolis and established itself as the center of a new artistic culture inspired by classical antiquity.[12] The residences of prominent Roman families opened to everyone who wished to see ancient statues and reliefs. These works of art were exhibited in Roman residences as they were found – their ostentatiously random placement in the courtyard or garden of a palace demonstrated that they were authentic finds that had occurred recently on the site. The pope made the greatest claim to ancient heritage, as he stylized himself into the role of the direct successor to the ancient emperors. As proof of this uninterrupted continuity, ancient artistic objects were displayed throughout the whole Middle Ages in front of the pope's residence in the Lateran.[13] Pope Paul II (1464–1471) gathered a

---

[8] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b.

[9] See Ludwig Bertalot, *Studien zum italienischen und deutschen Humanismus*, 2, ed. Paul Oscar Kristeller (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1975), 147.

[10] See Kathleen Wren Christian, "Architecture and Antique Sculpture in Early Modern Rome," in *Renaissance and Baroque Architecture* (The Companions to the History of Architecture, Volume I), ed. Alina Payne (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 4-5.

[11] See Poggio Bracciolini, *Opera omnia, 1. Scripta in editione Basilensi anno 1538 collata* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1964), 65. English translation: Elam, *Lorenzo de'Medici Sculpture Garden*, 65.

[12] Cf. Massimo Miglio, "Roma dopo Avignone: La rinascità politica dell'antico," *Memoria del antico nell'arte italiana, 1. L'uso dei classici.* ed. Salvatore Settis (Turin: Einaudi, 1984), 74-111.

[13] Cf. Ingo Herklotz, "Der Campus lateranensis im Mittelalter," *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 22 (1985), 1-43.

massive collection of ancient art objects in his residence in the center of Rome in what would later be Palazzo Venezia, the palace itself was the first modern *all'antica* structure in Rome. Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) had ancient bronze statues from the papal residence in the Lateran exhibited in the Roman Capitolium as a gift to the Roman people. A truly groundbreaking moment in this context came during the time of Pope Julius II at the beginning of the 16th century. In 1505-1506, Bramante connected a courtyard, the "Cortile del Belvedere," to the papal villa on the highest point of the Vatican complex, called the Belvedere.[14] Visitors could enter this courtyard without having to walk through the papal residence, as Bramante built external stairways in order to make the statue collections accessible. To this day, visitors can still climb the stairs and reach the eastern corner of "Il cortile ottagono," as this part of the Vatican museums is called today.

It was known from Latin literature that the villa was a place especially suitable for spiritual development, which in turn was to be fostered by appropriately chosen statues. In his letters, Cicero wrote about where he planned to place Greek originals in his villa, pointing to the fact that they were in some way incorporated into the architecture.[15] Julius II intensified the effect of his ancient collection not only via the careful selection of the exhibited works, but also through ingenious staging. The "Cortile del Belvedere" was the first monumental architecture built especially for the public exhibition of ancient statues, which were organized within it in 1506-1511 according to a preconceived ideological concept. The spacious square-shaped courtyard included alcoves located in the corners and also in the middle of each of the four walls. The courtyard was annexed onto the back wall of the villa, and the most important façade was thus in the south, opposite the doors that led from the villa out into the courtyard. For this reason, the most prominent ancient statues from the papal collection were exhibited on this side of the courtyard.

The appearance of the courtyard was recorded in a drawing from 1532-1533 by Maarten Van Heemskerck, who also documented other prominent Roman collections of ancient statues in a similar manner.[16] A group statue of the Tiber and Nile stood at the center of the courtyard. In the middle of the southern façade was an alcove with a group sculpture depicting Laocoön and his sons, which referred to the destruction of Troy, as Roman history begins with the escape of the great Trojan Aeneas. In the alcove in the eastern corner of the southern façade was a statue of Apollo, a reminder of the Vatican's connection to the ancient Temple of Apollo, which was located on these premises. In the western corner of this façade was the alcove with a statue of the half-naked Venus Felix, which embodied the mother of Aeneas, the forefather of the Roman nation and imperial dynasty. Giuliano della Rovere, who as the Pope allegedly adopted the name Julius after Julius Caesar, presented himself to the public via the Cortile del Belvedere as the legitimate successor of the ancient emperors.

---

[14] See Christian, *Empire without End*, 265-275.

[15] Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 1.8; 1.9. We do not know what the words "xystus" and "gymnasium" meant to Renaissance readers.

[16] London, The British Museum 1946-7-13639. Cf. Arthur J. DiFuria, *Maarten van Heemskerck's Rome: Antiquity, Memory, and the Cult of Ruins* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

45. Roman woman as Venus (Venus Felix), h. 214 cm, ancient Roman marble group sculpture, 180-200.

The sculptural group of the goddess with Amor known as the Venus Felix belongs to the aforementioned sculptural series of Roman women in the form of Venus (**45**). It was found in Rome at the end of the 15th century and exhibited in the Cortile del Belvedere in 1509.[17] Amor is reaching up towards an object that the goddess had originally held in her raised left hand. On the pedestal is the inscription "VENERI FELICI SACRUM", making it clear who the statue represented.[18] The fame of this group statue is evident in the fact that Pier Jacopo Alari de Bonacolsi (known as Antico)

---

[17] Phyllis Pray Bober and Ruth Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources*, Second edition (Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2010), no. 16, p. 66-67.

[18] Aldrovandi interpreted it as the goddess coming out of her bath: Aldrovandi, *Delle statue*, 120: "uscita dal bagno."

created a statuette based on it before it was exhibited in the Cortile del Belvedere.[19] The artist worked for the Mantuan court, and his Venus was dedicated to Mantuan Bishop Ludovico Gonzaga. The goddess is depicted without Amor; Antico reversed the drapery, replaced the diadem with an Isis knot, and changed the expression of the face, replacing the melancholy of the original with concentration. While both figures are looking at the object that Venus is holding on the original group of sculptures and ignoring the viewers, Antico's Venus is not only looking directly at them, she is also reaching out to them with her left hand. Similarly to the ancient Roman period, "copies" were always a new interpretation of the original in early modern Europe. Antico created the model of the statuette around 1496, and the actual statuette was cast in 1510, making it the first ever miniaturized copy of an ancient statue of Venus. Antico's statuette of Venus stands on a wooden pedestal into which gold coins were embedded to increase its value, although this was evidently not necessary; a number of replicas of the statue originate in the early 16th century.[20]

Venus's special position in the papal collections is evidenced by the fact that the statue of Venus Felix was joined in 1536 by the statue known as the Standing Venus (**13**), which was placed in the middle of the western wall.[21] In 1539, a wood engraving of it appeared as the frontispiece for a poem by Eurialo d'Ascoli, which begins with the verse: *Venus, mother of all creation*.[22] The text was part of a three-poem collection celebrating the statue in the Cortile del Belvedere; the first was about the sculptural group of Laocoön, the second about the statue of Venus, and the third about the statue of Apollo. Sometime between 1538 and 1571, the statue in the alcove was drawn by Francisco da Holanda and included his inscription "Venus Exiting the Bath." [23] There was evidently great interest in the statue among artists, as it was also drawn by Girolamo da Carpi sometime between 1549 and 1553.[24]

During the period of Clement VII (1523–1534), the so-called Venus Victrix was found in Rome, Roman version of the Hellenistic original. [25] This was a version of the Cnidia that is characterized by the fact that Venus is holding an unfolded cloak behind her, creating a background for the bottom portion of her body. This marble statue missing both arms and a head was placed in the Vatican Belvedere. It was evidently not in the Cortile del Belvedere, but another section of the pope's villa. In any case, it was the third naked Venus in the papal villa next to the Standing Venus and Venus Felix, the model of which was Praxiteles's Cnidia. After the mid-16th century, the statue of Venus Victrix was incorporated into the Medici collection, where it was restored several times (**46**). After 1945, the statue was exhibited in Florence's Uffizi

---

[19] H. 29,8 cm, Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer 5726. For Antico cf. Eleonora Luciano, *Antico. The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes* (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2011).

[20] Napoli, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte 10645; London, Victoria and Albert Museum A.96-1910.

[21] Aldrovandi, *Delle statue*, 120: "In un'altra capella e Venere tutta ignuda."

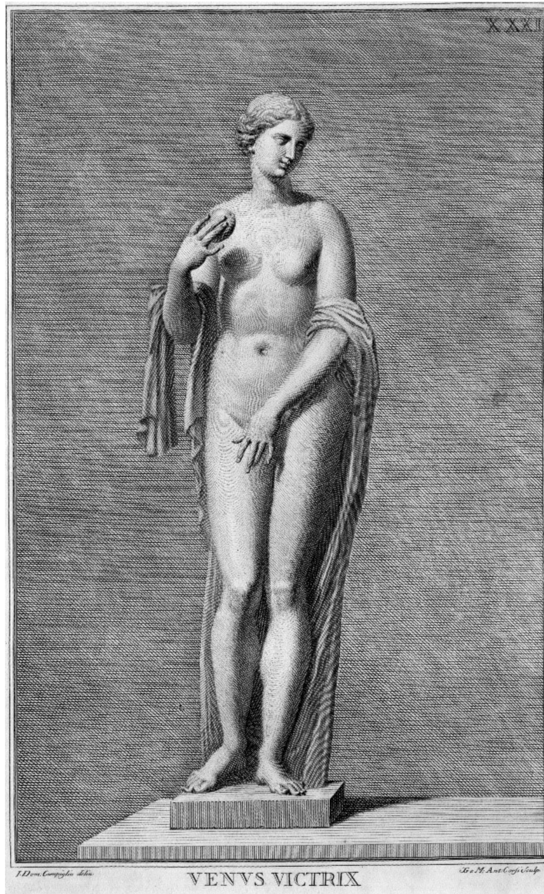
[22] Eurialo d'Ascoli, *Stanze d'Eurialo d'Ascoli sopra le statue di Laocoonte, di Venere, et d'Apollo* (Rome: Dorico, 1539), 51r.

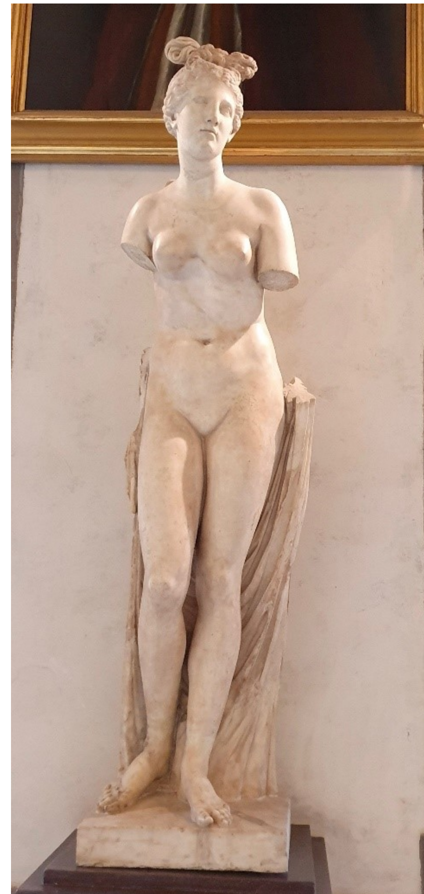
[23] Real Monasterio El Escorial 28-1-20 (Antigualhas), fol. 31r. See Sylvie Deswarte-Rosa, "Francisco de Holanda et le Cortile di Belvedere" in *Il Cortile delle statue. Der Statuenhof des Belvedere im Vatikan*, ed. Matthias Winner et al. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998), 404-406.

[24] Philadelphia, Rosenbach Museum & Library. Rosenbach Album R 67. Cf. Norman W. Canedy, *The Roman Sketchbook of Girolamo da Carpi* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1976).

[25] See Claudia Conforti et al., ed., *Vasari, gli Uffizi e il Duca* (Florence: Giunti, 2011), cat. 13,2.

without arms but with a head that was from the ancient period but taken from another statue (**47**).[26]





46 (left). Venus Victrix after the 17th century restoration, engraving 1734.
47 (right). Venus Victrix today, The Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.

At the time, Venus Victrix was a very famous statue, which was according to Baccio Bandinelli *a very beautiful Venus esteemed like that of Phidias*.[27] The fame of this statue was spread by a whole score of drawings, engravings and copies. In 1530-1534, Bandinelli acquired a plaster cast of this statue to which he added a head but no arms; he then had the work cast in bronze in this only partially reconstructed state. Bandinelli dedicated the bronze statue sometime before 1536 to Emperor Charles V, who in turn gave it to his sister Mary of Hungary. In the Spanish Netherlands, the Habsburg regent placed the statue in her castle in Binche, south of Brussels, which was meant to compete with the residences of the French king, in which copies of ancient statues were an important element of his presentation as a sovereign.[28] The statue of Venus was later taken from Binche and exhibited at the end of the 16th century in the park of the Spanish king in Aranjuez, where it was also renamed to the biblical "Eve." The fragmentary state of the goddess without arms, which guaranteed the authenticity of

[26] Cf. Arnold Nesselrath, "The Venus Belvedere: An Episode in Restoration," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 205-214.
[27] See Paola Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, 1-9 (Einaudi, Torino 1971- 1979), vol. 6, 1374.
[28] Cf. Noelia Garcia Pérez, ed., *Mary of Hungary, Renaissance Patron and Collector: Gender, Art and Culture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

the ancient work of art, had one additional advantage – it allowed the shapes of the female body to stand out to their full extent. This was evidently the reason they were added on in 1840 in order to give the statue a more chaste impression.[29]

For Christian Europe, the primary problem with ancient statues was their nakedness. This was, however, their primary attribute, which presented a seemingly unsolvable problem. The exhibiting of naked Venuses in the papal residence was therefore an unprecedented step, which evoked an immediate and massive response. Giovanni Evangelista Fausto Maddaleni, court poet of Julius II's successor Pope Leo X, composed a celebratory poem in which the poet admires the artistic mastership of the depiction of the naked female body in the Venus Felix.[30] On the occasion of Pope Leo X's inauguration in 1513, a festive parade was organized in Rome, which was an evocation of the ancient triumphal procession intended to celebrate the new pope from the Medici clan and the prosperity that his reign would bring.[31] Goldsmith Antonio di San Marco had a statue of Venus exhibited over his workshop and under it placed a Latin inscription: *Mars reigned, Pallas reigns, I, Venus, shall always be*.[32] The ancient statue of Venus was also incorporated into the decoration of one of the arches of triumph that were built for this occasion along the route of the procession.[33]

The Vatican Cortile del Belvedere was immediately imitated after its construction. A courtyard with ancient sculptures was built by Bishop Andrea della Valle probably in 1508 in the Palazzo della Valle di Mezzo on Via papale (today's Corso Vittorio Emmanuele).[34] Hermann Vischer recorded the appearance of the courtyard in 1515-1516.[35] There were two alcoves in the upper section of the courtyard's façade wall; on the left was Ganymedes and on the right was Venus with a dolphin, which we know from the drawing by Francisco da Hollanda.[36] At her feet, the dolphin bites into an octopus. This statue made its way to the Medici collection in 1584, and has been in the Pitti Palace in Florence since 1788.[37] Vischer's drawing records only a generally naked woman and a male figure, but the arrangement corresponds to Aldrovandi's description published in 1556.[38] Another "magnet" for admirers of ancient sculptures

---

[29] Cf. Stefano Pierguidi, "Baccio Bandinelli, Carlo V e una nuova ipotesi sulla Venere bronzea del Prado," *Boletín del Museo del Prado* 30 (2012): 34-49, 138-148.

[30] Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Cart. 4. F. Vat 3351, fol. 108. Cf. Hubert Janitschek, "Ein Hofpoet Leo's X. über Künstler und Kunstwerke," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 3 (1880): 56.

[31] Giovan Giacomo Penni, *Croniche delle magnifiche et honorate Pompe fatte in Roma per la creatione et incoronatione di Papa Leone X* (Roma: Magistro Marcello Silber 1513). See Guglielmo Roscoe, *Vita e pontifico di Leone X*, vol. V (Milan: Sonzogno, 1817), 192-231.

[32] Roscoe, *Vita e pontifico*, 212.

[33] Roscoe, *Vita e pontifico*, 223.

[34] Christian, *Empire without End*, 384-385

[35] Paris, Louvre, Cabinet des dessins 19051r. Cf. Astrid Lang, *Die frühneuzeitliche Architekturzeichnung als Medium intra- und interkultureller Kommunikation. Entwurfs- und Repräsentationskonventionen nördlich der Alpen und ihre Bedeutung für den Kulturtransfer um 1500 am Beispiel der Architekturzeichnungen von Hermann Vischer d.J.* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2012), 62-64, pl. VII.

[36] El Escorial, Biblioteca Reale 28-1-20 fol. 28v. Cf. Francesco di Hollanda, *Os desenhos das Antigualhas que vió Francisco d'Ollanda Pintor Portugués 1539-1540* (Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1940).

[37] H. 174 cm, Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Pitti OdA, 1911, no. 691. Cf. Gabriella Capecchi et al., eds., *Palazzo Pitti: La reggia rivelata* (Florence: Giunti, 2003), no. 172, p. 644-645.

[38] Ulisse Aldrovandi, "Delle statue antiche, che per tutta Roma, in diversi luoghi e case si veggono," in *Le antichità de la città di Roma*, ed. Lucio Mauro, (Venice: Giordano Ziletti, 1556), 214 (revised edition

was the courtyard of the Sassi Palace near Castel Sant'Angelo, the back wall of which had been dominated since at least 1531 by a Venus statue of the Louvre type (**10**). In 1546, the collection was purchased by Ottavio Farnese and today the statues, including the one of Venus, are located in the archeological museum in Naples and therefore the sculptural type to which it belongs is called Louvre-Naples.[39] The courtyard was drawn by Maarten van Heemskerck in 1532-1537; the alcove with Venus is on the left side of the back wall.[40] On the image of St. Lucas painting the Virgin Mary, which van Heemskerk painted around 1550, the painter used an almost exact copy of his drawing of the Sassi Palace with the Venus statue in an alcove for the painting's background. He evidently intended to place this scene into the house of Christ's era, to which a statue of Venus belonged according to concepts of the time.[41]

In 1550, Ulisse Aldrovandi saw an exemplar (which is now lost) of an ancient statue of Venus in the home of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi. He wrote that it was such a beautiful body that a person would have believed it to be the "Venus from Cnidus."[42] Praxiteles's statue of the naked Venus was the most famous work of ancient sculpture, and it was thus the ambition of each collector to have a piece in his collection that could be presented as a potential echo of Praxiteles's work. However, Renaissance artists knew nothing in detail about what Cnidia looked like, which paradoxically posed no threat to references to her in literary production of the time and, on the contrary, caused them to become more frequent.[43] Praxiteles's work was identified among ancient Roman versions based on comparison with ancient coins minted in Cnidus as late as the 18th century.[44]

The rich decoration of the villa and adjacent terraced gardens that Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este had constructed in 1560 in Tivoli included dozens of ancient sculptures, among which were also Venuses. The only Venus that has been preserved from the original furnishings of the villa was created in the 16th century and is a marble group statue of the goddess and Amor on a dolphin by Gugliemo della Porta from roughly 1572, which is located today in Vienna.[45] We know of the statues of Venus from the Villa d'Este from graphics and inventories from the villa, the first of which

---

was published in 1562). For Aldrovandi cf. Katherine M. Bentz, "Ulisse Aldrovandi, Antiquities, and the Roman Inquisition," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 43 (2012), 963-983.

[39] Naples, Archaeological museum 5997. Cf. Carlo Gasparri, ed., *Le sculture Farnese, vol. 1: Le sculture ideali* (Milano: Electa, 2009), no. 25.

[40] Berlin, SMB-PK, Kupferstichkabinett KdZ 2783.

[41] Rennes, Musée des Beaux Arts 8016r. Cf. Rainald Grosshans, *Maerten van Heemskerck. Die Gemälde* (Berlin: Horst Boettcher, 1980), pl. VI, fig. 108.

[42] Aldrovandi, *Delle statue antiche*, 206.

[43] See Maurice Brock, "L'anecdote de Pline sur l'Aphrodite de Cnide dans quattre lettres de Bembo à Dolce," in *Le mythe de l'art antique,* ed. Emmanuelle Hénin and Valérie Naas (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018), 346-364; Lise Wajeman, "Fictions comiques ou théories sérieuses? Les réincarnations de l'Aphrodite de Cnide au XVIe siècle dans quelques récits et traités," in Hénin and Naas, *Le mythe de l'art antique*, 365-376.

[44] See Géraud de La Chau, *Dissertation sur les attributs de Vénus* (Paris: de Prault, 1776), 70–71; Christian Gottlob Heyne, *Sammlung Antiquarische Aufsätze* 1 (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1778), 123. Cf. also Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit*, 17.

[45] Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum 7520. Cf. Manfred Leithe-Jasper, "Venus Este: Eine Marmorskulptur aus dem Umkreis des Guglielmo della Porta," *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 4-5 (2002-2003): 136-163.

was created after the death of the villa's architect in 1572.[46] Record of the fountain of Venus next to the water organ also comes from this same year.[47] However, the ancient statue exhibited here originally represented the Nymph of the Spring, proof of which is seen in the vessel that supported her.[48] The next ancient statue of the reclining Nymph was exhibited in the fountain of Venus in the villa's interior, which we also know from an engraving from the 17th century.[49] Only one statue of these reclining Nymphs considered to be Venus has been preserved in the Villa d'Este, and was since the very beginning located in the villa's courtyard in an important spot on the central line of the whole complex.[50] Deceased Roman women were depicted as Venuses on sarcophagi. The Nymphs differed from Venuses not only in the fact that they were leaning on a vessel, but also the fact that they were not reclining in a bed, but in a natural frame. These ancient statues of sleeping Nymphs were often painted by Renaissance artists.[51] They may have served as a model for Italian paintings of a similarly depicted Venus, a topic we will return to below.

Galleries of ancient statues were built outside Rome as well, the most famous of which was the "Salla delle Nicchie" built in Florence's Pitti Palace. This central *piano nobile* hall of the Medici residence was reconstructed by Bartolommeo Ammannati in 1561.[52] He had ten alcoves carved into the walls of the rectangular hall, six of which faced the window and were brightly lit. He had the alcoves lined with black marble in order for the white marble statues to stand out against the background. He placed 26 of the best ancient statues of the Medici collection, including several Venuses, in the alcoves, above the doors, and on the floor of the "Salla delle Nicchie." Since 1568, an additional copy of Praxiteles's Cnidia (which was also in the Medici collections) was exhibited here.[53]

Domenico Grimani, patriarch of Aquilea, created the collection of ancient statues during his stay in Rome. This collection also had to include a Venus, which was represented by a small sculptural group with the goddess and Amor standing on a dolphin.[54] After his death in 1523, his will stated that the collection be placed in the ownership of the Venetian Republic and was situated in the Doge's Palace there.[55]

---

[46] See Serafina Giannetti, *La collezione delle statue antiche della villa d'Este a Tivoli. Storia d'une dispersione* (Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2019), no. 30 and 85.

[47] Giovanni Francesco Venturini, etching, 1653-1691. Le fontane del giardino Estense in Tivoli, no. 22. Cf. Giannetti, *La collezione delle statue*, no. 83.

[48] Cf. Emanuela Fabbricotti, "Ninfe dormienti. Tentativo di classificazione," *Studi Miscellanei. Seminario di archeologia e storia dell'arte greca e romana dell'Università di Roma* 22 (1976): 65-71; id., "Ninfe dormienti: Addendum," *Quaderni dell'Istituto di archeologia e storia antica. Università di Chieti* 1 (1980), 37-41.

[49] Giovanni Francesco Venturini, Le fontane del giardino Estense in Tivoli,no. 6: "Fontana di Venere in una delle camere ultime del palazzo."Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum BI-1893-A39-85. Cf. Giannetti, *La collezione delle statue*, no. 26.

[50] The statue was incorporated into the fountain, which was created after a design by Raffaello Sangallo in 1569, cf. Giannetti, *La collezione delle statue*, no. 87.

[51] Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, no. 62.

[52] See Capecchi, *Palazzo Pitti*, 111-137.

[53] Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria delle Statue, Inv. Pitti, OdA, 1911 no. 670, h. 199 cm.; Capecchi, *Palazzo Pitti*, p. 576 no. 124.

[54] Venezia, Museo archeologico nazionale 168. Cf. Irene Favaretto et al. (eds.): *Museo archeologico nazionale Venezia*. Mondadori Electa, Milano 2004, II no. 19.

[55] See Gustavo Traversali, *La statuaria ellenistica del Museo Archeologico di Venezia* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1986), no. 48.

Giovanni Grimani, who was also a patriarch of Aquilea, continued on in his uncle's activity. He created a massive collection of ancient statues in his Venetian palace and made it accessible to the public in a hall built for this very purpose, the Tribuna, drawing inspiration for its architecture from the Roman Pantheon. In his will, Giovanni Grimani left the collection to the Venetian Republic on the condition that it be made accessible to the public together with the statue collection dedicated to the republic by his uncle.[56] An exhibition was held in the Grimani Palace entitled "Domus Grimani, 1594-2019", during which the Tribuna was arranged in the same way that visitors saw it in the 1560s and 1570s when Giovanni Grimani was filling it with ancient statues (**48**).[57]

48. The Tribuna of the Palazzo Grimani in Venice, a reconstruction of the placement of ancient statues in the 1560s-70s.

During Giovanni Grimani's era, five statues dominated the Tribuna and formed the backbone of the narrative into which he placed the ancient statues. Upon entering the Tribuna, a visitor could see a statue of Venus in the center of the left wall. It was

[56] In the vestibule of Vincenzo Scamozzi's Marciana Library, the architect placed statues into an architectonic context inspired by the Salle della Tribuna in the Grimani Palace in which the statues are now displayed, cf. Favaretto, *Museo archeologico nazionale Venezia*, 11-19.

[57] Cf. Toto Bergamo Rossi and Daniele Ferrara, *Domus Grimani 1594-2019: The Collection of Classical Sculptures* (Venice: Marsilio, 2019).

not the above-mentioned exemplar, but the Capitoline-type sculpture of Venus.[58] Venus's counterpart was a statue of Bacchus in the center of the opposite wall. Directly opposite the entrance in the center of the southern wall was a statue of an old Silenus. In the middle of the hall was a statue of Amor pulling back his bow; above him hovered Zeus's eagle abducting Ganymedes. The ideological program of the Tribuna thus stemmed from the traditional link between Venus and Bacchus, which is illustrated by the above quoted Terence's verse: *When Ceres and when Liber fail, Venus is cold*.[59] The exhibited statues called upon viewers to enjoy the delights of life while there was still time to do so, and the statue of the old Silenus served as a reminder.

As was mentioned above, French King Francis I also had himself surrounded by ancient statues according to the pope's model and for similar reasons. In 1530, he acquired the aforementioned statue, which is now in the Louvre (and according to which the Louvre-Naples sculpture type is named), for his residence in Amboise.[60] Just as Roman origin was absolutely crucial to the statues in the Cortile del Belvedere, this Venus's alleged origin in Fréjus was equally important, as it was meant to heighten its political significance. In reality, the statue was found somewhere in the surrounding areas of Naples. However, the unfounded theory of the statue's French origin was written on the plaque of the statue's pedestal in the Louvre until the end of the 20th century despite the fact that Salomon Reinach had already refuted this claim in the beginning of the same century.[61] The statue of the Venus "of Fréjus" is significant in that it was the first exemplar in Francis I's collection of ancient statues, which were intended to link the sovereign with ancient Roman emperors (and France with the Roman Empire), legitimizing French political ambitions. Proof of the enormous significance the statue represented for the French is found in the unique literary response it evoked. A total of 29 glorifying epigrams on the statue have been preserved in French, Latin and even Greek.[62] These texts were inspired by ancient epigrams to Aphrodite of Cnidus, but some put the statue into the French geographical context or the context of French politics. In these poems, Francis I is Paris or even Venus's lover Mars. Venus prophesizes that Francis I will subjugate Italy and become the successor of the ancient Roman emperors. The apple in the goddess's hand has become a globe, the symbol of world rule, which the ancient goddess hands over to the king of France.[63]

Copies held great importance in the reception of ancient statues in Renaissance Europe, as they were able to replace originals that were difficult to acquire outside of Rome.[64] The first replica of an ancient statue of Venus at a scale of 1:1 was created in 1542 for the French king as a part of a larger collection of copies destined for the

---

[58] H.173 cm, Venezia, Museo archeologico 93. Cf. Traversali, *La statuaria ellenistica*, no. 5; Favaretto, *Museo archeologico nazionale Venezia*, no. II, 16.

[59] Cf. Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 2.23.60.

[60] Paris, Musée du Louvre Ma 525.

[61] See Salomon Reinach, "Quatre statues figurées sur la colonne Trajane," *Revue archéologique* 5, (1905), 400.

[62] Cf. Perrine Galand-Hallyn, "Autour de la Vénus Amboise (1530). Une refloraison du genre de l'ekphrasis," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 61, no. 2 (1999): 345-374.

[63] Throughout Francis I's life, the statue was situated in Amboise. In the 17th century, it was located in Tuilleries, Paris and then transferred to Versailles. It has been in the collections of the Louvre since 1802.

[64] Cf. Bertrand Jestaz, "Les premières copies d'antique," in *D'après l'antique,* ed. Jean Pierre Cuzin et al., eds., (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000), 45-52.

chateau in Fontainebleau.[65] The French king thus not only rose to the same level as the pope, but surpassed him with his collection, as bronze statues were considered to be more valuable than stone ones. During his two visits to the Vatican's Cortile del Belvedere in 1540 and 1545, Primatticcio made plaster casts of marble statues, among which was the so-called Standing Venus (**13**). These casts were used in Fontainebleau to create bronze statues. The Standing Venus and three other statues were exhibited in 1570 – 1646 in the alcoves of Cour de la Fontaine's façade.[66] The replicas are in their original size but do not adhere exactly to the originals. Primaticcio righted the errors of the restorers, and in the Standing Venus's case he made a better reconstruction of the nose and right leg. At the same time, he left out modern additions in order to heighten the statues' impression of authenticity. This was, however, a detriment to the logic of the depicted action, as he left out the drapery and vessel for aromatic materials, which are ancient elements that can be found in all Renaissance drawings of this statue. Primaticcio's Venus is only holding the end of the drapery, making the statue look as if she were holding a handkerchief in her outstretched hand.

Drawings and Prints

Preserved sketch books show that artists often attempted to draw all the ancient statues they saw in Rome. Their drawings were then copied, and these reproductions of their sketchbooks and individual drawings subsequently became basic accessories for artistic workshops in all the main cultural centers of Western Europe. Prints based on these drawings greatly facilitated the dissemination of knowledge of ancient statues and testified to their popularity. A systematic analysis of these drawings and prints is being carried out by the project entitled "Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance."[67] Thanks to this database, we can create a highly accurate image of the reception of ancient statues of Venus in the Italian Renaissance. It shows that the ancient statue of Venus become an integral part of the European cultural horizon in 16th century.

Artists had been drawing ancient statues since the beginning of the 15th century, but perceived them as a means of understanding the anatomy of the human body in movement. Only at the end of this century did drawings begin to faithfully record ancient works of art exactly as they had been preserved, i.e. as fragments. This signalizes that ancient statues as such were the focus of these drawings. The goal of this chapter is to show that a whole repertoire of sculptural types used in antiquity to embody Venus was amassed in Rome and Florence in the 15th and 16th centuries. In addition, Renaissance artists expanded this repertoire; they added types used to represent Nymphs in antiquity but were reinterpreted as Venus in the Renaissance. In drawings and engravings, depictions of ancient Venus statues are sometimes modified

---

[65] H. 192 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, MR3277 (Fontainebleau, Château). Cf. Nicole Bensoussan, "From the French Galerie to the Italian garden: Sixteenth-century Displays of Primaticcio's Bronzes at Fontainebleau," *Journal of the History of Collections* 27, no. 2 (2015): 175–198.

[66] After 1646, the statues were shifted to the queen's garden, today there are copies on the façade of the Cour de la Fontaine.

[67] Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*; http://census.bbaw.de/.

in the spirit of the Renaissance concept, which has no basis in antiquity. This is a very important finding for our further investigation.

The ancient statues that Renaissance artists drew include those that we know to be echoes of Praxiteles's Cnidia. During his stay in Rome in 1431-1432, Pisanello was one of the first Renaissance artists to draw ancient statues, including several variations of Praxiteles's Cnidia.[68] A variation of this statue in reduced size with a dolphin in place of a vessel, which has been in Munich's Glyptothek since 1810, was located in the Roman collection of Cardinal Prospero Santacroce in the 16th century.[69] The oldest drawing after this fragment comes from the end of the 15th century. The inscription accompanying the drawing proves that it was not considered to be Venus; nonetheless, the author of the inscription appreciated the beauty of this depiction of the female body.[70] Sometime before 1503, the torso was drawn by an anonymous Umbrian artist.[71] While the torso has been partially completed in drawings from the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century, Pierre Jacques emphasizes the fragmentary nature in his drawing from the 1570s, which in the 16th century was a guarantee of authenticity.[72] Girolamo da Carpi drew another ancient variation of Praxiteles's Cnidia that has since been lost.[73]

In post-ancient Europe, the most widespread sculptural type depicted the naked goddess with her breasts covered by one hand and her loins with the other.[74] Perhaps the most famous ancient exemplar was the aforementioned Medici Venus, which was excavated in Rome around 1500 (**17**).[75] Painters Maarten de Vos and Pierre Jaques saw very a similar statue; however, the fact that they drew it without arms is problematic.[76] In his manuscript from 1559-1565, Pirro Ligorio writes about a statue with preserved arms, which were perhaps also found and connected to the statue sometime in the second half of the 16th century.[77] In the same period, Willem van

---

[68] See Monica Centanni, *Fantasmi dell'antico: La tradizione classica nel Rinascimento* 2. (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2017), 19.

[69] München, Glyptothek Gl. 237. Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, 65-66, no. 14.

[70] Holkham, Holkham Hall, MS. 701, fol. 34 v.

[71] Calenzano, Collection of L. Bertini. Umbrian Sketchbook fol. 8v, 9v. See Angerit Schmitt, "Römische Antikensammlungen im Spiegel eines Musterbuches der Renaissance," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 21 (1970): 122.

[72] Paris, BnF (CdE), Album de Pierre Jacques, F b, fol 14v. See Salomon Reinach, *L'album de Pierre Jacques, sculpteur de Reims, dessiné à Rome de 1572 à 1577*, 1-2 (Paris: Leroux, 1902), pl. 14bis.

[73] See Norman W. Canedy, *The Roman Sketchbook of Girolamo da Carpi* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1976), T 47, T 73.

[74] A Renaissance statuette that reproduced this sculptural type was made around 1500 (Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer 5693).

[75] The statue was purchased in 1575 from a collection by Gualtieri Ferdinando de' Medici, and was housed in the Villa Medici in Rome until 1677, when it was transferred to the Uffizi in Florence, cf. Dietrich Boschung, "Die Rezeption antiker Statuen als Diskurs: Das Beispiel der Venus Medici," in *Zentren und Wirkungsräume der Antikerezeption. Zur Bedeutung von Raum und Kommunikation für die neuzeitliche Transformation der griechisch-römischen Antike*, ed. Karhrin Schade et al. (Münster: Scriptorium, 2007), 165-176.

[76] Maarten de Vos, ca. 1560: Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet 1935, A 45 (De Vos Sketchbook) fol. 04 r. Pierre Jacques, 1572-1577: Paris, BnF, Album de Pierre Jacques fol. 40v, 41r, 41v.

[77] Pirro Ligorio, Napoli BNN Ms XII B3, fol. 170r-170v. Cf. Anna Schreurs, *Antikenbild und Kunstanschauungen des Pirro Ligorio (1513-1583)*. Atlas, 3. (Cologne: König, 2000), 255-258.

Tetrode, a Flemish sculptor working in Rome created a smaller copy of the Medici Venus with both arms.[78] Their placement visibly corresponds to a reconstruction from the 16th century, which was transformed in the 18th century into the form of the statue that we know today.[79] In 1584, the Medici residence in Rome added another two ancient statues to its Medici Venus that were of the same type. They all share the fact that the goddess's hair is falling onto her shoulders. However, the first is differentiated by the fact that Amor, not a dolphin, is sitting by her feet, and her head, although ancient, comes from a different statue.[80] The next Venus statue of this type, which depicts a dolphin biting into an octopus and is also housed today in the Uffizi in Florence, was discussed above in connection with the della Valle collection.[81] There was a whole score of other statues of Venus of this type in Rome in the 16th century.[82]

As mentioned above, Domenico Grimani's collection contained a small sculptural group with Venus and Amor standing on a dolphin.[83] Venus' cloak created the background of the bottom section of her body, by her right leg, the goddess has wrapped the cloak around the vessel and thrown the other end over her left arm. The torso of a similar Venus, which has since been lost, was drawn in Rome by Pierre Jacques.[84] The similar type of Venus statue is characterized by the goddess covering the lower part of her body as the Venus Felix in the Cortile del Belvedere (**45**). This type includes the so-called Mazarin Venus discovered in Rome around 1510, which today is housed in the Getty Museum (**49**).[85] Today, the statue has been completely restored, but the head comes from another ancient statue.[86] The first record of the existence of the Mazarin Venus is the engraving by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia from the time shortly after it was excavated (**50**). As was customary in the 15th century, the author placed the statue into the landscape as if it was truly the goddess herself. This is also the reason why there is no dolphin at her feet. After the mid-16th century, a group sculpture of the Venus Felix type appeared in the Farnese collection in Rome.[87] In this group sculpture, Amor is not looking at Venus, but staring straight forward; he

---

[78] H. 57 cm, 1559, Firenze, Ufizzi 1879no. 28. Cf. Conforti, *Vasari, gli Uffizi e il Duca*, 340-41, no. XII.14.

[79] Cf. Frits Scholten and Emile van Binnebeke, *Willem van Tetrode (c. 1525-1580). Guglielmo Fiammingo scultore* (Zwollw: Waanders, 2003).

[80] H. 180 cm, Firenze Uffizi 153. See Vasiliki Machaira, *Les groupes statuaires d'Aphrodite et d'Éros* (Athens: Université nationale et capodistriaque, Faculté de Philosophie, 1993), 67-68 no. 39. It was visible in the Villa Medici in Rome from 1584 to 1787. In 1596, Girolamo Franzini included it in his guide to ancient statues in Rome (Girolamo Franzini, *Icones Statuarum Antiquarum Urbis Romae* (Rome 1596), pl. F 14).

[81] Florencie, Palazzo Pitti, Pitti OdA, 1911,no. 691. When the statue was still in Rome, it was drawn by Amico Aspertini and later also by Francesco de Hollanda (London, The British Museum, Aspertini Sketchbook I 1898-11-23-3, fol. 03 r; Real Monasterio El Escorial, Francisco de Holanda Album 28-1-20, fol. 28v).

[82] For example Franzini, *Icones Statuarum Antiquarum,* pl. D 14 and F05.

[83] Venezia, Museo archeologico nazionale 168.

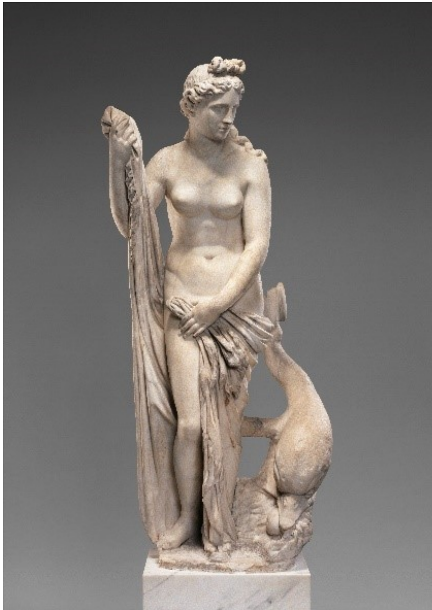
[84] Pierre Jacques, F b, 18 a, fol. 67v (detail). Cf. Reinach, *L'album de Pierre Jacques*, pl. 67bis.

[85] Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, 66, no. 15. The statue was named after the French cardinal who allegedly purchased it for his collection, a fact which is, however, improbable. The statue is reproduced with only slight changes in the statuette by Girolamo Campagna from the period around 1597 (London, Christies 5.7.2007).

[86] A Florentine drawing in Budapest documents the statue in the state in which it was found, i.e. without a head and right arm (Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum 2551).

[87] H. 124 cm, Naples, Museo nazionale 6300. Aldrovandi, *Delle statue antiche,* 158; Gasparri, *Le sculture Farnese*, 83-86, pl. 34,.

is depicted in a walking stance and holds a seashell before him with both hands. The statue was drawn in Rome in the 1570s by Pierre Jacques, who drew a similar half-naked Venus also without arms and a head from the garden of the Cesi family in Rome.[88]

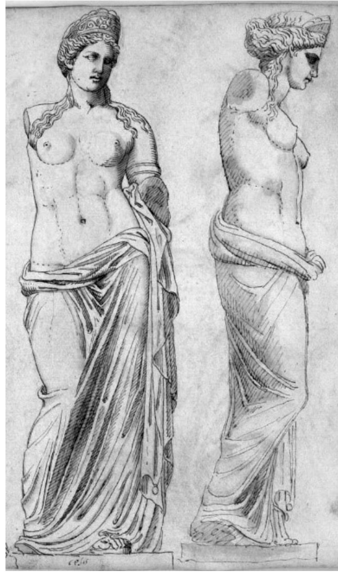


49 (left). Mazarin Venus, h. 184 cm, Roman marble version from the 2nd century AD of the Greek original from the 4th century BC.
50 (right). Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, engraving after the Mazarin Venus, ca. 1513.

The Cesi collection was one of the most prominent Roman collections that intentionally pointed to the family's origin in ancient Rome.[89] In the 16th century, the Cesi collection housed a half naked Venus, which was also drawn by Pierre Jacques (**51**). Just like its more well-known variation, Venus of Arles, this statue is also located in the Louvre in Paris (**52**).[90] Another statue of this type was housed in Ippolito d'Este's collection in the third quarter of the 16th century in his villa in Rome's Quirinal and is located today in Florence's Pitti Palace.[91] Venus's head is from the 16th century and her arms have been restored. After these additions, it appeared for the first time in 1555-1559 in a collection of engravings after ancient statues in Rome with the inscription "Venus Cypria."[92] Yet another statue of this type was seen by Aldrovandi around the

[88] Paris, BnF (CdE) F b, 18 a, reserve (Album de Pierre Jacques) fol. 54 v. Cf. Reinach, *L'album de Pierre Jacques*, p. 129 pl. 54bis. Paris, BnF (CdE), Album de Pierre Jacques, F b, 18 a, fol. 9v. Cf. Reinach, *L'album de Pierre Jacques*, pl. 9bis.
[89] Cf. Katherine M. Bentz, "The Afterlife of the Cesi Garden: Family Identity, Politics, and Memory in Early Modern Rome," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 72, No. 2 (June 2013): 134-165.
[90] Cf. Étienne Michon, "La réplique de la Vénus d'Arles du Musée du Louvre," *Revue Archéologique* 1 (1903), 39-43.
[91] H. 163 cm, Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Salla delle nicchie OdA, 1911no. 694. Capecchi, *Palazzo Pitti*, 648, no. 177.
[92] Giovanni Battista De'Cavalieri, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae,* 1-2 (Rome1585), fol. 35. Cf. Ashby 1920, 147.

mid-16th century in the studiolo of the Palazzo del Bufalo.[93] It is a small marble statue group, with Venus holding her clothing with her right hand while her left is lifted over Amor, who is riding on a dolphin and pouring water from an amphora.



51 (left). Pierre Jacques, drawing of the Cesi Venus, 1572-1577.
52 (right). Cesi Venus, h. 195 cm, Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.

In the Renaissance, Venus was often depicted sitting comfortably. The ancient statue of a sitting, half-naked woman with clothing wrapped around the lower half of her body is housed today in the Vatican's collections (**53**).[94] The drawing by Marcantonio Raimondi from around 1516 shows that the statue was found without its head, a whole right arm, a left arm from the elbow down and the left foot.[95] Nothing pointed to the fact that this statue depicted Venus, and its girlish figure was closer to that of a nymph. Nonetheless, she was already interpreted as Venus in the period when the first echoes of the work appear in Rome. This is evidenced in the decoration of the bathroom (stufetta) of Cardinal Bibbiena in the Vatican Palace.[96] Venus dominates its iconographic program and the Chiaramonti statue served as a model for the painting of Venus and Amor holding an arrow. The decoration was created in Raphael's workshop and, in addition to the wall painting, a drawing by Giulio Romano and graphics by Agostino Veneziano have also been preserved (**54**).

---

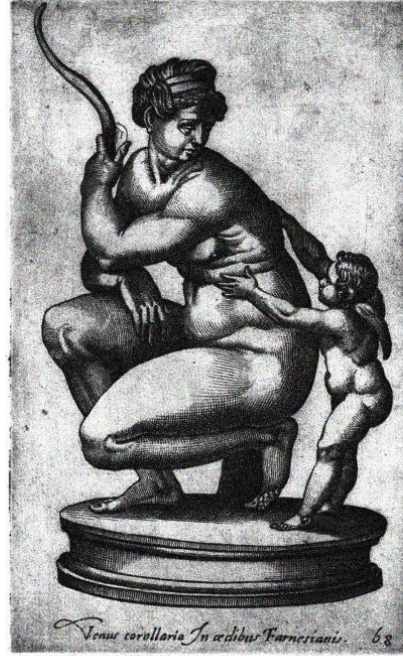
[93] Roma, Musei Capitolini 1836, Aldrovandi, *Delle statue antiche*, 287. See Henning Wrede,. *Der Antikengarten der del Bufalo bei der Fontana Trevi*. Trierer Winckelmannsprogramme, 4 (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1982), 1982, 5, pl. 6,1.
[94] Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, no. 17. The statue was recorded in the 1550s in the Villa d'Este in the Quirinal, where it was exhibited in restored form and was captured in an engraving by Girolamo Porro (Giovanni Battista De'Cavalieri, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae, 1-2* (Rome 1585), fol. 51). Venus is holding a cluster of grapes in her right hand as she reaches towards Amor; she points to another Amor with her left.
[95] Wien, Albertina. Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, p. 67, pl. 17a.
[96] Cf. Arnold Nesselrath, "L'antico vissuto: La stufetta del cardinal Bibbiena," in *Pietro Bembo e l'invenzione del Rinascimento* ed. Guido Beltramini et al. (Venice: Marsilio, 2013), 284-291.

53. Chiaramonti Venus, h.158 cm, ancient Roman marble statue after a Hellenistic model.
54. Agostino Veneziano, Venus and Amore, engraving after a wall painting in the bathroom of Cardinal Bibbiena in the Vatican Palace, 1516.

The sculptural type of the crouching Venus was highly popular in ancient times and captivated a whole score of artists again in the 16th century with its complicated pose: the goddess's legs are differentiated, her arms crossed and her head turned behind her.[97] The motivation for this special position was known in the Renaissance from a relief depicting Venus crouching and Amor pouring water onto her back; the second Amor holds a mirror in front of her in the form of a seashell.[98] In 16th century, several exemplars of monumental statues of the crouching Venus could be seen in Rome. One statue was acquired in 1505 and housed in the Palazzo Madama. [99] In the garden loggia of the palace, Maarten van Heemskerck drew it from three different angles in 1532 – 1536.[100] Another version of this sculptural type, in which Amor is standing next to Venus, was located in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome in 1550-1562 (**55**).[101] According to Aldrovandi, the goddess was holding a bow. This reconstruction is documented in an engraving from 1594 (**56**). Aldrovandi's text was published in 1556, so the bow must have been added on sometime before this.[102] This modification, which has no basis in ancient tradition, proves that Renaissance restorers modified ancient

[97] Cf. Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 140-146; Mandy Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus. Ihr Nachleben zwischen Aktualisierung und Neumodellierung von 1500 bis 1570* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2016).
[98] London, The British Museum 1805,0703.182. Cf. Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, cat.n. 19; Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus*, 103-104.
[99] Napoli, Museo archeologico 6297. Cf. Gasparri, *Le sculture Farnese*, no. 30..
[100] Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Heemskerck Sketchbook I, 79 D 2, fol. 5 recto; 79 D 2, fol. 6 verso.
[101] Napoli, Museo archeologico 6293. Cf. Gasparri, *Le sculture Farnese*, no. 29. Amor standing next to the crouching Venus is recorded in Rome from the beginning of the 16th century (Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps 8564). Venus is sitting upright, and next to her is a dolphin and Amor with a towel. This statue group was drawn in 1549-1553 by Girolamo da Carpi (Philadelphia, Rosenbach Museum & Library 1954.0807.099v).
[102] Aldrovandi, *Delle statue antiche*, 149.

statues to fit the moralizing interpretation of the time. In early modern Europe, Amor was considered the main originator of erotic desire. Venus often prevented him from doing so, confiscating his bow and arrows or physically punishing him, as we shall see in the next chapter on Renaissance statuettes of Venus.



55 (left). Crouching Venus in Naples, h. 122 cm, Roman marble version of the Hellenistic model.
56 (right). Giovanni Battista de'Cavalieri, copper engraving after the crouching Venus in Naples, 1594.

The statue of the crouching Venus which is now in Madrid has both her head and whole torso turned backwards and is kneeling on a turtle.[103] In the first half of the 16th century, the statue in the Roman Massimi collection was drawn in its original state before the head and arms were added; one drawing is in Venice and the other in Bayonne.[104] Plutarch's moralistic interpretation mentioned above was adopted by Andrea Alciato and Georg Pictorius in the first German book on ancient mythology.[105] In the first publication of Alciato's "Book of Emblems" from 1531, Venus as the patroness of marriage is depicted outside with her foot on a turtle; in the second edition, she is shut inside a house.[106] The goddess is naked with her hair down and holds an apple in her right hand while pointing to the turtle with the left hand. Two doves on the ground around the goddess are looking at the turtle. The meaning of Venus's turtle was discussed by Giraldi and Cartari in their mythological manuals written around the mid-16th century.[107] Venus with a turtle is significant in that it

---

[103] Madrid, Museo del Prado E000033. Cf. Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus*, 93-97.
[104] Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia 1136r; Bayonne, Musée Bonnat, NI 1603r. See Ann H. Allison, "Antique Sources of Leonardo's Leda," *The Art Bulletin* 56, No. 3 (September 1974), fig. 8.
[105] See Georg Pictorius, *Theologia mythologica* (Antwerp: Michel Hillenius, 1532), 18v. Cf. Plutarchos, *Conjugalia Praecepta*, 32 (*Moralia* 142d, similarly 381E).
[106] Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum libellus* (Paris: Christianus Wechelus, 1534), 106 (Emblema C). Cf. Andrea Alciato, *Il Libro degli Emblemi secondo le edizioni del 1531 e del 1534*, introduzione, traduzione e commento di Mino Gabriele (Milan: Adelphi Edizioni, 2009), 511-514.
[107] Giglio Gregorio Giraldi, *De deis gentium varia et multiplex historia* (Basel: Joannes Oporinus,1548), 543.

defines the naked goddess as the patroness of chaste women.[108] This was also the reason for the success of the later statue by Antoin Coysevox for French King Louis XIV, in which Venus's chastity is even more emphasized by her crotch being covered by drapery and her breast with a lock of her hair.[109]

Based on ancient depictions of the crouching Venus, Marcantonio Raimondi created around 1510 an engraving with the goddess in a landscape and added Amor with a quiver over his shoulder standing on a column, and therefore he knew this was Aphrodite.[110] Raimondi may have seen a whole score of exemplars of this sculptural type in Rome on which he based his own version, to which he added a non-ancient face with a solemn expression.[111] Part of the updating of the myth is the natural environment, which does not evoke the Mediterranean, but the landscapes of Albrecht Dürer from beyond the Alps. In his engravings, Raimondi not only imitated ancient models and contemporary patterns, he also commented on the scenes. The depicted action is not clear, but Amor is evidently reaching his right hand towards the lock of hair on Venus's back. Ancient depictions of bathing may have served as artistic inspiration here, i.e. Amor standing behind the crouching goddess and pouring water down her back. The template for Raimondi's engraving exists, and it depicts a bow resting on a column that the author eventually left out of the engraving.[112] We find an almost identical Amor in Raimondi's engraving from 1508 depicting a sitting Mars and Venus with a torch.[113] Raimondi's engraving was highly copied in Italy and ultramontane Europe. One of the first copies is the engraving of German artist Albrecht Altdorfer of 1521-1526, which emphasizes the connection to bathing, as the goddess's head is wrapped in a towel.[114] These works emphasize Venus's phallic gesture, i.e. the extended middle finger of her right hand, which is only hinted at in Raimondi's engraving. This gesture and sneering expression of Altdorfer's Venus clearly define her as the patroness of condemnable sexuality.[115]

Around the mid-16th century, the headless torso of a statue of a half-naked woman was found in Rome.[116] The statue of Venus, who is looking over her shoulder at her own behind, is known as Venus Callipyge (**24**). It immediately aroused great interest, as it was clear whom the statue depicted thanks to the ancient story of the origin of the Temple of Venus Callipyge mentioned at the beginning of the 16th century by Erasmus of Rotterdam.[117] Proof of the fact that Erasmus's mention of this type of

---

[108] Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, ed. Sonia Maffei (Turin: S. G. Einaudi, 2012), 495-496. Cf. William S. Heckscher, "Aphrodite as a Nun," *Phoenix* 7, no. 3 (Autumn 1953): 105-117.

[109] Paris, Louvre MR 1826. Coysevox presented the statue as Phidias's work by adding a Greek pseudo-signature of the famous Greek sculptor next to his own.

[110] E.g. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 49.97.110.

[111] Mina Gregory, ed., *In the Light of Apollo: Italian Renaissance and Greece* (Athens: The Hellenic Culture Organization, 2003), no. XI/25.

[112] Paris, Louvre 10401r. Cf. Marzia Faietti, "A New Preparatory Drawing by Marcantonio Raimondi for his Kneeling Venus," *Print Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1989), 308-311.

[113] Cf. Gregory, *In the Light of Apollo*, no. VII,19.

[114] E.g. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 18.84.2.

[115] Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus*, 164-193.

[116] Klaus Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos: Ihre kunstarchäologische Stellung und Aspekte ihrer Rezeption," in *Zentren und Wirkungsräume der Antikerezeption*, ed. Kathrin Schade et al. (Münster: Scriptorium, 2007), 223-236.

[117] Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Adagia,* 4.7.15 (3615).

Venus statue had not been lost can perhaps be found in the relief of a naked woman depicted from behind, with her head turned backwards and to one side, which was created around 1509 by Ludwig Krug after a design by Albrecht Dürer.[118] In 1556, Vincenzo Cartari wrote down the anecdote about the Temple of Venus Callipyge in his manual on ancient mythology as proof of the fact that *the ancient of those times were really addicted to lecherous pleasures*.[119] The immorality of the story was probably the reason it was ultimately left out of the Latin translation of Cartari's work.[120] The ancient statue that embodied Venus Callipyge in Renaissance Rome finally ended up in the Farnese collection, which is evidenced by its illustration in a collection of engravings of ancient statues in Rome published in 1594.[121] Two years later, Franzini incorporated it into his illustrated guide to the statues of Rome.[122] The interest that it aroused can be seen in statuettes, the highest-quality example of which is located in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum.[123] In the ancient original, Venus is looking to the side; on Renaissance statuettes however, she is looking at her behind, which strongly heightened the work's erotic character.[124] Another ancient sculptural type presented the female body in a similarly contorted position, evidently putting on or taking off her sandal. During this demanding action, one of her hands reaches upward and the other is free and pointing down to her lifted foot. The now lost exemplar was drawn in 1532-1536 by Maarten van Heemskerck.[125]

As Pietro Bembo wrote in 1525: *all day long artists from far and wide arrive in Rome, where beautiful antique figures in marble and bronze are scattered here and there in public and in private … capturing their form in the small spaces of their sheets of paper and wax tablets*.[126] This systematic activity required a great amount of work that was not rewarded. Finding private residences with collections of ancient statues, acquiring permission to visit them, drawing often unsuitably placed and poorly lit statues took much time, and preparation for such undertakings could take even longer, as the artist had to be trained in advance. Statues were usually preserved only in fragments that meant nothing to laymen, and artists had to learn how to interpret only partially preserved parts of the body and drapery, what to take notice of, and what angle was best for drawing a fragment of a statue. They had to know how individual statues differed and

---

[118] Cf. Jörg Rasmussen, "Kleinplastik unter Dürers Namen: Das New Yorker Rückenakt-Relief," *Städel-Jahrbuch* 9 (1983), 131–144; Ingrid S. Weber, "Venus Kallipygos: der Weibliche Rückenacht nach Dürer," *Städel-Jahrbuch* 9 (1983), 145–150.

[119] Vincenzo Cartari, *Le Imagini con la spositione de i Dei de gli antichi* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1556), 93r. English translation John Mulryan.

[120] Vincenzo Cartari, *Imagines deorum, qui ab antiquis colebantur* (Lyon: Stephanus Michael, 1581.

[121] Giovanni Battista De'Cavalieri, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae*, 3-4 (Rome 1594), fol. 66.

[122] Franzini, *Icones Statuarum Antiquarum*, pl. D 3.

[123] Oxford, Ashmolean Museum WA 1960.39, cf. Renate Eikelmann, ed., *Bella figura: Europäische Bronzekunst in Süddeutschland um 1600* (Munich: Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, 2015), no. 30, p. 236-238; Frankfurt am Main, Liebighaus 1318, cf. Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, ed., *Natur und Antike in der Renaissance* (Frankfurt: Liebighaus Museum, 1985), 559, no. 301.

[124] E.g. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum BK-16539 (Italian bronze statuette, 1550-1600).

[125] Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Heemskerck Sketchbook I, inv. no. 79 D 2, fol. 25 verso. Cf. Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, 69 no. 20.

[126] Pietro Bembo, *Prose e rime*, ed. Carlo Dionisotti (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice, 1960), 183. English translation K.W. Christian.

what was important for their proper reconstruction. What was all of this heading towards and what was the result of this extraordinary expenditure of energy and knowledge? As we shall see, thorough preparation culminated in a surprisingly small number of realizations, which usually do not correspond to the quality of the ancient models that were studied. At the same time, we also see fundamental transformations in the content of the depictions in statuettes and statues.

Statuettes

Small Italian Renaissance statuettes of Venus cover almost the whole repertoire of poses and depicted actions of the goddess that we know from ancient Rome. One of the oldest was created at the end of the 15th century and is characterized by the attempt to faithfully portray the ancient form and capture the character of the goddess. Adriano Fiorentino's Venus is erotically attractive thanks to her distinct free and supporting leg, even though her loins are smooth like ancient exemplars.[127] The goddess stands on a seashell and, judging by the gesture of her right hand, we can infer that Amor was standing next to her.[128] She is depicted as stepping out of the water with her hair loose and wet and lifting one lock for it to dry more quickly, which was a common motif in ancient art. In the first quarter of the 16th century, a whole score of similar statuettes was created, but they usually do not reach the height of Adriano Fiorentino's statuette, which is peculiar. We would expect rather the opposite tendency, or at least a continuation of such a grandly initiated trend.

Fiorentino's statuette shows the goddess wringing out her wet, loose hair in a way that all women must have done it. However, it was not a motif that had been observed from life, but rather from ancient depictions. In addition, there was also a literary inspiration, i.e. accounts of Apelles's painting mentioned above. It was known from Antipater of Sidon's epigram (also mentioned above) that Apelles' Venus was wringing out her hair. Poliziano used this motif in his poem from 1494, in which he writes about Venus emerging from the waves, wringing out her hair with her right hand and covering her breast with her left.[129] The enormous significance that was attributed in the Renaissance to the ancient motif of a woman wringing out her wet hair was due to knowledge of Pliny's claim that Apelles was the greatest ancient painter.[130] This was also the reason why Venus drying her hair is found on the wall painting of Baldassare Peruzzi on the ceiling of the Loggia di Galatea in Villa Farnesina from 1510-1511 and in Titian's painting from around 1520.[131]

The naked Venus is also wringing out her loose hair with both hands on the marble relief by Antonio Lombardo of 1510-1515.[132] Venus is characterized by the

---

[127] Philadelphia, PA, Philadelphia Museum of Art 1930-1-17.

[128] Hans R. Weinrauch, *Europäische Bronzestatuetten 15.-18. Jahrhundert* (Braunschweig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1967), 89-90.

[129] *Greek Anthology*, 16.178. Polizano, *Stanze*, 1.102-103: "la dea premendo colla destra il crino, coll'altra il dolce pome ricoprissi."

[130] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.79.

[131] Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scottland NG 2751.

[132] London, Victoria and Albert Museum A.19-1964. This is the first of similar small-scale reliefs that were highly popular in Padua and Venice in the 1530s, cf. Vincenzo Farinella, *Alfonso d'Este: Le immagini e il potere. Da Ercole de'Roberti a Michelangelo* (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2014), 614-615.

water below her feet; the goddess stands on an open seashell, and next to it is a closed seashell. In addition, a Latin inscription was added below the scene stating that the naked Venus is wringing out her wet hair. By combining the depiction of Venus at her toilette and the inscription, the relief was likened to the aforementioned painting by Apelles. The inscription on the relief by Antonio Lombardo is an ancient quote from Ovid's "The Art of Love," and the last pentameter from the distich mentions famous ancient statues.[133] The verse heightened the prestige of the marble relief by placing it on the same level as bronze statues by the famous ancient sculptor Myron and the famous unnamed ancient marble statue or gem depicting Venus wringing out her hair. The reference to Ovid's depiction both celebrates and interprets the scene, as educated members of the elite knew that the verses are a part of the passage about secretive means of beautification. The ancient poet forbids women to show themselves to men while they are decorating themselves, but makes an exception for combing hair, as their beauty is heightened by their loose locks flowing down their backs.[134] This is precisely what is depicted on the relief by Antonio Lombardo, which was inspired by this frequently adapted ancient sculptural type.

Italian bronze statuettes from the beginning of the 16th century reproduce the ancient sculptural type with the naked goddess with one hand over her breasts and the other over her loins. In addition to poses and anatomy, they also took the silver and gold plating from ancient models. The statuette of Venus with drapery around her hips comes from the period around 1500. In her left hand she holds a mirror to look at herself and covers her loins with her right hand.[135] This type was highly popular in northern Italy, and we also know of a similar version but without the drapery at her sides. The combination of these two actions is not probable, but has analogies in ancient art and can be found, for example, on a Roman mosaic.[136] One such statuette of Venus but with a preserved mirror in her hand was purchased as an ancient original by Basel lawyer Basilius Amerbach in the 1550s.[137] The statuette of this type was the model for a painting by Gossaert, which depicts Venus with the same curly locks of hair falling down to her chest in an identical pose and with the same attribute.[138] This connection between the statuette and painting gives proof of the prominent role of easily movable and relatively affordable statuettes in the reception of ancient statues of Venus in the visual arts of the 16th century.

Ancient statuettes of the naked Venus are often characterized by a walking posture, which may be a reference to her arrival into the world and her omnipresence, while erotic attraction is denoted by her thick and complexly styled hair. We find both

---

133 Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, 3.219-222. Cf. Romana Sammern and Julia Saviello, eds., *Schönheit – der Körper als Kunstprodukt: Kommentierte Quellentexte von Cicero bis Goya* (Berlin: Reimer, 2019), 49-57.

134 Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, 3.234.

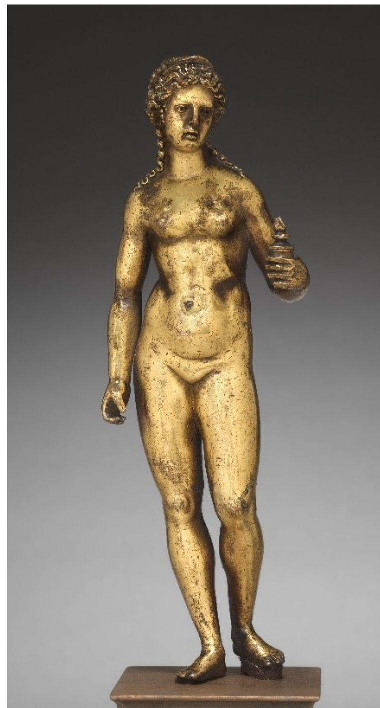
135 Francesco Francia, "Fortnum Venus", Oxford, Ashmolean Museum WA1899.CDEF.B411. Cf. Jeremy Warren, *Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture in the Ashmolean Museum*, 1 (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum Publications, 2014), 76 - 82 no. 20.

136 Evamaria Schmidt, "Venus," in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* VIII. 1. (Zürich: Artemis, 1997), no. 167.

137 Basel, Historisches Museum 1909.243. Venetian or Paduan artist, ca. 1500, belt added by Christoph Kumberger (before 1553–1611).

138 Oil on panel, h. 59 cm, ca. 1521. Rovigo, Pinacotheca dell'Accademia dei Concordi 79. Cf. Thomas Kren et al., eds., *The Renaissance Nude* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2018), no. 40.

on a Renaissance silver-plated bronze statuette, the so-called Cardinal Granvelle Venus from around 1500.[139] The goddess's hair is tied around her temples in an "Isis knot." Efforts to create an ancient appearance motivated the author of the statuette to lump together various attributes – Venus is holding a seashell in one hand, which refers to her birth from the sea, and an apple in her left, indicating her victory in the Judgment of Paris. We find both attributes in ancient originals, but not at the same time; in addition, ancient goddesses do not hold seashells in their hands. The attribute that we never find in ancient statuettes is a small vessel with a lit fire held forwards by Venus, who wears a diadem (**57**). This attribute appears in the 16th century in a whole score of other statuettes of this goddess.



57. Northern Italian artist, Venus with a burning urn height 19.6 cm, gilded bronze statuette, from Venice?, ca. 1500-1520.

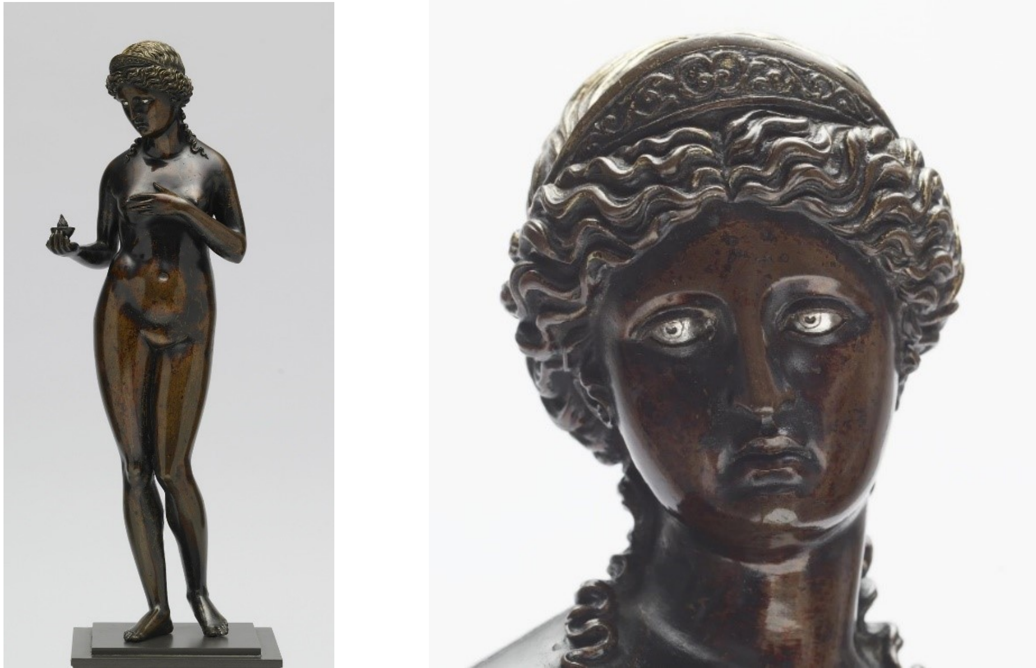
A fire, torch or burning lamp appears in the literature and visual arts of the 13th century as an attribute of Christian Caritas (Amor dei), who melded with the ancient Venus.[140] The fact that sexual love was not involved is attested by the solemn expression on Venus's face, her fixed gaze and the drooping corners of the mouth. The aforementioned Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi specialized in the creation of bronze statuettes based on ancient models in Italy and for this reason was given the nickname Antico. This sculptor was the first to perfect the ancient method of depicting Venus using faultless proportions with probable stances while capturing movement. He worked for the Mantua court, for which he also created in 1520-1523 a half-meter high bronze statuette of Venus with gilded hair and silver-inlayed eyes (**58-59**).[141] In this example, a burning lamp of love, the attribute of life, is combined with an eloquent

[139] H. 26,2 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer 7343.

[140] Ebert-Schifferer, *Natur und Antike*, 373, 420-1; Guy de Tervarent, *Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane: Dictionnaire d'un langage perdu,1450-1600* (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 223, 441.

[141] Cf. Ebert-Schifferer, *Natur und Antike*, no. 116.

gesture; Venus is holding her breast as if she were trying to press milk from it. She is thus characterized as Venus Genetrix (i.e. the Mother) in her attribute and gesture. This statuette is exceptionally taller than the aforementioned statuette by Adriano Fiorentino, but the monumentalization is accompanied here by the clear incorporation of the work into the Christian context.



58-59. Antico, bronze statuette of Venus, h. 45,6 cm, 1520-1523.

The creation of Venus statuettes was carried out by prominent Italian artists such as Baccio Bandinelli, who created variations of ancient sculptural types.[142] Venus is characterized by her hairstyle and Isis knot; she may be standing on a seashell or wave, and may be holding either a dove or flower. In addition to her hands covering her breasts or loins, Venus may be characterized by a dolphin, Amor, or both. Around the mid-16th century, artists from France and the Netherlands who had been trained in Italy also began work in the production of bronze Venus statuettes. Dutch sculptor Willem Tetrode (Guglielmo Fiammingo) worked in Florence and Rome. His series of statuettes based on ancient originals has already been mentioned above, and included a statuette after the Medici Venus type. Benvenuto Cellini's short stay in the French court of Francis I in 1540-1545 made evidently a strong impression on French sculptors. An example of the Italian influence is a French statuette of Venus of c. 1550 in an extravagant pose with a raised hand, which styles a lock of hair on her head.[143]

Artists in ultramontane Europe held a more reserved attitude towards Venus than in Italy, and either condemned the goddess as a pagan demon or presented her as something sensational. Both approaches manifested themselves in the possible ultramontane contribution to Venus's iconography, which gave the goddess "African" traits, i.e. curly hair, a flat nose and pronounced lips. This was not just a one-time

[142] Florence, Bargello 388. Cf. Detlef Heikamp et al., eds. *Baccio Bandinelli: Scultore e maestro,1493-1560* (Florence: Giunti, 2014), no. 28.
[143] Kansas City, MO, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art 64-13.

improvisation – this sculptural type is known in at least thirteen variations on the theme. The model was probably created by Dutch sculptor Johann Gregor von der Schardt.[144] Scholars assume this to be Venus judging by the pose, nakedness, mirror and ball of cloth. However, we cannot rule out the fact that the audience of the time merely saw a black woman at her toilette who was compared to Venus in the way she was depicted.

Christian and pagan symbolism is combined in one of the oldest Italian statuettes of Venus created around 1500. This was an ambitious work with silver-inlayed eyes, the left hand covering the loins and the right hand raised in the gesture of a blessing.[145] In the last third of the 16th century, Italian depictions of Venus show the goddess distancing herself from her own body, a fact which is wholly contradictory to the way the goddess was depicted in ancient times. Girolamo Campagna's Venus is characterized by her nakedness and a dolphin, but her head is bowed and her right hand covers her breast – this gesture did not indicate the veiling of nakedness, but fertility, as her nipple is visible between her fingers as if she were pressing out milk. She is not covering her loins with her left hand, but holding the tail of the dolphin with it. Her foot rests on the dolphin's head, indicating that she holds control over the animal.[146] On another statuette by the same artist, the goddess is covering her loins with her left hand, while her right hand is outstretched in a dismissive gesture; her head is bowed as she looks away from her hand, and her foot is also placed on the dolphin's head.[147] The goddess depicted on the statuette by Tiziano Aspetti from the last quarter of the 16th century has a similar pose, and is also stepping on a dolphin while bowing her head down towards it.[148]

The meaning of Renaissance statuettes is illuminated by those that depict Venus with Amor, especially the ones that were inspired by Ovid's tale of Venus injuring herself on Amor's arrow while kissing him, which was already known by Dante and Boccaccio.[149] This banal accident aroused in the goddess a love for Adonis, who paid for his passion for hunting with his life as he was killed by a boar. The story in the Italian Renaissance was interpreted in medieval tradition as a warning against bodily caresses, which could turn against those who made these advances. Even the seemingly innocent love between a son and mother could lead to tragic ends. In this sense, Ovid's story is interpreted by Berchorius around 1340, as he states that kissing amongst relatives arouses lust and eventually leads to incest.[150] As was mentioned above, Ovid's text inspired Raphael to create the wall painting in the bathroom of Cardinal Bibbiena in the Vatican, which became general knowledge thanks to Agostino Veneziano's engraving mentioned above. The story was illustrated in a drawing by Michelangelo Buonarroti from 1532–1533, after which Jacopo Pontormo

---

[144] Cf. Maraike Bückling, *Die Negervenus* (Frankfurt: Liebieghaus, 1991).
[145] Baltimore, Walters Art Museum 54.244.
[146] New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 40.14.7.
[147] Berlin, Skulpturensammlung 7279.
[148] H. 24,1 cm, Universitry of Michigan Museum of Art 1958/2.52.
[149] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10.525-528; Dante, *Divine Comedy: Purgatorio,* 28.65-66 (cf. Christophoro Landino, *Comedia di Danthe Alighieri poeta divino: col'espositione di Christopho Landino* (Venice 1529), 103v); Giovanni Boccaccio, *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* (Milan: Ugo Mursia,1987), 54.
[150] Petrus Berchorius, *Ovidius Moralizatus*, ed. Joseph Engels (Utrecht: Instituut voor Laat latijn der Rijksuniversiteit, 1962), 152.

and Agnolo Bronzino created paintings.[151] A statuette on this theme was created by a sculptor from the circle of Jacopo Sansovino in the mid-16th century. With a solemn face, the goddess is turning to Amor, who holds the now-missing arrow which has injured his mother in his raised hand (**60**). Amor is sitting on a dolphin swimming above the surface of the water; his head looks like a globe, a symbolic reference to Amor's world rule. The statuette stands out in its size; it is almost one meter high.

60. Circle of Jacopo Sansovino, Venus and Amore on a Dolphin, h. 88.9 cm, bronze statuette, ca. 1550.

In the 1560s, Giambologna created a model for a sculptural group of Amor and the naked Venus standing next to him. She is characterized by a diadem and has placed her bent leg on a stool in order to pull a thorn from her foot.[152] A similar statuette was created in 1560-1570 by the most famous French Renaissance sculptor Jacquiot Ponce, whose goddess has taken the pose of the ancient kneeling/bathing Venuses.[153] Venus pulling a thorn from her foot was linked to the death of Adonis in Italy. Statuettes depicting Venus tending to her wound thus do not depict a banal accident, but emphasize the fact that love is always linked to blood, pain and the threat of death. This is also indicated by the statuette by Carlo di Cesari del Palagio from 1590-93 that depicts Venus holding a burning heart in her outstretched right hand; the crying Amor

---

[151] William Keach, "Cupid Disarmed, or Venus Wounded? An Ovidian Source for Michelangelo and Bronzino," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 327-331; Cf. Rebekah Compton, "Omnia Vincit Amor. The Sovereignty of Love in Tuscan Poetry and Michelangelo's Venus and Cupid," *Mediaevalia* 33 (2012): 229-260.

[152] New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 32.100.183.

[153] London, Victoria and Albert A.13-1964. The ceramic model of the bronze statuette, which was used to create the molds for the bronze copies, has also been preserved (Paris, Louvre R.F. 3455).

with a quiver over his shoulder reaches out for it in vain.[154] With her other hand, Venus is pressing on her breast, which characterizes her as the goddess of fertility protecting life against the threat posed by the irresponsible Amor. The burning heart, the embodiment of the power of love, has appeared since the beginning of the 16th century as an attribute of Venus as a planetary deity, but also as the visualization of how she affects a person.[155] This attribute is the equivalent of Amor's weapons, which his mother refuses to yield to him, and we encounter it on statuettes from the beginning of the 16th century. We find the burning heart as Venus's attribute on a statuette from around 1600, which on rare occasion shows the goddess clothed, emphasizing the necessity to control one's bodily passions.[156] The openings in the breasts on this statuette point to the link between Venus and Caritas, i.e. Christian virtue, which was discussed above.

Love is a powerful weapon, which can also have woeful consequences, and therefore Amor must know when and how to use this weapon. This is the message of the exceptional French statuette from the same period, which depicts Venus teaching Amor how to shoot his bow and spread love in the correct manner.[157] The engraving from the 16th century shows Venus armed with a large arrow as she shows Amor where to fire.[158] Renaissance statuettes usually depict the exact opposite action, i.e. Venus is taking away Amor's bow or breaking it. The problems which the goddess had with her mischievous son are described in Apuleius's novel, in which Venus becomes angry with Amor due to his love for Psyche and threatens him: *Indeed, in order to make you feel the insult all the more I will adopt one of my young slaves and make over to him those wings of yours and torches, your bow and arrows, and the rest of my equipment, which I did not give you to use in that way.*[159] In Lucian's text, Aphrodite admits to having to punish her son for firing arrows of love at her: *So I have threatened him time and again, if he does not stop it, I'll smash his archery set and strip off his wings. Last time I even took my sandal to his behind.*[160] Proof of the reception of this theme in Renaissance literature is found in a poem from 1496 that celebrates the now-lost work of sculptor Pirgotel. The author asks why the goddess on the group of statues is raising her whip at her own son. He speculates that it was due to her son that she was caught by her husband being unfaithful with Mars, or because Amor on the contrary has neglected his duties. The author of the poem concludes: *Whatever the answer I fear the anger of the Sybarite goddess, and love still burns me even though he suffers these cuts*.[161]

The dispute between Venus and Amor was already a popular topic in ancient art. But the goddess reprimanding or punishing her mischievous son carries a new

---

[154] H. 74 cm, The Quentin and Mara Kopp Foundation, San Francisco. Cf. Dorothea Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard und Carlo di Cesare del Palagio. Spätplastiker der Renaissance,* 1-2 (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2004), vo. 2, cat. C8; Eikelmann, *Bella figura*, no. 28 p. 222. Carlo di Cesari del Palagio was Giambologna's aid and member of Florence's Accademia; he also worked in Germany, where he created the statuette of Venus with the burning heart.

[155] Cf. Tervarent, *Attributs et symboles*, 131-132.

[156] Dresden, Skulpturensammlung ZV 3524.

[157] San Marino, California, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens 17.21.

[158] Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-6248.

[159] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 5.29-30. English translation J. A. Hanson.

[160] Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods*, 19.232. English translation M. D. Macleod.

[161] Battista Guarini, *Poema divo Herculi Ferrariensium duci dicatum* (Modena: Rocociola, 1496). English translation A. Debenedetti and C. Elam.

meaning in Italian Renaissance art. It was no longer a "juicy detail" from the world of the gods that was meant to bring the goddess closer to the people as a caring mother. In post-ancient Europe, Venus is presented as a deity refusing bodily passions by punishing Amor, who is on the contrary the instigator of sexual passion. Around 1500, Pier Maria Serbaldi da Pescia created a statuette of the naked Venus with Amor, which was meant to look ancient thanks to the material used, i.e. porphyry imported in ancient times from Egypt.[162] The statuette was evidently destined for the Medici court. Venus is leaning toward Amor, who stands next to her, and holds him firmly by the arm to prevent him from shooting an arrow from his bow. Amor was originally gripping a metal bow and arrow in his hands, which are now lost; behind him on the ground is a quiver with arrows. Venus is clutching the wings of a bird standing on a column with her left hand, most likely a dove, which was sacred to her. Her cloak has been thrown over the column, on the side of which is the inscription "Made by Pier Maria" written in Greek lettering, which was intended to emphasize further the ancient character of the scene. The statuette is interesting in that Venus is not only preventing Amor from acting, she is also controlling the dove, which is noted for its sexual intensity.

The image type of Venus disarming Amor is not known in ancient art, and we encounter it for the first time in the 14th century on a fresco by Ambrogio Lorenzetti from 1321, in which a sculptural group of this type adorns the architecture in the Basilica of San Francesco in Siena in a scene depicting the martyrdom of Franciscans in Thane.[163] One of the oldest depictions of Venus punishing Amor is a statuette of the goddess kneeling on one knee in the model of the ancient statues that show her bathing. With one hand, the goddess is holding Amor on the ground as he lies on his back, and raises the other to strike him.[164] It was created in Padua, which was one of the centers of statuette production in the 16th century. This "thrashing" is also depicted in a relief bronze plaquette by Riccio created before 1532. The naked Venus's mouth is open and is reprimanding Amor. The action is unambiguous – Venus is raising her right hand to strike while holding the hair of the crying Amor, whose legs are buckling, in her left.[165] Venus dressed as a sutler and holding the crying Amor by the arm as he tries to escape her grasp is found on a drawing by Albrecht Altdorfer from 1508.[166] At the end of the 16th century, Paolo Savin created a statuette of the naked Venus with a diadem who is raising her hand with a now-lost object and preparing to strike Amor with it.[167] The small god is in a semiprone position and covers the back portion of his body, which was likely struck by the first blow.

---

[162] Firenze, Palazzo Pitti 1067. Cf. Maria Sframeli, *The Myth of Venus* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale 2003), no. 3.

[163] See Suzanne Maureen Burke, "The Martyrdom of the Franciscans by Ambrogio Lorenzetti," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 65 (2002): 484-485.

[164] Klosterneuburg, Stiftsmuseum I.N. KG 3. Cf. Manfred Leithe-Jasper and Francesca De Gramatica, eds., *Bagliori d 'Antico: Bronzetti al Castello del Buonconsiglio* (Trento: Castello del Buonconsiglio, Monumenti e collezioni provinciali, 2013), 126-130.

[165] Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1957.14.257.

[166] Berlin Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett KdZ 4184. Cf. Ursula Mielke et al., *The New Hollstein German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, 1400-1700, 2. Albrecht and Erhard Altdorfer* (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision Interactive, 1997), e-43.

[167] Los Angeles, Getty Museum 85.SB.66.

In 1639, Giambologna's pupil created a bronze statuette of Venus whipping Amor on the behind with a bundle of roses (**61**). The counterpart to this work was Venus breaking Amor's arrows.[168] In the 4th century, Ausonius described a wall painting showing Venus whipping Amor with a bundle of roses; the poem captivated Vincenzo Cartari to such a degree that he paraphrased a passage and incorporated it into his book on depictions of ancient gods from 1556.[169] We find a reception of the motif in a poem by Giambattista Marino from 1623, which may have been an inspiration for the aforementioned statuette.[170] Statuettes of Venus were designated exclusively for private use, and it is therefore surprising that they show the goddess distancing herself from her nakedness and punishing Amor, who is presented as the exclusive originator of destructive bodily passion.

61. Giovanni Francesco Susini, Venus Whipping Amor, bronze, h. 57.2 cm, ca. 1638.

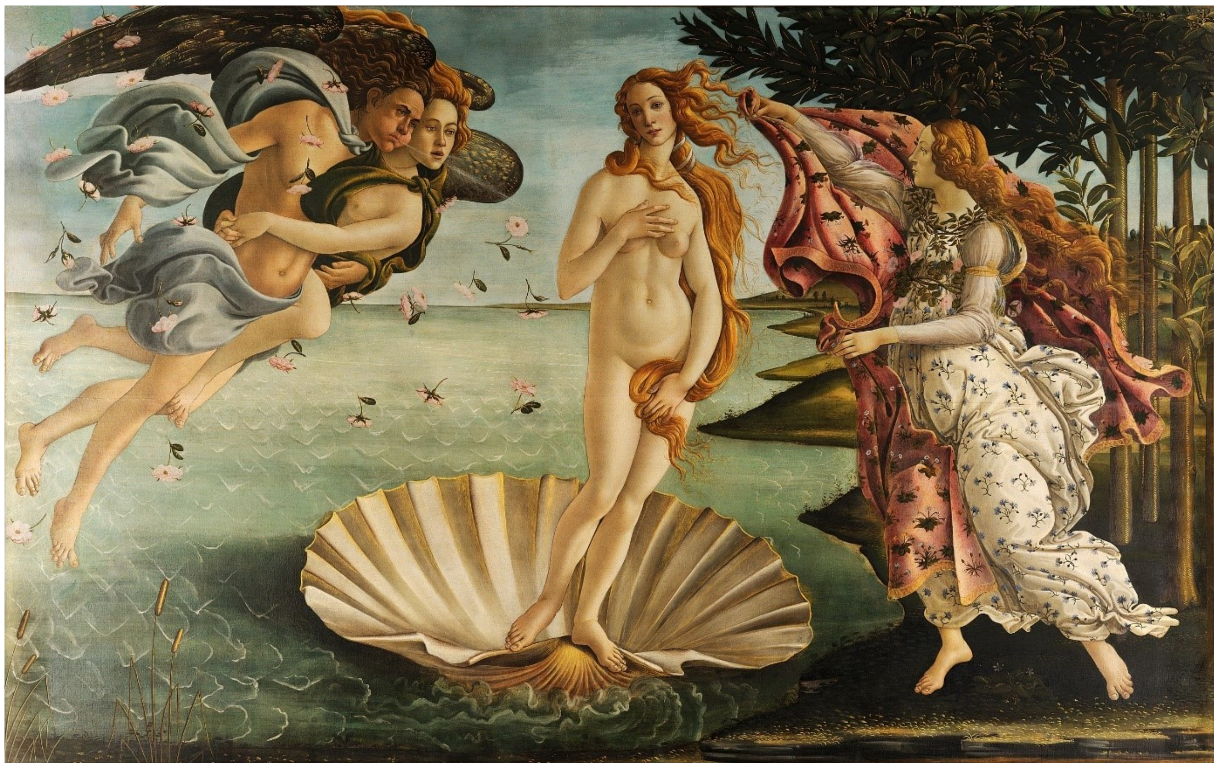
Statues

In 16th century Italy, we find statues of Venus primarily on the paintings destined to be hung on walls, which served to decorate private residences. The physical handling of these works was much easier than with statues; they could be moved operatively, and their accessibility was completely under the control of their owners. Thanks to this fact, the commissioning party could provide artists with greater maneuvering space

[168] Paris, Louvre OA 8276 a OA 8277.
[169] Cartari, *Le Imagini*, CVIIv-CXv.
[170] See Giambattista Marino, *L'Adone* (Turin: Compagnia della Concordia, 1623), 6 (1, 17).

when it came to depicting nakedness and erotica, which were evidently highly sought-after and also highly controlled commodities in Renaissance Italy.[171]

The first to make full use of hanging pictures as new bearers of artistic mastery was Sandro Botticelli. But we have no information on who commissioned his famous paintings of ca. 1484 depicting Venus in life-size and inspired by ancient statues of the goddess (**62**).[172] Giorgio Vasari, who in his pioneering work "Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects" always emphasized the importance of those commissioning artworks in the development of the visual arts, states only that he saw the works at some point in the second quarter of the 16th century in the Cosimo de'Medici villa in Castello. He writes about them in the first publication of "Lives of…" published in 1550: *one depicts the Birth of Venus, and those breezes and winds which blew her and her Cupids to land; and the second is another Venus, the symbol of Spring, being adorned with flowers by the Graces*.[173] Both paintings are located today in the Uffizi in Florence. On the first, Venus is dressed and lifting her right hand in a gesture of blessing, and her identity is verified by Amor with a bow, who flies over her head. On the next, the goddess stands naked on a seashell floating on the sea. The two-winged personifications of the wind have ferried the goddess to the shore, where she is awaited by Hora, who will veil her in a cloak.



62. Sandro Botticelli, Birth of Venus, 172.5 × 278.9 cm, tempera on canvas, c. 1484.

[171] See Sara F. Matthews-Grieco, ed., *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy* (London Taylor & Francis, 2010), 231.

[172] Florence, Uffizi Gallery 878. Cf. Centanni, *Fantasmi dell'antico*, 251-302; Rebekah Compton, *Venus and the Arts of Love in Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 54-91.

[173] Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de'più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed archittettori, 1568*, ed. Gaetani Milanesi, vol. 1-9 (Florence: Sansoni, 1878-1885), vol. 3, 1878, 312. English translation J. C. and P. Bondanella.

The birth of Venus on Botticelli's painting radically deviates from illustrations of medieval texts stemming from Fulgentius's manual "Mythologiae" from around the year 500, from which post-ancient Europe drew knowledge on the depictions of ancient deities and their meanings. In this work, Venus is interpreted in a clearly negative manner, i.e. as the embodiment of physical pleasure and caprice and was proof of the depravity of ancient Rome. On the contrary, Botticelli attempted to reconstruct a work that the ancient Greeks and Romans had admired – Apelles's image of Aphrodite Anadyomene that has been mentioned several times above. The painter drew inspiration from ancient tradition in his depiction of the goddess covering her breast with one hand and her loins with the other, an element he took from the ancient type best known from the Medici Venus. In Botticelli's time, this type is considered to be an echo of Praxiteles's Cnidia, the most famous statue of the goddess of all time. Botticelli adopted both Venus in the seashell and the figure of the woman with the cloak waiting for her on the shore from ancient visual tradition. These figures appear in depictions of the goddess's birth from the 5th century BC. Botticelli also drew from ancient literary tradition, specifically from Homer's hymn to Aphrodite, which was mediated to him through Angelo Poliziano.[174] This poem speaks about how the goddess arrived in Cyprus: *where the wet-blowing westerly's force brought her accross the swell of the noisy main, in soft foam; and the Horai with headbands of gold received her gladly, and clothed her with divine clothing*.[175]

The compositional scheme simultaneously evokes the depiction of Christ's baptism, the primary attribute of which is the nakedness of the protagonist standing in water as he is welcomed to a new life by a figure standing on the shore. Botticelli's Venus is completely calm and introspective, not noticing the outside world. However, her flowing hair reveals what she will become once she awakens. This is also denoted by the dynamically depicted figures that surround her. These figures, with their cloaks billowing in the wind and expressive positioning of their arms, were inspired by ancient models. According to Aby Warburg, the reception of these "emotive formulae" (or Pathosformeln) in a radically transformed world show that they were evidently in accord with the fears and dread that are a part of the collective subconscious even in modern times.[176] The birth of Venus is a dramatic event which fundamentally changed the world, in which nothing would be as it was before.

Warburg's finding that the medieval concept of Venus lived on in the Italian Renaissance and therefore her depiction continued to contain the potential threat of destruction is crucial to the theme of this book on statues of this goddess.[177] However, Botticelli viewed Venus's nakedness as positive and as a visualization of God's

[174] See Angelo Poliziano, *Stanze per la giostra di Giuliano de'Medici* (Florence: Bartolomeo de'Libri, Firenze 1494), 99-101.
[175] *Homeric hymn* 6.3-6. English translation M. L. West.
[176] See Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 152-177.
[177] See Aby Warburg, *Sandro Botticellis Geburt der Venus und Frühling* (Hamburg: L. Voss, 1893), 48-49. Cf. Claudia Wedepohl, "Why Botticelli? Aby Warburg's Search for a New Approach to Quattrocento Italian Art," in *Botticelli Past and Present*, eds. Ana Debenedetti and Caroline Elam (London: UCL Press, 2019), 183-202.

immense love.[178] Proof of this is found in the fact that the painting The Calumny of Apelles from around 1492 contains a similarly conceived figure representing Truth.[179] She is also depicted naked and facing forwards, but her right hand is raised as she looks upwards. Inspiration also came from Apelles's painting, which was known from a description by Lucian, who, however, only described Truth looking upwards.[180] In Alberti's version, which he included in his tractate from 1436, Botticelli may have read that this was a shy and chaste girl (*una fanciulletta vergognosa e pudica)*, which was probably the first use of the new term *Venus Pudica*.[181] In his Birth of Venus painting, Botticelli boldly distances himself from the erotic by depicting the goddess covering her loins not only with her hand, but also with a lock of her hair, of which we have no proof in ancient art.[182]

The fact that the work had its admirers is evidenced by workshop copies. The painting in Berlin only depicts the figure of Venus on a black background standing on a stone pedestal; both the background and pedestal emphasize the fact that the painting was to be perceived as a statue.[183] It is certain that Botticelli's Birth of Venus was destined for a private residence, and thus the vast majority of the inhabitants of Florence, where the work was created, had not even the slightest knowledge of its existence. Thanks to this, the image exists, because it could otherwise have ended up on the "bonfire of vanities" (falò delle vanità), during which immoral books, paintings and objects of luxury were burned en masse. [184] The largest fire was lit on January 7, 1497 by Girolamo Savonarola, whom Botticelli himself came to support fervently. If his "Birth of Venus" had still been in his studio, he may have perhaps thrown it personally upon the fire.[185] However, Savonarola failed in putting a stop to culture inspired by antiquity, as he was ultimately declared a heretic and executed in 1498. On the contrary, the naked Venus that Botticelli introduced to Renaissance painting made an energetic entrance in the 16th century and became one of the primary themes of paintings used by members of the elite to give their new lifestyle a lasting appearance.

Paintings of the naked Venus inspired by ancient models may have also had a practical function inspired by antiquity, a fact which scholars began to consider only at the end of the 20th century. It cannot be ruled out that Botticelli's naked Venus placed in a married couple's bedroom was meant to show the bride how to present herself to

---

[178] Cf Julia Branna Perlman, "Looking at Venus and Ganymede Anew: Problems and Paradoxes in the Relations Among Neoplatonic Writing and Renaissance Art," in *Antiquity and its Interpreters,* ed. Alina Payne et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 110–125.

[179] Firenze, Uffizi 1890, no. 1496. Cf. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus: Nudité, rêve, cruauté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 18-19.

[180] Lucian, *Calumniae non temere credendum*, 4.

[181] See Leon Battista Alberti, *Über die Malkunst – Della pittura*, ed. Oskar Bätschmann und Sandra Gianfreda (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftiche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 152. See also Angela Dressen, "From Dante to Landino: Botticelli's Calumny of Apelles and Its Sources," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 59, no. 3 (2017): 328.

[182] But see *Greek Anthology*, 16.180.

[183] Oil on canvas, h. 158 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie 1124.

[184] Cf. Lauro Martines, *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[185] Cf. Rab Hatfield, "Botticelli's Mystic Nativity, Savonarola and the Millennium," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 58 (1995): 88–114.

her groom on their wedding night.[186] Venuses sitting, sleeping or sitting while they groom themselves may have also been linked to a wedding. The Italian Renaissance revived the ancient literary genre of giving congratulations to newlyweds, which were sung by their friends outside the bedroom on their wedding night. In these literary compositions, Venus and Amor appear as patrons of the wedding night. It is probable, that the depiction of Venus in paintings hung in the married couple's bedroom were not only an illustration of the content of these songs, but were also meant to insure the conception of healthy and beautiful offspring. According to ancient concepts of conception that were also widespread in Renaissance Italy, the appearance of one's offspring was influenced by what the couple were looking at during conception.

The powerful representation of the goddess in the paintings of the most prominent artists contrasts with the small role that Venus played in Renaissance monumental sculpture. In the previous chapter, we selected only the best examples representing the main iconographic types of Venus from the vast number of statuettes produced in the Renaissance era. This chapter documents all preserved exemplars including works created by artisans or amateurs. The only exception is the Venuses of Giambologna, to which a separate chapter will be devoted. This chapter will also list all reports that someone has made or planned to make a statue of this ancient goddess. After sculptor Jacopo Sansovino became famous in his native Florence and in Rome, he settled in Venice in 1527. He began his Venetian career with work on a bronze statue of Venus for the Mantuan ruler Federico Gonzaga, which according to Pietro Aretino's testimony was: *so faithful and animated that it evokes sinful thoughts in everyone who sees it.*[187] However, the project was abandoned, perhaps due to rumours about it. Not only did the promised statue never make it to Mantua, no other similar statue by Sansovino has survived despite the fact that he had founded a prosperous workshop in Venice, where he worked until his death in 1570.[188]

In Rome, artists in the services of the pope were allowed to set up workshops directly next to the Vatican's Cortile del Belvedere, which significantly fostered the reception of ancient statues exhibited here in the visual arts of the time. We would expect a whole score of Renaissance variations of Venus statues to have been created in the papal Belvedere. However, the situation was in reality much more complex. Although artists had an enormous interest in the topic of Venus, no monumental statue of her was created here, even despite the fact that sculptor Baccio Bandinelli established an academy "del disegno" directly in the Belvedere around 1531. Proof of this is seen in an engraving with the inscription: *Accademia di Bacchio Brandin, in luogo detto Belvedere* (**63**).[189] The graphic is one of the first records of an artistic academy and the first depiction of an artist drawing an ancient work.

---

[186] See, for example, Lilian Zipolo, "Botticelli's Primavera: A lesson for the Bride," *Woman's Art Journal* 12, No. 2 (Autumn, 1991 - Winter, 1992), 24-28; Andreas Prater, *Venus at her Mirror: Velázquez and the Art of Nude Painting* (Munich: Prestel, 2002), 29-30.
[187] See Bruce Boucher, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino,* 1-2 (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1991), vol. 1, 184-185, vol. 2, 375-376.
[188] Lost Venuses: Boucher, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*, vol 2, 363.
[189] Cf. Ben Thomas, "The Academy of Baccio Bandinelli," *Print Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (March 2005): 3-14; Adriano Aymonino and Anne Varick Lauder, eds., *Drawn from the Antique: Artists and the Classical Ideal* (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 2015), 80-84, no. 1.

63 (left). Academy of Baccio Bandinelli, engraving, 1531.
64 (right). Academy of Baccio Bandinelli, engraving, 1548.

Members of the academy are engaged in drawing presumably ancient statuettes located in the center of the engraving just next to a candle with a bright flame, a symbol of spiritual enlightenment, which strengthens the significance of the statuettes and elevates them to symbols of the academy. Bandinelli sits at a table next to his pupils, but is characterized by different clothing; he wears a beret and is cloaked in a coat with a fur collar. The head of the academy thus stands out from the collective of artists and is heightened to the role of one transferring the message of ancient depictions of Venus to his pupils. Bandinelli is lecturing on the statuette of Venus that he holds in his hand; another similar statuette is placed on the ledge over the table. The second model on the table itself is a statuette of a naked man in a standing position. The pose of the statuette in the master sculptor's hands corresponds to the Venus Victrix from the statue in the Cortile del Belvedere, while the pose of the naked man corresponds to Apollo from the same collection. This naked woman and naked man duo simultaneously alludes to Adam and Eve.

Bandellini's academy is the theme of another two engravings, one of which is from 1545-1550 and is a variation on the aforementioned engraving; in it a statue of a naked woman also holds a prominent place.[190] The young man standing at the fireplace has sketched the image of a naked woman evidently after some ancient statue, but there is no model of it in the room and therefore he had to work from memory. In addition to the statuettes on the ledge, there are only two ancient statues in the room, which are evidently casts. One depicts a reclining naked woman, perhaps Venus or a Nymph, and the other a standing naked young man. Both presumably ancient statues are in the foreground, which is dominated by skeletons, emphasizing the necessity of the study of anatomy.

[190] Enea Vico after After Baccio Bandinelli, The Academy of Baccio Bandinelli, engraving ca. 1545/50. Cf. Aymonino and Varick Lauder, *Drawn from the Antique*, 85-88, no. 2.

The engraving from 1548 after Bandinelli's self-portrait is an artist surrounded by ancient statues.[191] Bandinelli's left hand rests on a statue of Hercules and his right points to a statuette of this mythical hero at his feet; however, the largest ancient statues are naked Venuses on a column to the right of the sitting artist.[192] The statues are ancient fragments of two variations of Praxiteles's Cnidia; one is depicted from the back and the other from the front. In this, the sculptor presented himself as an expert, as the ancient topos was discovered in the Renaissance claiming that a naked woman seen from behind was the most stimulating.[193] There are three more statuettes under Heracles, two of which depict naked women. In the center is the widespread type of the goddess tying (or untying) her sandal. On engravings via which Bandinelli glorified his art and knowledge of ancient statues, Venus is dominant or at least plays a similarly important role as other ancient models. We also know from Vasari that Bandinelli created bronze statuettes in the Belvedere that represented Venus and other Olympian gods, which he then handed out to those who might potentially commission his works of sculpture.[194]

In "Memoriale," which is dated to 1552, Bandinelli presents himself as an artist of European renown because he builds upon the ancient tradition. In a compendium of his most famous works, he emphasizes the fact that these works depict ancient themes, including Venus, which he allegedly dedicated to Emperor Charles V.[195] We know today, however, that he only gave the emperor an aforementioned copy of the ancient statue of Venus. In Bandinelli's extensive sculptural work, we find no trace of the creation of a monumental statue of Venus nor any sketches pointing to his work on such a project.[196] There is also no other reference outside "Memoriale" of Bandinelli's statue of Venus. The only explanation for this contradiction is that the sculptor fabricated the statue because he knew that Venus belonged to the "curriculum vitae" of famous ancient sculptors. It is also unknown whether the non-existent statue was fabricated by Bandinelli or his grandson, who demonstrably modified the text of "Memoriale" at the beginning of the 17th century in order to glorify his grandfather.[197] In two cases, the ancient depictions of Venus that Baccio Bandinelli carefully studied appeared in his monumental work, but these sculptures represented Eve. The most similar to the Cnidia is the Eve paired with Adam from 1551, which is now located in Florence's Bargello. The second Adam and Eve pair that he worked on between 1548 and 1558 was a failure, and the statue ended up as Ceres in the Buontalenti grotto in Florence's Giardino Boboli.

This striking disproportion is not limited to Bandinelli and is typical of the Italian art of the 16th century. In the 1530s, Bernardino Licinio created a painting that

---

[191] E.g. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1983.1194. Cf. Aymonino and Varick Lauder, *Drawn from the Antique*, 89-93, no. 3.
[192] Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 309-312.
[193] Cf. Jörg Rasmussen, "Kleinplastik unter Dürers Namen: Das New Yorker Rückenakt-Relief," *Städel-Jahrbuch* 9 (1983): 131–144.
[194] Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 6, p. 153. Cf. Masinelli 1991, 43-49.
[195] Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte*, vol. 6, 1370-1371: "Quanto alle mie opere di scoltura e disegno … la Venere donata a Carlo Quinto."
[196] Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 299.
[197] See Louis A. Waldman, *Baccio Bandinelli and Art at the Medici Court:. A Corpus of Early Modern Sources* (Philadelphia PA: American Philosophical Society, 2004), x-xi.

summarizes the system of art education of the time, which was based on mastering the ancient artistic language.[198] The master sculptor is depicted in the center holding a plaster statuette created after an ancient model of the crouching Venus, which accentuates the twisting of her body. The complex pose in ancient style was the reason it was selected as an educational aid. To the left is an apprentice, who is showing others a drawing of the statuette held by the master sculptor, and the painting is accompanied by an inscription: *Look and see if the drawing is good*. The drawing depicts a statuette in the master sculptor's hand exactly from the angle in which it is seen by the viewer, to whom the inscription is addressed.[199] The painting is of rather large proportions (83x 128 cm) and is perfectly designed, which probably means it was created as a type of advertisement for the artist's workshop and served to attract new apprentices of the painting arts from higher social circles. This was nothing new – a statuette of the naked Venus is also found at the center of the art academy in a drawing by Jan van der Straet from 1573, based upon which a number of engravings were created.[200] A reference to the ancient statue of Venus in the artist's self-representation emphasized his place among the artistic avant-garde of the time, which was characterized by the admiration of the ancient visual arts. This gives even more relevance to the fact that we know of no monumental depictions in the 16th century of the ancient type of the crouching Venus, which artists and art aficionados of the time admired and knew so well. The monumental statue discussed above was created by Antoine Coysevox long afterwards, in 1686.

There is no doubt that the statues of Venus managed to engage their audience's imaginations. Proof of this is found in the many graphics on which Venus appears as a three-dimensional architectonic element. The method of displaying ancient statues in arched niches first appeared in the Cortile del Belvedere in 1506-1511; museum façades with copies or variations of ancient statues began to spread quickly in Italy and were promoted by a series of engravings that appeared in the second decade of the 16th century. According to Raphael's drawings, Marcantonio Raimondi created in 1510-1527 a series of engravings with statues in alcoves that depict the virtues and the Olympian gods, including Venus (**65**). In 1526, Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio published a similar series of twenty graphics of the Olympian gods, the bases of which were drawn by Rosso Fiorentino (**66**). Series of these "paper galleries" were evidently in high demand, and therefore Etienne Delaune etched a similar series after his son's design that showed two Venuses in alcoves on one of its pages.[201] A series of engravings from 1610 depicting ancient statues in Rome shows all of them in alcoves regardless of their specific placement. This collection includes four Venuses, among which is the

---

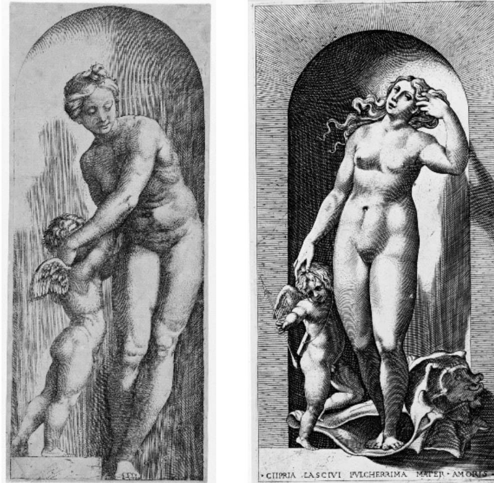
[198] Alnwick Castle, Collection of the Duke of Northumberland 383. See Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus*, 121-124.

[199] On the right is another pupil holding a statuette of Mercury and carefully studying it. With his right hand, he draws on a piece of paper on the table, which is also accompanied by an inscription: *This art is difficult*.

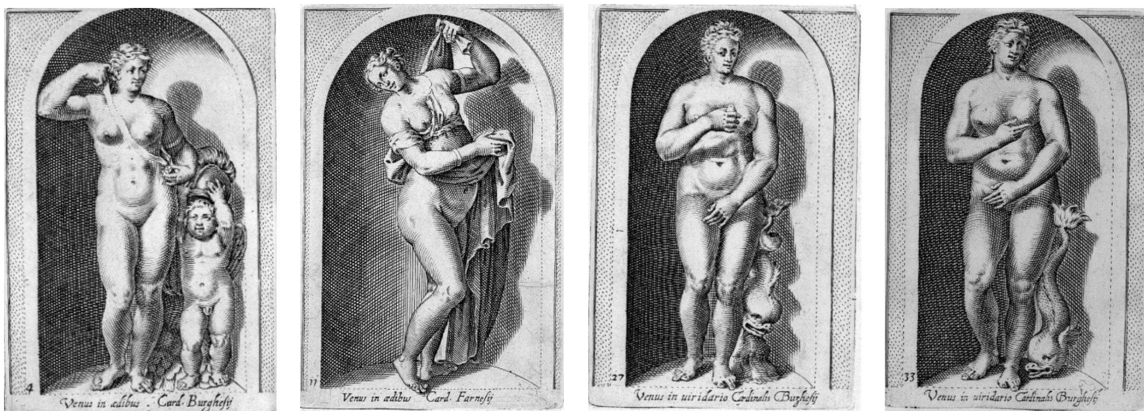
[200] London, The British Museum SL,5214.2. See James Grantham Turner, *Eros Visible: Art, Sexuality, and Antiquity in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 144.

[201] London, Victoria and Albert Museum 28911F. See Christophe Pollet, *Les Gravures d'Etienne Delaune, 1518-1583* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2001), vol. 2, 693-4.

aforementioned statue from the Villa Giulia, which was handed over to the property of the Borghese in 1607 (**67**).[202]



65 (left). Marcantonio Raimondi after Raffaello, Venus with Cupid, engraving, 1510-1527.
66 (right). Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio, after Rosso Fiorentino, Venus and Cupid, engraving, 1526.



67. Philippe Thomassin, Armed Venus and Cupid, now in the Louvre (MA 370), engraving, 1610.
68. Philippe Thomassin, Venus Kallipygos, which is now in the Archaeological Museum of Naples (6020), engraving, 1610.
69. Philippe Thomassin, Venus with a small dolphin (lost), engraving, 1610.
70. Philippe Thomassin, Venus with a large dolphin (lost), engraving, 1610.

These graphics could perhaps have led to the erroneous assumption that an alcove with an ancient statue of Venus was a common part of the decoration of Italian residences in the 16th century. The exact opposite was in fact true – they appear only rarely, always inside the residence and not visible from the street. The first evidence of this is from 1524, when Alvise Cornaro built an architectural complex in Padua for the performance of ancient theatrical pieces. On the "Loggia Cornaro" floor, three recesses with statues of ancient deities facing the closed courtyard still exist today.[203]

[202] Philippe Thomassin, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae liber primus* (Rome, 1610), pl. 11, 27 and 33. See Volker Heenes, *Antike in Bildern. Illustrationen in antiquarischen Werken des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Stendal: Winckelmann-Gesellschaft, 2003), 109.
[203] Cf. Giovanni Mariacher, "Scultura e decorazione plastica esterna della Loggia e dell'Odeo Cornaro," in *Alvise Cornaro e il suo tempo*, ed. Lionello Puppi (Padua: Comune di Padova, 1980), 80-85.

On the sides were Diana and Apollo, while Venus and Amor are located on the central line of the structure. Venus with a dolphin at her feet is loosely inspired by ancient statues, but is interpreted in a Christian manner. She holds the flame of love in her raised hand and holds the tail of the dolphin in the other, signifying her control over love.

Venus appears on a façade in Rome around the mid-16th century, but only exceptionally. There is record of such statues in several places, but only one is preserved in Rome's Palazzo Spada, which stands out with its uncommonly rich sculptural collection incorporated into the ambitious architecture. The courtyard of the palace included niches with statues of Olympian deities by Giulio Mazzoni of 1549-1550, among which was also the naked Venus. This was a variation on the ancient Mazarin Venus, from which this statue differs in its more pretentiously chaste nature with the goddess's right hand covering her breasts.[204] While the Olympian gods are characterized by their nakedness on the façades of the Palazzo Spada's courtyard, the street façade shows distinguished warriors and men in togas. According to Simeoni's guide to Rome published in 1558, ancient statues were placed in the niches on both the longer sides of the Villa Giulia's first courtyard. These included a sculptural group of Mars being embraced by Venus, and a sculptural group with an armed Venus and Amor.[205] In comparison to the drawings based on ancient statues of Venus and the small statuettes that reproduced or modified them, it is surprising at first glance how few monumental statues of this goddess were produced in this era. An exception to this rule is the Villa Barbaro.

The Villa Barbaro in northern Italy was designed in classical style by Andrea Palladio, and the wall paintings inspired by ancient mythology were created by Veronese. However, the sculptural decoration of the villa was designed and implemented by the builder himself, Marcantonio Barbaro, an amateur sculptor who created three large statues of Venus in 1558-1559. The stucco statue of the goddess is a part of the decoration of the nymphaeum behind the villa, and stands with Helios on an important spot next around the entrance to the grotto. The goddess is holding an arrow in her raised hand as Amor reaches for it, and is thus characterized by her restraint of her son and thus sexuality in general. However, the inscription accompanying Venus shows that she is also vulnerable when it comes to the spark of love. Venus addresses the visitor: *I am the daughter of the sea and mother of fire, but even an ocean could not extinguish love*.[206] The inscription accompanying Helios emphasizes that, as the god of the sun, he sees everything. Educated guests thus clearly knew that this duo evoked Venus's infidelity, which the all-knowing Helios revealed to the goddess's husband, Vulcan.[207]

In the Villa di Maser, there are two more statues of Venus; one is in slightly larger-than-life size and can be found in the last niche in the left wing of the façade; the second Venus is standing freely in life size and placed on a pedestal before the

---

[204] Cf. Lionello Neppi, *Palazzo Spada* (Rome: Editalia, 1975), fig. 20.

[205] Paris, Louvre MA 370. See Gabriele Simeoni, *Illustratione de gli epitaffi et medaglie antiche* (Lyon: J. de Tournes, 1558), 58. A head that did not belong to it was added to the statue in 16th century, cf. Anna Coliva et al., eds., *I Borghese e l'Antico* (Milan: Skira, 2011), 306, no. 32.

[206] See Carolyn Kolb, ed. Melissa Beck, "The Sculptures on the Nymphaeum Hemicycle of the Villa Barbaro at Maser," *Artibus et Historiae* 18, no.35 (1997): 25.

[207] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.169.

façade. The counterpart to this Venus is the statue of Vulcan, who is hard at work. The goddess calls the visitor's attention to him with a pointed finger. This married couple is the counterpart of the other married couple depicting Juno and Jupiter standing directly before the villa's façade. In light of the fact that Vulcan is placed before his mother Juno and Venus before her father Jupiter, this couple can be interpreted as the representatives of the next generation and all four statues as a family. In accordance with the moralist ideological program of the villa's sculptural decoration, all three statues of Venus have their loins carefully covered. The exceptional concentration of Venus statues in the Villa Barbaro was probably linked to the role of Venus in Venetian state ideology, as this "city on the sea" identified with the goddess, who was also born from the sea.[208] This explains the popularity of paintings of Venus in the city's lagoons, where we find Venus in public space, but in the form of reliefs. On the Loggetta in St. Mark's Square in Venice, there are three marble reliefs on the attic by Danese Cataneo from 1540 celebrating Venice and its domains. Cyprus is represented by the semi-prone Venus emerging from the waves with Amor flying towards her. A part of the rich sculptural decoration of the Loggetta is also a marble relief of Venus drying her hair from the workshop of Jacopo Sansovino.[209]

In the second half of the 16th century, we find the statue of Venus as a part of the fountain decorations in the gardens of palaces and villas, but only exceptionally.[210] In the 1560s in the garden of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in Rome's Quirinal, a pergola or pavilion stood at the center of the "Fontana del bosco" grove, and in it was a rock garden. At the peak of the rocks sat a shepherd with a statue of Venus with two putti. It was a restored ancient original of the Chiaramonti Venus discussed above.[211] Venus is also in the fountain that was created around 1580 by Giovanni Bandini, a pupil of Bandinelli's, for the garden of the Palazzo Budini Gattai in Florence. The naked Venus is characterized by a diadem and Amor on a dolphin at her feet. This is a variation of an ancient original after which Baccio Bandinelli created the aforementioned bronze statue in 1530-1534.[212] Contrary to the ancient statue and its version made by Bandinelli, Bandini's Venus is covering her loins not only with her hand, but also with the richly flowing cloak.

We know the fountain of Venus in the Florentine garden of Giovanni Battista Ricasoli from around 1565 only from literature, but this contemporary account is exceedingly valuable.[213] The garden had a philosophical program that is explained by its author, Cosimo Bartoli, a colleague and friend of Giorgio Vasari. The sculptural decoration intended to emphasize the contrast between the male and female principle embodied by Neptune and Venus. These gods, who were understood as the

---

[208] See Centanni, *Fantasmi dell'antico*, 337-366.

[209] Boucher, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*, vol. 2, no. 27.

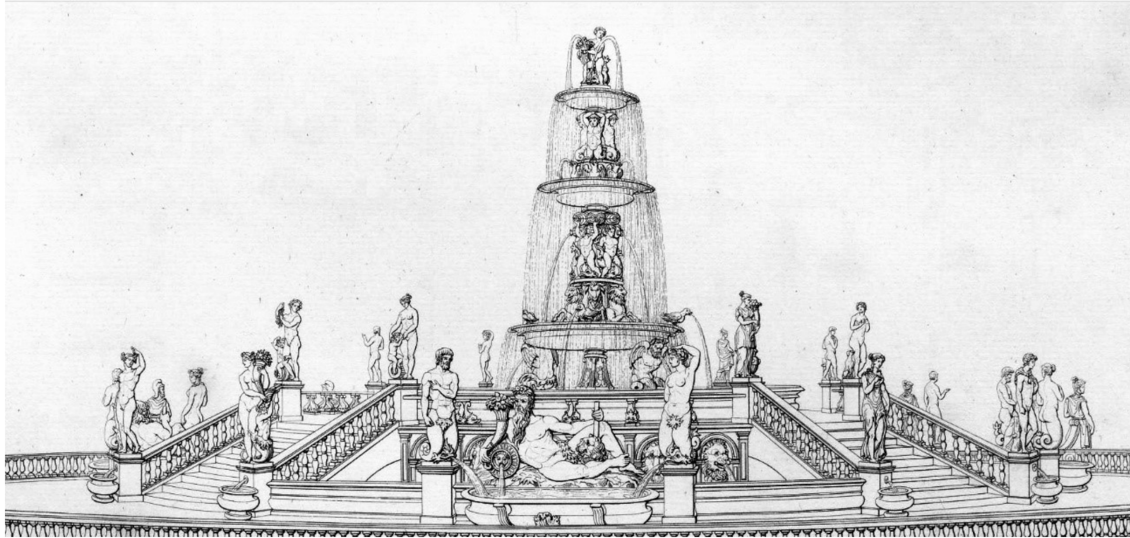
[210] Cf. Stefan Morét, *Der italienische Figurenbrunnen des Cinquecento* (Oberhausen: Athena, 2003).

[211] See Elisabeth B. MacDougall, *Fountains, Statues, and Flowers. Studies in Italian Gardens of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), 30-31.

[212] See Stefano Pierguidi, "Baccio Bandinelli, Carlo V e una nuova ipotesi sulla Venere bronzea del Prado," *Boletín del Museo del Prado* 30 (2012): 44.

[213] See Cosimo Bartoli, *Ragionamenti accademici sopra alcuni luoghi difficili di Dante* (Venice: Francesco de Franceschi Senese, 1567), 18r-21r. Cf. Fabia Jonietz, "The Semantics of Recycling: Cosimo Bartoli's Invenzioni for Giovan Battista Ricasoli," in *Cosimo Bartoli, 1503-1572,* ed. Francesco Paolo Fiore e Daniela Lamberini (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2011), 304-305.

visualization of abstract principles, also represented the contrast between dampness and heat, the basic prerequisite for birth and growth. Neptune and Venus formed central figures at two fountains by the back wall of the garden lined with herms, which together represented the four seasons. The herms of spring and autumn were placed next to Venus, and the goddess was accompanied by Amors and sea creatures with seashells. It is not clear from the description whether the statue of Venus was an ancient original or was created solely for this garden.



71. Fontana Pretoria in Palermo from the south-east, on the staircase on the left is the Venus Verticoria (right) and Vertumnus (left), drawing, 1835.

Statues of Venus were a part of one of the largest fountains of all time, the Fontana Pretoria in Palermo (**71**).[214] This is the "exception that proves the rule" that exhibiting the naked Venus in public was not tolerated in the 16th century. An explanation for this anomaly can be found in the unique circumstances around which the fountain was created. The client commissioning the work was Don Louis de Toledo, brother of Eleonora, the first wife of Cosimo I de'Medici, who lived in Italy, where he was known as Don Luigi. During his stay in the Medici court in Florence, he built a monumental garden. It was dominated by a gigantic fountain with a diameter of 40 meters, for which Florentine sculptor Francesco Camilliani, pupil of Baccio Bandinelli, created statues from 1554 to 1567. When Vasari issued the second edition of his "Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects," the fountain was just nearing completion. Vasari writes of it as the most exquisite fountain in all of Italy.[215] Don Luigi was an educated commissioner of statues with sophisticated tastes. The exceptional status of Venus in the program of his fountain may have been linked to the private life of the Spanish contractor, whose promising career in the hierarchy

---

[214] Cf. Maria Pia Demma and Giuseppina Favara, eds., *La Fontana Pretoria in Palermo: hic fons, cui similis nullus in orbe patet* (Palermo: Assessorato regionale dei beni culturali e ambientali e della pubblica istruzione, 2006); Anatole Tchikine, *Francesco Camiliani and the Florentine Garden of Don Luigi de Toledo: A Study of Fountain Production and Consumption in the Third Quarter of the 16th Century*, 1-2 (Dublin: Trinity College, 2002); Jonietz, *The Semantics of Recycling*, 308-330.

[215] Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 7, 1881, 628: "Fonte stupendissima … che non ha pari in Fiorenza, né forse in Italia."

of the clergy ended when he decided to marry Violante Moscoso. Her origin also damaged him socially, as she was the illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Altamira; nonetheless, he refused to withdraw from his plan despite strong resistance from his family. The fact that Venus's fountain also decorated Don Luigi's garden in Naples, to where he later moved, indicates Don Luigi's special relationship with Venus.[216]

72. Francesco Camilliani, Venus with a Dolphin, h. 1.87 cm, marble statue on the south staircase of Palermo's Fontana Pretoria, 1554-1567.

Don Luigi moved to Naples after the death of his sister in 1562, and dealt with his dismal financial situation by selling the Florentine fountain, which was purchased by Palermo's municipal council in order to place it in the center of the city in front of the town hall building (Palazzo Pretoria). After the statues were moved from Florence, the sculptural decoration of the fountain was built again in 1574-1580 and definitively completed in 1584. On the new site, the statues were given a new arrangement and the collection was also expanded to include new statues. The rich sculptural decoration consists of statues of ancient deities and personifications arranged in two concentrated ovals divided by four stairwells leading to a heightened terrace with a fountain. Statues of deities and personifications stand on the small pillars of the balustrade at the bottom and top of the stairway. Venus is presented here twice, once at the foot of the southern stairway facing the port, and once at the top of the western stairway. The western Venus by Francesco Camilliani of 1554-1567 is a variation on the Louvre-Naples Venus type with one breast unveiled, which was known in Rome since the beginning of the 16th century (**72**). The goddess stands on the water, which is indicated by waves, and holds the tail of a dolphin in her right hand and covers her left breast with her left hand. The statue thus represented the goddess controlling sexuality embodied by the dolphin, and promoting fertility indicated by the hand on the breast. The southern Venus, to whom Amor reaches, by Palermo sculptor of 1573-1580 was inspired by an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi that has already been mentioned

[216] See Giuseppe Ceci, "Pizzofalcone, II," *Napoli nobilissima* 1 (1891): 88-89.

several times above. This statue was destroyed over the course of the first half of the 20th century, and therefore we know it only from old, poor-quality photographs.[217]

The placement of Fontana Pretoria in public space was a highly unique event. Palermo's municipal council decided to use of predicament that the fountain's owner had found himself in to their own advantage. The massive collection of statues was designed in the highest quality and came directly from the cultural center of the time, but was practically impossible to sell. It was too expansive for a private garden, and it was also not suitable for public space, as it was dominated by depictions of naked female bodies. In addition to the two Venuses, a score of other naked women were depicted among the other statues. Comprehensive defenses of the iconographic program are proof of the problematic nature of this project, which was possible only in provincial Sicily. The Palermo fountain initially had a philosophical program similar to the aforementioned fountain of Giovanni Battista Ricasoli in Florence. This fountain, however, was located in a private garden, while the Palermo fountain was on the main square of the city. The ideological program of the fountain's sculptural decoration had to be radically revised in order to correspond to the stance of the highest representatives of the church at the time.

The poet Antonio Veneziano commented on the Palermo fountain during its construction. Veneziano, dubbed the "Sicilian Petrarch," wrote of it in a letter to the mayor of Palermo, Nicolo Antonio Spatafora. It was evidently meant to be published, as the author incorporated epigrams into the text that allowed the individual statues to "speak" to viewers.[218] In Veneziano's description, Venus holds a central position in the fountain's decoration. Adonis is the counterpart of Venus, who is placed on the southern stairwell.[219] The water of the fountain are the tears which the goddess cried for her murdered lover, and they moisten the anemones into which Adonis has transformed after his death. The poet assumes that the visitor to the fountain knows the myth of Adonis, who returns from the underworld in the spring and brings with him a renewal of nature, which is announced each year by the anemones.

Veneziano then interprets the other statue pairs at the feet of the stairwells in a similar manner. The series of statue pairs at the top of the stairways begins with Triptolemus and Ceres as the divine patrons of the fertility of Sicilian soil. Venus follows them on the western stairwell, which in Veneziano's words represents Venus Verticordia (the Changer of Hearts), who: *transforms indecent love to chaste love*.[220] Veneziano also wrote an extensive description of the fountain, in which he elaborated upon the significance of the individual statues. In the context of Venus and the dolphin, he emphasizes that the goddess is the progenitress and giver of life. By doing

---

[217] Tchikine, *Francesco Camiliani*, 41, note 131.

[218] *Lettera di Antonio Vinitiani circa la dispositione delle statue della fontana inanzi la casa della Città.* The letter is not dated, but was probably created in 1579-1580 when all the statues arrived from Florence to Palermo. The letter was published for the first time in 1630 and reprinted in 1646, see Francesco Baronio Manfredi, *De Maiestate Panormitana libri IV*, 1 (Palermo: A. de Isola, 1630), 126-131, and idem, *Antonii Vinitiani Siculi ... Epigrammata quasi omnia, inscriptiones, fontiumquè descriptiones, et triumphales arcus* (Palermo: A. de Isola, 1646), 54-61. Cf. Giuseppe La Monica, ed., *Pantheon ambiguo: La Fontana Pretoria di Palermo nell'analisi formale e nel commento di Antonio Veneziano e Francesco Baronio Manfredi* (Palermo: S.F. Flaccovio, 1987).

[219] Manfredi, *Antonii Vinitiani*, 54.

[220] Manfredi, *Antonii Vinitiani*, 58.

so, Veneziano explains why this Venus's breast is unveiled and covered by her hand, as if she intended to feed the whole world, without mentioning it explicitly.

In 1709, the priest Biagio di Benedetto wrote (but did not publish) a detailed description and interpretation of the statues in the fountain.[221] In another detailed description of the fountain, Leonardo Maria Lo Presti made use of texts both by Veneziano and Di Benedetta.[222] The latter compares the Venus embodying bodily love at the southern stairway and the Venus embodying virgin, divine love on the higher floor of the multi-level fountain at the top of the western stairway. Nonetheless, literary defenses did not manage to influence public opinion in Palermo and the square on which the fountain stands was given the nickname "Piazza della Vergogna" (the Square of Shame) for its depiction of female nakedness.

The monumental statue of Venus in public space can be found on Italian soil also outside the cultural and political centers of the time in Sabbioneta, a miniature Lombardian town founded by Vespasiano I Gonzaga at the end of the 16th century. From 1588 to 1590, Bernardino de'Quadri created plaster statues of the Olympian gods in life size for the interior of a theater there. Among them, Venus is depicted naked with one hand covering her loins and the other over her breasts. The theater in Sabbioneta is the first independently standing theater building and its architecture is not a part of the ducal residence as was the custom of the time.[223] Nonetheless, the theater building was topographically linked to the residences of the founder and ruler of the town, imperial general Vespasiano Gonzaga. The building stood half way between his Palazzo Ducale on the main square and his Palazzo del Giardino, which was located by the city walls. In the theater, the statues of the Olympian gods stand over the platform from which the duke and his court watched the theatrical performances. The statues are workmanlike and lack greater artistic ambitions, but their monumental dimensions and placement in public space characterized the unique status of the ruler of the town and his link to the ancient Roman empire.

Transalpine Europe followed developments in Italy concerning Venus and her function, and even here, statues of this goddess appear only in private residences as a rule.[224] In 1560, Germain Pilon created a wooden statue of Venus accompanied by Juno, Mars and Mercury for the garden of Mary, Queen of Scots in Fontainebleau, which is now lost.[225] Pilon, who was the most famous French sculptor of the second half of the 16th century, also created a monumental sculptural group of Venus and Amor.[226] This Venus is naked; she dries her chest with her left hand while picking up an arrow with her right that is being handed to her by an obedient Amor, who stands on a dolphin. The sculptural group thus had a moralizing message, i.e. the goddess is taking away

---

[221] See Biagio Di Benedetto, "Fontaneo ovvero descrizione della fontana del pretore" published by Marcella La Monica, *La fontana pretoria di Palermo: Analisi stilistica e nuovo commento* (Palermo: Pitti Ed., 2006), 163-164, 212-215.

[222] Leonardo M. Lo Presti, *Nuova, ed esatta descrizione del celeberrimo fonte esistente nella piazza del Palazzo senatorio* (Palermo: Antonio Epiro, 1737).

[223] See Stefano Mazzoni and Ovidio Guaita, *Il teatro di Sabbioneta* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1985, 70-72.

[224] See Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance c. 1520–1580: Art in an Age of Uncertainty* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 198–244.

[225] See Léon Laborde, *Les comptes des Bâtiments du roi (1528-1571), suivis de documents inédits sur les châteaux royaux et les beaux-arts au 16e siècle*, 2 (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1880), 50.

[226] H. 210 cm. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, 1964.

the arrow that arouses passion. The group is standing on a closed seashell and was originally in the center of the fountain, which can be seen in the opening in the dolphin's mouth, which spouted water. The statue differs from all Italian statues in its larger-than-life dimensions.

In 1576, Danish king Frederick II commissioned Georg Labenwolf to create a gigantic fountain for the main courtyard of the palace in Kronborg.[227] The fountain had a total of 36 figures, and at the center was a column six meters high on which Neptune stood. On a column was a statue of Minerva, Juno and the naked Venus with an arrow in one hand and a burning heart in the other. After the Swedish capture of Kronborg, the statues were taken to Drottningholm; today only three statues of the goddesses remain from this collection.[228] Labenwolf created a fountain in Nuremberg, where he also publicly tested it in 1582. A drawing was made for the occasion, which became the basis for a later engraving.[229] Thanks to this drawing, we can create a relatively accurate image of the fountain's appearance. Venus was on a column at the center, Minerva was on the left, and Juno was on the right, and water flowed from all the goddesses' breasts. Venus is naked, but her loins are covered with fabric. Judging by the engraving, she had an arrow in her right hand and a burning heart in her left, which were attributes that pointed to a Christian interpretation. The goddess awakens love for God, but tames sexuality and has therefore taken the arrow away from Amor.

The problematic status of Venus statues in late Renaissance Europe is evidenced by the fate of the sculptures that the aforementioned Willem Danielszoon van Tetrode created to celebrate the ancient goddess. None of the works have been preserved and the sculptures are likely to have been intentionally destroyed. Their author was one of the greatest experts on ancient art of his time, and was surely much more familiar with it than any other of his compatriots. He was from Delft in the Netherlands, but was educated in Italy. In the second half of the 1540s, he worked in the workshop of Benvenuto Cellini in Florence and then in Rome in the workshop of Gugliemo della Porta in the 1550s. In Florence and Rome, Tetrode restored ancient statues and also created smaller-scale copies of them. In 1567, the sculptor returned to Delft and the works that he had created for the local Oude Kerk were highly praised by his contemporaries but were destroyed in the Dutch iconoclasm (Beeldenstorm) of 1573.[230]

The sculptural group of Venus, Jupiter and Mercury was created for the home of rich merchant Peter ter Layn in Cologne, but we know it only from an engraving published by Adriaan de Weerdt in 1574 (**73**).[231] The goddess was leaning at a distinct angle on a tree with her raised left arm with one leg over the other. This sculptural type was created by Greek sculptor Alcamenes at the end of the 5th century. Tetrode combined it with the sculptural type of the naked Venus, whose cloak is behind her, creating a background for the bottom section of her body. Amor stands at Venus's feet with his wings spread, looking up to her and reaching out his hands, which was an ancient image type renewed by Raphael. Tetrode's next sculptural group with Venus

---

[227] Cf. Kristoffer J. Neville, "Frederik II's Gothic Neptune for Kronborg," in *Sculpture and the Nordic Region,* eds. Sara Ayres and Elettra Carbone (London: Routledge, 2017), 12-23.

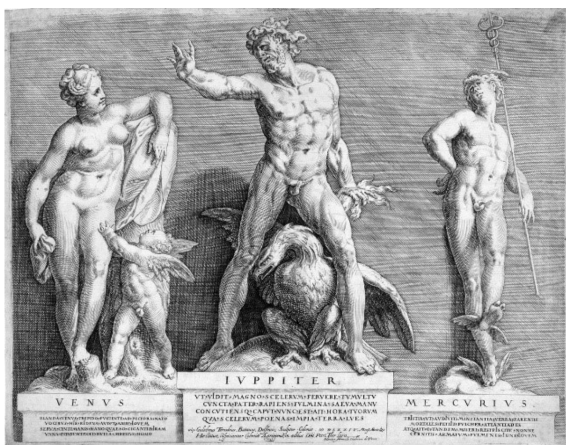
[228] Stockholm, National Museum NMSk 1104.

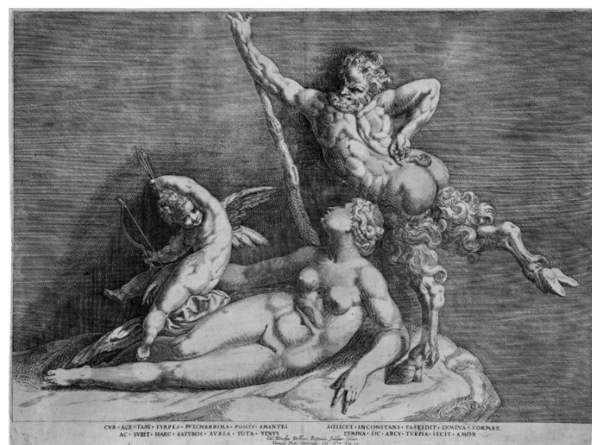
[229] See Johann Gabriel Doppelmayr, *Historische Nachricht von den Nürnbergischen Mathematicis und Künstlern* (Nuremberg: P.C. Monath, 1730), tab 11. Cf. Smith, *German Sculpture*, 243.

[230] See Scholten and van Binnebeke, *Willem van Tetrode*, 8.

[231] Cf. Frits Scholten, *Willem van Tetrode: Sculptor* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2003), no. 40.

was a variation on Giambologna's composition of Venus or Faun gazing at a Nymph (**74**). Faun is leaning over Venus with his legs wide apart and arms at angles; one is lifted upward and the other reaches behind him, following his gaze. This pose was inspired by Laocoön in the famous sculptural group in the Vatican Belvedere, which, however, pictures him in a sitting position. Venus and Amor are depicted in a similarly dramatic pose, which is not explained in any way in the displayed action. In addition, the postures of the depicted figures defy the laws gravity – they would not be able to stay in these positions for more than a second, and all three would otherwise fall to the ground. Sculptors and those who commissioned them were evidently not interested in what the sculptural group represented, but how their complicated postures might capture the viewer's attention. Despite this fact, this group of statues did not escape the iconoclasts and thus we know it also only from an engraving published by Petrus Overraat in 1574.[232]





73 (left). Venus with Cupid, Jupiter and Mercury, engraving after the lost sculpture by van Tetrode, 1574.
74 (right). Venus, Faun and Amor, engraving after the lost sculpture by van Tetrode, 1574.

James Grantham Turner has recently published his book about the "erotic revolution" in Italian art in the first half of the 16th century.[233] Thanks to the systematic study of ancient sculptural works, artists of the time had mastered artistic language so perfectly that they were able to meet the demand for strong designs, which could provoke the senses and evoke physical reactions. However, monumental statues of Venus were surprisingly absent among these works. A period commentary on an engraving representing a statue of the naked Venus holding a seashell in her left hand and a burning heart in her right sheds light on this absence.[234] The fact that the statue of naked Venus also needed to be defended on the engraving explains why we only see it rarely on real façades.

In this engraving of around 1590, Amor represented next to Venus is pointing with his arrow to the inscription under the niche with the group sculpture. The inscription informs us that the engraving depicts a marble statue created by Florence native Ridolfo Sirigatti according to nature (*duce natura*). We know of this statue also

---

[232] Cf. Scholten, *Willem van Tetrode*, no. 49.
[233] Turner, *Eros Visible*.
[234] Hieronymus Wierix after a drawing by Johannes Stradanus: London, The British Museum 1861,0518.204. Cf. Ch. Davis http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/volltexte/2011/1354/ (2011).

from another source, as it is mentioned by Raffaello Borghini: (Sirigatti) *now has in hand, having completed all the limbs, a larger-than-life marble Venus with a Cupid at her feet. Very great grace is already seen in this. The wax model, studied from life, promises that she will have to be a figure of all beauty and perfection.*[235] Borghini was a friend of Florentine collector and amateur artist Sirigatti, and thus the statue surely existed; however, with the exception of a mention of it in a book from 1584 and a graphic from around 1590, we have no further information on it. Borghini's comment that the sculptor created it according to a real model corresponds to what is written on the graphic and the fact that, judging by the engraving, it did not adhere to any ancient model. It is also important to note that the sides of the niche bear inscriptions that interpret Venus in a Christian context, i.e. as the patroness of sexual restraint. Thus, the inscriptions defend both the creation of the statue and the engraving that was created after it.[236]

We may draw several general conclusions from the evidence collected above. Monumental statues of Venus that began to appear in Europe in the second half of the 16th century were usually only variations on ancient models and were only rarely original works created by prominent artists. Another shared characteristic was that they were destined for private residences and were placed in public spaces only in exceptional circumstances. As the example of the sculptural group created by Tetrode shows, even a statue in a private residence could not necessarily save it from iconoclasts. Ancient statues of Venus and statues and paintings inspired by them, which could be destroyed as immoral works endangering the morality of society, became an attribute of the special status of the social elite, who were not required to follow the conventions of the time.

A typical commissioner of a Venus statue was Kryštof Popel of Lobkowicz, the High Steward, which was the most prominent office in the Kingdom of Bohemia after the Burgrave of Prague. It is probably no coincidence that Popel of Lobkowicz ordered a bronze group of statues of Venus with Amor in Nuremberg for the garden of his residence in Prague in the very same year that he gained his prestigious title in 1599 (**75**).[237] The statue stood on the site of today's Šternberský Palace in Prague's Hradčany in close proximity to Rudolph II's imperial residence. Nuremberg builder Wolfgang Jakob Stromer incorporated a drawing of the fountain from the end of the 16th century into his manuscripts, which is proof of the fact that the statue was known beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Bohemia.[238] Another drawing can be found in the graphic collection of Prague's National Gallery.[239] The drawings emphasize the fact that Amor is urinating and water is gushing from Venus's breasts, which was primarily meant to

---

[235] See Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo, in cui della pittura, e della scultura si favella, de' più illustri pittori, e scultori, e delle più famose opere loro si fa mentione* (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1584), 22. English translation Llloyd H. Ellis Jr.

[236] See Ottavio Mirandola, *Illustrium poetarum flores* (Antwerp: Jan van der Loe, 1549), 2r; Tomaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni* (Venice: Somascho, 1585), 717.

[237] Original: Prague, National Gallery P 4606, copy: Prague, Wallenstein Garden. Cf. Jaromír Neumann, (Prague: Academia, 1966), cat. no. 77.

[238] Nuremberg, private collection. See Karel Chytil, *Pražská Venušina fontána od B. Wurzelbauera* (Prague, 1902), pl. 1.

[239] Chytil, *Pražská Venušina fontána*, 16.

capture the attention of viewers of the time and entertain them.[240] The attached inscription lists the full title of the work's commissioner and that the fountain was cast in Nuremberg by Benedikt Wurzelbauer, Labenwolf's protégé. We also know the sculptural group from a later report claiming that Wurzelbauer placed *a new fountain in Prague, which he created with great fame in the year 1600*.[241]

75. Benedikt Wurzelbauer, Nicolaus Pfaff, Venus and Cupid, bronze, h. 123 cm, 1599 (copy in the Waldstein Garden in Prague).

In 1623, Kryštof Popel of Lobkowicz's widow sold the Hradčany residence with the Venus fountain, which was purchased by the high-ranking dignitary Albrecht von Wallenstein, commander-in-chief of the imperial army and admiral of the northern flotilla. He placed the statue in the garden of his magnificent residence in Malá Strana and it remained in his property until 1630, which is evidenced by the bronze plates on the pedestal on which Venus and Amor stand. The Wallenstein coat-of-arms, the name of the owner and his most prominent titles adorn all four of the statue's sides: Duke of Mecklenburg, Prince of Pomerania and Sagan (today's Żagań). In this manner, Albrecht von Wallenstein identified with Venus in a clearly intentional manner – throughout the whole Wallenstein Palace, this inscription and the coats-of-arms are the only reference to the builder. The statues of Venus enjoyed great prestige in early modern Europe despite (or better to say thanks) that they, aside from few exceptions, had to be hidden away in private gardens.

---

[240] Cf. Morét, *Italienische Figurenbrunnen*, 36; James W P. Campbell and Amy Boyington, "The Problems of Meaning and Use of the Puer Mingens Motif in Fountain Design 1400–1700," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 38 (2018), 247-267.

[241] Doppelmayr, *Historische Nachricht*, 296: "zur einem neuen Brunnen in Prag, und richtete selbige A. 1600 ebenfals mit vielen Ruhm allda auf."

Why Giambologna?

Jean Boulogne, known as Giambologna, was born in 1529 in Douai, which at the time belonged to the Netherlands. He came to Rome in 1550, where he thoroughly acquainted himself with ancient sculpture. In 1553, however, he settled in Florence, where he headed a large and extraordinarily prosperous workshop which carried out commissioned work for the Medici court. It is only in the monumental statues of Giambologna where we find Venuses that can rival ancient models in their aesthetic qualities. However, these statues are no different from the bathing women, an essential innovation of Giambologna, who approached all ancient mythological motifs in the same way.[242] Giambologna built upon how Michelangelo and primarily Benvenuto Cellini had depicted the naked body in that he was not interested in spiritual content and the story as such.[243] He replaced the narrative about ancient gods with a narrative of the human body, a prerequisite of which was to replace ancient schemes with the study of live models. Radical limitation of attributes and decorative elements was linked to this, and thus his statues differ from other production of its time thanks to its minimalist concept.

Interest in what the human body looks like and attempts to create a faithful depiction of it appears relatively late in post-ancient art and shows distinct gender differentiation. Men were considered to be physiologically and intellectually superior to women, and therefore Cennino Cennini wrote the following about depicting the human body in his manual on art from around 1400: *I will make you acquainted with the proportions of a man; I omit those of a woman, because there is not one of them perfectly proportioned.*[244] The first attempts at depicting the anatomy of the naked male body according to a live model appear in Italian art around 1470, the first study based on living women appeared as late as the second decade of the 16th century.[245] However, women continue to be overshadowed by the male body. A practical problem was also at play here – artists were by vast majority men, and female models were practically unavailable if one's sister, lover or wife did not agree to pose. In order to master the anatomy of the female body, artists therefore used ancient statues of Venus not only as a supplement, but also as an alternative to a living model.

Giambologna's first marble statue, which he unveiled in Florence, happened to be a Venus; however, it has yet to be identified.[246] Giambologna later created the Fiorenza, the personification of Florence modelled on ancient statues of Venus. The statue was destined for the fountain in the Medici Villa Il Castello, where Botticelli's famous paintings celebrating Venus, the Birth of Venus and Primavera were hung at the time.[247] As early as 1543, Martelli claims that there were plans to place it in the

---

[242] Tommaso Mozzati, "Il tempio di Cnido: Il nudo e il suo linguaggio nell'età di Giambologna," in *Giambologna: Gli dei, gli ero*, eds. Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Dimitrios Zikos (Florence: Giunti, 2006), 67-87.

[243] See Michael W.Cole, "Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name," *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 3 (2008): 338.

[244] Cennino Cenini, *The Book of the Art of*, chapter.70. Translated by Ch. J. Herringham.

[245] Cf. Kren, *The Renaissance Nude*, 86-88, 193-197.

[246] Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 7, 1881, 629; Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 586.

[247] Firenze, Villa La Petraia 74. Cf. Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Dimitrios Zikos, *Giambologna: Gli dei, gli eroi*, eds., Dimitrios (Florence: Giunti, 2006), 2006, 158-160, no. 2; Doris H.: Lehmann, "Tribolos Erbe:

fountain at the center of the labyrinth at the end of the garden in the Il Castello villa.[248] The Medici villas were not only private residences, but also a part of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany's state representation. The personification of the city conceived as a variation on Venus was meant to emphasize the Roman origin of Florence, which its rulers understood as a second Rome. By making reference to Venus as the embodiment of fertility and the element of water, Fiorenza at the same time emphasized that Florence was founded on the confluence of the Arno and Mugnone rivers and water is the source of the prosperity of both the city and the whole state.[249] The ancient sculptural type that formed the model for Fiorenza depicts Venus stepping out of the sea with both hands raised upwards and lifting a lock of her hair for it to dry more quickly. Fiorenza builds upon the abovementined image type of Lombardo's Venus holding a lock of her hair with both hands, thus depicting her wringing out her hair. This motif was emphasized by a pipe hidden in the lock of her wrung hair from which water flowed, a symbol of the vitality of the Medici state.

Creation of the statue of Fiorenza was originally entrusted to Nicollò Tribollo, but he did not manage to realize it by his death in 1550 and the fountain's statue was thus made by Giambologna. Vasari's description of Tribollo's model of the statue tells us that Giambologna adhered closely to it.[250] We can form an idea of the appearance of this model from the version in Aranjuez created by an unknown Florentine sculptor around 1571.[251] Giambologna deviated from Tribollo's model by making the figure much more dynamic. Its left leg is bent as it rests on a vessel on the ground; its right hand is outstretched and the body is depicted in a distinct twisting motion. The result is a more intense impression of the presence of a living woman who at the same time gives off a less erotic impression, as her loins and breasts are more hidden and the dynamic pose takes attention away from them. The same effect is made by the only slightly wavy hair falling tightly around its head, as one of the primary sources of erotic attraction in the 16th century was curly, voluminous hair.[252] Giambologna's concept of hair was in contradiction not only to the fashion of the time, but also with the way Venus was depicted in antiquity. On the contrary, the statue in Aranjuez adheres to ancient patterns, as its hair is richly curled in a complex hairstyle including a Florentine lily. Nonetheless, Giambologna clearly held his version of Fiorenza in high esteem, as his portrait from the end of the 16th century shows a cast of Venus/Fiorenza in his studio.[253] The fact that the statue's relationship to Venus was generally understood at the time the statue was created is seen in the statue by Giambologna's successor, who added Amor to the statue and replaced the vase with a dolphin (**76**).[254] This bronze statue of 1575-1580 is not a cast of Giambologna's statue; it has slimmer

---

Giambolognas Fiorenza Anadyomene," in *Leibhafte Kunst. Statuen und kulturelle Identität*, in Dietrich Boschung und Christiane Vorster, eds., (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 179-200.

[248] See Nicollò Martelli, *Primo libro di lettere* (Florence, 1546), 30v.

[249] Cf. Compton, *Venus and the Arts of Love*, 203-241.

[250] Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 6, 1881, 79.

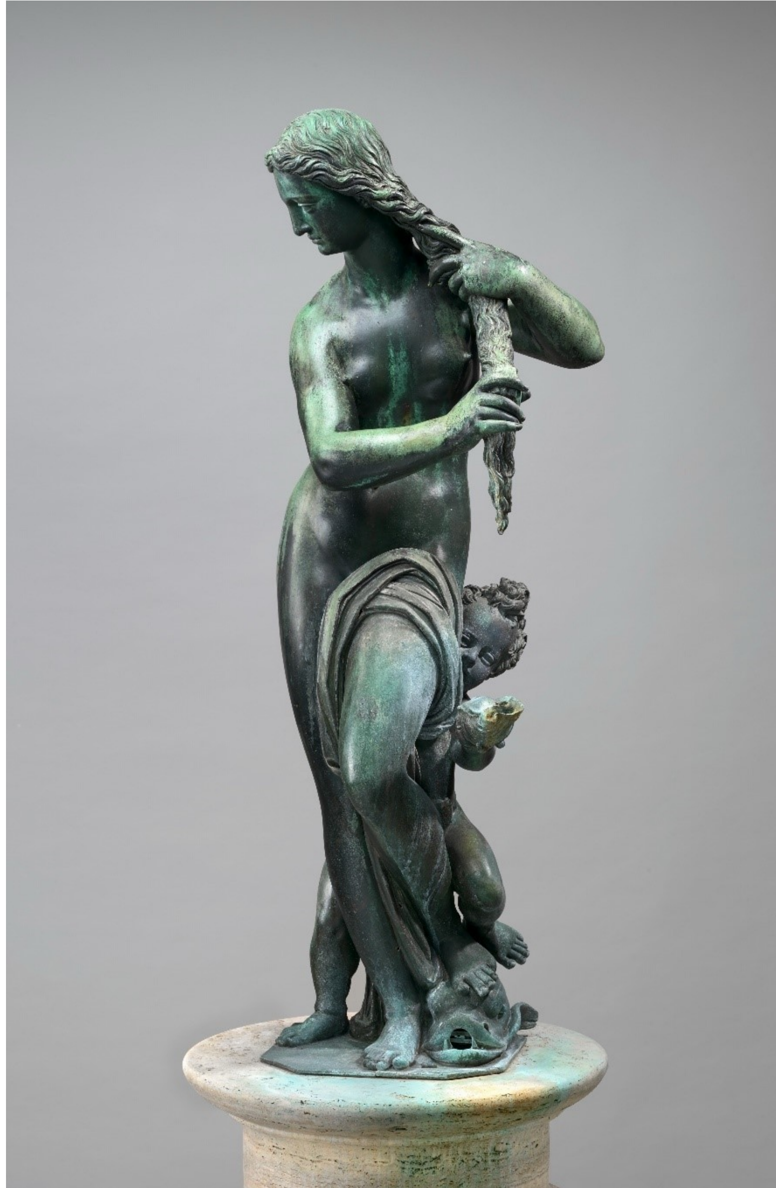
[251] Madrid, Palacio Real de Aranjuez, Jardines de la Isla. Cf. Margarita M. Estella, "La fuente de la Venus de Aranjuez, obra de Francisco Moschino," *Archivo Español de Arte* 58 (2007), 89-93.

[252] See Elena Lazzarini, *Nudo, arte e decoro: Oscillazioni estetiche negli scritti d'arte del Cinquecento* (Pisa: Pacini, 2010), 47-51.

[253] National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburg. See Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna,* 138, fig. 17.

[254] Washington, NG 1991.242.1. Cf. Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard*, vol. 1, 414-416.

proportions, the facial expression is different, and its general concept also differs. We find in it an anecdotal motif – Amor is catching the water flowing from Venus's hair into a seashell.

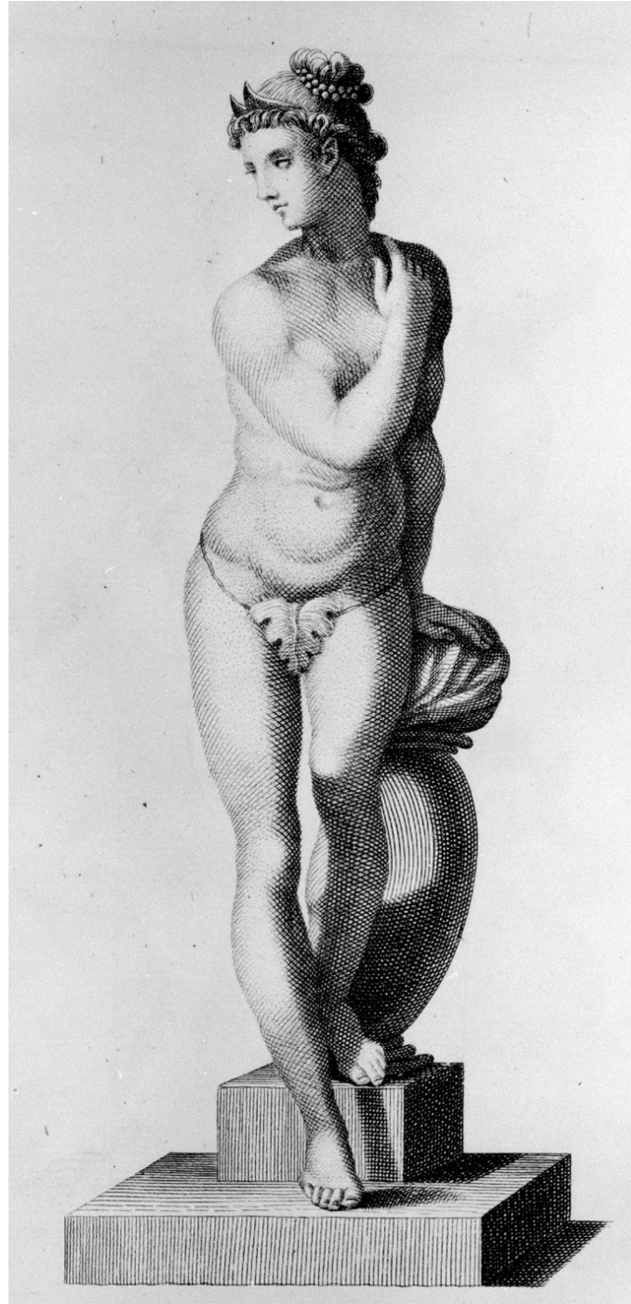


76. Successor to Giambologna, Venus and Cupid, h. 124.5 cm, bronze sculpture, 1575-1580.

Giambologna's most significant work is the statue known as the Groticella Venus (77). In 1548, the statue was located in the bedroom of Tuscan Grand Duke Francesco de'Medici.[255] The statue is now placed in the back grotto of Buontalenti's Grotto Grande in the Boboli Gardens by the Pitti Palace in Florence. The statue was not necessarily conceived as Venus, although the goddess is implied by the Isis knot, diadem and traditional attributes, e.g. nakedness, or a vase with a cloak thrown over it that she holds with one hand while the other is lifted to her chest. However, she is not covering her breasts with her raised hand or handling the cloak with her free hand, which simply rests upon the cloth. In Giambologna's Venuses, the ancient goddess

[255] See Charles Avery, *Giambologna* (Florence: Cantini, 1987), 107.

and her medieval reinterpretation have disappeared almost without a trace from the perspective of both content and form, as Giambologna's models were not ancient statues of Venus, but living women.



77. Giambologna, Venus di Groticella, height 131 cm, marble statue, ca. 1570.
78. Venus di Groticella with undergarments, engraving, 1789.

The Groticella Venus is also characterized by the fact that the sculptor was much more interested in the technical skill and brilliance than in the depicted theme. The goddess is depicted in an almost complete twisting motion with her head turning behind her. The precariousness of her stance is caused by the fact that she is seemingly ascending, standing with her right leg on the polygonal base and stepping with the other onto the cylindrical pillar that takes up the whole surface of the base, not allowing her to stand in any other way. She uses her left hand to lean on the high vase

resting on the pillar. The statue's stability is ensured by the cloak thrown over the vase and flowing down it; however, if it had been made from real cloth and not marble, the goddess would have tumbled to the ground. The gesture of her right hand is also unjustified, as its outstretched fingers are resting on the chest of the left shoulder. Giambologna's statues may have nakedness and attributes in common with ancient sculptural types, but they primarily evoke bathing women. Fiorenza was the personification of the city, and thus could chastely display her nakedness; the Venus from the Boboli Gardens differs from her in that she is even more chaste, as she is covering her breasts with her left hand. This, however, was of no use, as she was still met with criticism on the part of the prudish public. Venus was therefore forced to put on undergarments, which were only removed as late as the 19th century (**78**).[256]

Giambologna's efforts to reform the ancient sculptural type depicting Venus culminated in a work from 1584 for Giangiorgo Cesarini, which today is the pride of the American Embassy in Rome.[257] The goddess is indicated in the marble Cesarini Venus only by her nakedness, her hair in the Isis knot, and the insinuation of bathing. The ancient attributes of Venus are wholly overshadowed here by an action observed from a living model, as Venus dries the skin under her breast. Ancient Greek and Roman statues depict the goddess taking off her clothing or sandals, or wringing out her hair, but she is never drying herself. Giambologna's statue, however, does not depict a genre scene. The statue does not evoke the intimacy of a bathroom, and the sculptor has shifted the concrete action to an abstract level in the same way as with the Groticella Venus, who stands in a similar and inconceivable position but still looks natural despite this fact. The goddess is depicted in a twisting motion, with one foot on a pillar. With her right hand, she holds her cloak, the bottom end of which lies on the pillar while its top end is thrown over her thigh. The waves of cloth are imitated so brilliantly in the marble that the viewer does not mind that the action does not make sense, aside from the fact that it generally evokes bathing. It is characteristic that this monumental statue was created by making a life-size copy of Giambologna's small bronze statuette, which he created twenty years earlier, i.e. around 1565, as a part of a Medici gift to Emperor Maximilian II.[258] This model was used later by Giambologna's workshop to create numerous bronze statuettes, which promoted this new concept of depicting Venus throughout Europe.

Giambologna's workshop also created a whole series of statuettes of women drying themselves, which can be interpreted as Venuses or Nymphs.[259] He was highly successful with them, which is evidenced by the fact that they were immediately imitated, and a number of these copies continues on until the beginning of the 18th century. The closest to the statue of the Cesarini Venus type is the bronze statuette in Ufizzi of a woman with her foot on a vessel as she leans down to dry her foot with the cloth that is draped over her raised thigh.[260] Her left hand, which holds the cloth, is lifted upwards, which Giambologna adopted from the ancient sculpture type of the

---

[256] See Francesco Maria Soldini, *Il reale giardino di Boboli nella sua pianta e nelle sue statue* (Florence 1789), pl. VIII.

[257] Roma, Palazzo Margherita, h. 154 cm. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, no. 17.

[258] Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum 5874. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna,* 203, no. 21. 203.

[259] Manfred Leithe-Jasper, "Venere dopo il bagno, prima e dopo la Venere Cesarini," in Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 189-191.

[260] Firenze, Museo nazionale del Bargello 71B. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 202, no. 20.

goddess taking off her sandal which was renewed at the beginning of the 16th century. In this model, the highly raised elbow was justified, as the goddess was using it to lean on something. Giambologna, however, left out the support, leaving the gesture with just one function – to catch the viewer's attention via its lack of function and draw attention away from the goddess's nakedness.

On the statuette that was created after the Cesarini Venus around 1565, the naked woman is also drying the skin under her breast, but is crouching with one knee on the cloth.[261] We know this statuette from many later variations.[262] The piece of cloth that the goddess uses to dry herself is an unraveled part of a turban that she holds with her right hand, which is raised behind her. The viewers are not bothered by the impossible action, as they are wholly preoccupied with the shapes of the female body, which the sculptor has shown them in complete nakedness. The ancient sculptural type of the crouching Venus which Giambologna saw in Rome or knew from graphics or drawings also gave inspiration to another statuette, which was created around 1560. The crouching woman is pressing the drapery to her chest, but at the same time she is turning upwards and lifting her hand, a gesture that can be interpreted as the expression of surprise or fear.[263]

The composition of these statuettes gave rise to a marble statue just slightly smaller than life-size, which depicts a naked woman sitting on a pillar and drying her lifted foot off with cloth (**79**). The ancient model for this may have been the sitting Nymphs putting their sandals on. On Giambologna's statue, the woman is holding a vessel in her raised hand, which was a gesture typical for depictions of Psyche. In the popular image type, a gesture is a semantic element – Psyche is holding the vessel that she has just received from Persephone in the underworld in order to take it to the earth's surface and pass it on to Aphrodite. Giambologna's statue certainly does not depict Psyche, as she was not likely to be drying her foot during her dramatic journey from the underworld. Francesco de'Medici sent the statue as a diplomatic present to his brother-in-law, Bavarian Duke Albert V.[264] The statue was located in Munich until 1630, when it was taken away by the Swedish army in their spoils of war. The statue entered Protestant Sweden as Bathsheba, evidently to excuse its nakedness. The definitive version of this composition is represented by the recently discovered bronze statue of the bathing Venus, which likely belonged to a collection of statues given by Ferdinand I de'Medici to French King Henry IV to decorate the garden of the royal palace in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.[265] The bronze statue differs from the marble version in that Venus's hand is partially covering her face, which the viewer can see only when he walks around the statue. The intentional incompletion of various parts of the statue is another characteristic that serves to give the impression that the depicted figure is escaping the viewer. The hair tied back into plaits is created in detail in order to evoke

---

[261] Firenze, Museo nazionale Bargello 62. Cf. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 199-200, no. 18.
[262] E.g. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 24.212.15.
[263] H. 9.7 cm. Firenze, Museo nazionale Bargello 69B. Cf. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 201, no. 19.
[264] Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 587.
[265] Private collection. Cf. Alexander Rudigier, "Les bronzes envoyés de Florence à Saint-Germain-en-Laye, la Vénus de 1597 et les dernières oeuvres de Jean Bologne," *Bulletin Monumental* 174 (2016): 287-356; Alexander Rudigier and Blanca Truyols, *Giambologna. Court Sculptor to Ferdinando I*. Paul Holberton Publishing, London 2019.

the impression of the goddess's presence, while other parts are only hinted at and thus look as if they were blurred.

79. Giambologna, Venus / bathing woman, height 115 cm, marble statue, 1571–1573.

The series of statues in Dresden points to the ancient myth, but here Giambologna created only a sleeping female figure loosely inspired by ancient sleeping nymphs. Someone else, probably his protégé Adriaen de Vries, added on the Satyr.[266] When the series of statues was recorded in the inventory of Dresden's Kunstkammer in 1587, the figures were marked down as Satyr and a woman.[267] The

[266] Dresden, Skulturensammlung IX34. Cf. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 207, no. 23; Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, "Giambolognas Venus und Satyr in Dresden: Ein durchdachtes Geschenk für einen Florenz-Bewunderer," in *Docta Manus. Studien zur italienischen Skulptur für Joachim Poeschke,* ed. Johannes Myssok and Jürgen Wiener (Münster: Rhema, 2007), 301-312.
[267] Dresden, Kunstkammerinventar, 1587, fol. 66r.

unclear identity of Giambologna's Venuses was nothing uncommon in Italy in the 16th century. Such a figure, which could have been a woman, a nymph, or Venus herself even had its own name – "Venerina", literally "little Venus". On his engraving of 1592, Annibale Carracci replaced the Nymph with a reclining Venus and emphasized the scene by adding Amor to accompany her.[268] Satyr is even more prying as he removes the blanket in order to take pleasure in the sight of the goddess's loins. One seemingly secondary detail here is also worth mentioning – the loins on Carracci's engraving are not smooth as was the rule in antiquity and Italian art of the 16th century, but depicted realistically as was common in the Middle Ages.

Flemish sculptor Hans Mont, Giambologna's pupil with whom he cooperated in Florence, worked in the Prague court of Emperor Rudolph II. Three group sculptures depicting Venus with her lover are attributed to Hans Mont. In his work, the mythical motif intertwines with the depiction of two lovers who are linked only loosely to the mythical tale. It is not clear who the naked man and woman depict on the group sculpture from around 1580, which was taken from Prague Castle to Sweden as a spoil of war.[269] They are sitting next to one another, embracing firmly, but have distanced themselves for a moment to look into each other's eyes. The naked woman may be Venus, as Amor stands at her side with a bow in his free right hand and a quiver hanging over his shoulder. However, the small deity takes no notice of the embracing couple located behind him and is turned to the viewer, whom he greets or blesses with his raised hand. On the Stockholm group sculpture, Venus's partner tends to be labelled as Adonis, but the small dog at his feet on the other side of the statue group is not a hunting breed, but a house pet, probably a symbol of fidelity in marriage. The identity of the lover was evidently unimportant to the sculptor, as he did not equip him with any attributes, and therefore he cannot be considered to be Mars, which is the only alternative to Adonis.

The small group sculpture in the Getty Museum of embracing, naked lovers created by Hans Mont in 1580 is without a doubt Venus and Mars, as the man is wearing a helmet.[270] Venus is sitting in her lover's lap in a conspicuous and unnatural acrobatic position, the purpose of which is to expose her loins to plain sight, as they are the counterpart to Mars's attribute of war (a part of Venus's left hand and Mars's left hand are later additions). Hans Mont's alabaster statuette from around 1580 is one of the few works from Rudolph's art collection that have remained in Prague.[271] Mars is characterized by a helmet and the armor on which the two sit. The lovers face one another, but the goddess is pulling herself away from Mars as if wishing to depart; her body is bent and her loins dominate the group sculpture similarly to the group sculpture in the Getty Museum. A German private collection contains a bronze cast that was created after a model of the alabaster statuette and shows the appearance of the work before the lost hands were added on.[272]

---

[268] E.g. Washington, National Gallery of Art 2008.104.11. See Diane DeGrazia, *Prints and Related Drawings by the Carracci Family* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 17.

[269] H. 117 cm, ca. 1580. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum NMDrhSk 141. See Jürgen Schultze, ed., *Prag um 1600 - Kunst und Kultur am Hofe Rudolfs II.* (Freren: Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen, 1988), cat. 72.

[270] Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 85.SB.75. See Eikelmann, *Bella figura*, 214-216, no. 22..

[271] H. 37 cm. Prague, National gallery P5820.

[272] See Eliška Fučíková et al. (eds.) *Rudolf II and Prague: The Court and the City* (London: Thames and Hudson), 1997, no. I.117.

Sculptor of Dutch origin Hubert Gerhard, who was the court sculptor for William V, Duke of Bavaria from 1584 to 1598, took an approach to Venus that was similar to Hans Mont. Before his arrival to Germany, the sculptor perfectly mastered Giambologna's style during his stay in Florence. From 1582, Gerhard worked in southern Germany and Tyrol and his first patron was Hans Fugger, an educated humanist member of a prominent merchant dynasty. Gerhard created the terracotta figural decoration of the marble fireplace of Fugger's chateau in 1587. Vulcan is hammering out a chain on an anvil at the top, and under him are the semi-reclining figures of Mars and Venus, who are caught up in an animated conversation, which is indicated by the gestures of their hands and their heads turned towards one another. Mars is characterized by his helmet, and Venus by her complex hairstyle and the bracelet on her arm; the gods are otherwise naked, but Venus's loins are covered with drapery. Hubert Gerhard differs from Giambologna and Hans Mont in the moralizing message of his statues. While the lovers over the door in Kirchheim are chatting carelessly, the deceived husband is vigorously wielding his hammer to finish the shackles which he will use to punish his wife and her lover.[273]

Hubert Gerhard created a gigantic fountain of Mars and Venus for the courtyard of the castle of Hans Fugger, which was completed and exhibited on the site in 1595.[274] The whole fountain was originally around 7 or 8 meters high, and the sitting Mars and Venus is 210 cm high; the naked figures are thus depicted in distinct larger-than-life size. The couple sit closely next to one another and Mars's leg is placed over Venus's. This motif of crossed legs was used frequently from the 16th century as a symbol of love, sexuality and birth.[275] Mars is fully occupied by Venus; he looks into her eyes, tightly embracing and pulling her close with his left hand while his right hand is placed on her breast. Colossal figures at the centers of fountains have appeared in Italy since the mid-16th century.[276] Hans Fugger evidently wished for something similar for the center of his residence, despite the fact that no colossal statues of Venus had been created in Italy. The intimate group of lovers is suitable exclusively for a small sculpture, but gives an awkward impression when enlarged to a monumental scale. Such a visible offence to good taste was unlikely for such an ambitious client as Hans Fugger was. He most likely understood the group more as an allegory than as lovers.

Venus, who is characterized by a diadem, is pulling Mars towards her with her right hand, embracing him around the shoulders; however, she is not looking at him, but at an apple, a symbol of victory, which she holds in her raised left hand. The figure of the child under the couple is interpreted as Amor, but he has neither wings nor a bow, quiver or arrows. Instead of Amor's common attributes, he holds a bunch of grapes, which would point more to a deity linked to Bacchus and fertility. The boy is turning around to look up to Venus and reaching for the apple with his left hand. The group on the fountain evidently depicts Mars as the personification of war, and Venus as the one preventing its outbreak through her love. She has evidently been successful:

---

[273] Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard*, vol.2, 26 (B7), 216.
[274] Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum R 6986. Cf. Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard*, vol. 1, 206- 219, II, cat. G7 p. 146-147; Eikelmann, *Bella figura*, no. 65 p. 352-358
[275] Cf. Lep Steineberg, *The Metaphors of Love and Birth in Michelangelo's Pietàs* (London: Basic Books, 1970).
[276] Cf. Virginia Busch, *The Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento* (New York: Garland, 1976).

in the next moment the child, i.e. Peace, will take the victorious trophy, i.e. the apple, in order to instate prosperity, which is symbolized by the bunch of grapes.

The group of statues created for Kirchheim is closely linked to the small bronze sculptural group by Hubert Gerhard from the 1580s, which Rudolf II held in his Prague collection.[277] However, it is not clear whom the work was created for. The composition is similar, i.e. the naked Mars sits next to the naked Venus with covered loins, and he pulls her close to him with both hands. He is not looking at her but at the burning heart held by the goddess in her outstretched right hand so Mars cannot reach it. Venus here has turned her back to Mars and looks at him imploringly; with her left hand, she tries lightly to pull away his hand, which grips her shoulder. In this sculptural group as well, Venus is wholly occupying Mars, and thus peace rules the earth. Amor is making use of this favorable situation, as he hides from the couple and lies down on a chest, which may symbolize the wealth that peace brings.

A typical example of a statue in Giambologna's style is the bronze statue created in 15580-1590 by Francesco Brambilla the Younger. The figure uses her left hand to dry her right side with cloth while looking in the opposite direction.[278] She is holding a seashell under her breast, an action that collides with the movement of her left hand. These Venuses from the end of the 16th century are made in life size and were intended exclusively for private residences. It is likely that Brambilla's statue was originally destined for the garden of the Lainate villa near Milan. As stressed above, Giambologna's reform of the Venus statue fundamentally influenced the production of statuettes. The Venus by Tiziano Aspetti of ca. 1600 is turning and stepping over a sleeping Amor and a dolphin as water pours from its mouth; the cloak is thrown over her back with one end wrapped around her lowered right hand and the other end held in her raised left hand.[279] The only explanation of the act with the cloak is that she is drying her back. In any case, she is not attempting to hide her nakedness, but on the contrary is calling attention to it. By doing so, she expresses her relationship with the statue representing Mars placed next to her.

For Giambologna and his successors, the primary means used to emphasize the fact Venus is not a common woman are her awkward poses, which are not justified by any specific activity. These differentiate the depiction of the goddess from common bathing women– the Venuses usually stand in an exaggerated contrapposto and their bodies are often turned so that their legs face in the opposite direction of the head. It is therefore no surprise that Giambologna's workshop produced Renaissance variations of Venus Callipyge, for which such an acrobatic position is characteristic.[280] Nonetheless, Italian statues of Venus from the last third of the 16th century usually distance themselves from their antique originals, and the shapes of their bodies are fuller and rounder. The relationship with the myth of Venus is limited only to connections with dolphins and Amor. The most commonly depicted act is Venus drying her body with bundled cloth, and thus the series of depictions of the goddess gradually shifted to depictions of a mortal woman in the privacy of her bathroom or

---

[277] Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer no. 5848. Cf. Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard*, vol.2, 158-159 (G 16); Eikelmann, *Bella figura*, no. 23 p. 218-220.
[278] Washington, National Gallery 1937.1.132.
[279] New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 66.111
[280] E.g. Antonio Susini, 1600-1624. London, Victoria and Albert Museum A.141-1910.

bedroom. These depictions are only linked to Venus in that the goddess was also depicted naked. It is also important to note that these statues of Venus may have aroused erotic thoughts, but the depicted goddess was in no way prompting the viewer to have them. She is wholly ignoring the surrounding world and the men or women who are watching her, and is wholly focused on herself and care for her body.

Return of the Demon

As stated above, Renaissance sculptors could not fully revive the ancient models of naked Venus. Mainly because of them, collectors had to be very cautious in the way they staged their collections to avoid being accused of idolatry. Julius II was aware of what a revolutionary act he was committing when he founded the public gallery in the Belvedere, which included the naked goddess. He, therefore, placed the inscription PROCUL ESTE, PROPHANI (*uninitiated, be gone*) over the entrance.[281] Nonetheless, ancient sculptures were exhibited here in alcoves and on pedestals, likening them to statues on Christian altars located in the apses of cathedrals, which was noted by Cesare Trivulzio during the opening of the Belvedere.[282] Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola mentioned "fake gods" exhibited on "altars" in Cortille del Belvedere in 1512. He published his poem "The Expulsion of Venus and Cupid" together with a letter that the author wrote to his friend Lilius Gyraldus. The author views the court as proof of the moral depravity of his time: *The poem was occasioned by the ancient statue of Venus and Cupid ... Truly in this statue it was possible to perceive at the same time the gifts of the maker and to reflect about the way in which the darkness of the false superstition had been put to flight by the true religion that not even the images of these gods could be seen except in broken fragments and almost withered away*.[283] In Giovanni Francesco's words, Venus is an evil demon, which has fortunately been chastened by the Christian faith, and therefore only the fragments of statues that prove its defeat remain. Nevertheless, the author acknowledges that the greater the mastery of the sculptors, the greater the danger of the statues.

An inscription which defended the exhibition of naked ancient statues had been a part of the Roman collection of the rich banker and merchant Jacopo Galli since the end of the 15th century. In a conspicuous place among his exhibits was the pseudo-ancient Latin inscription: *Virtue excludes no one, it is open to all, to it noble house or wealth do not matter, but instead it contents itself with the naked individual*.[284] This was an abridged quote of Seneca, in which nakedness is understood figuratively as the

---

[281] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6, 258. Cf. Francesco Albertini, *Opusculum de mirabilibus novae et veteris urbis Romae* (Rome: Jacobus Mazochius, 1510), fol. Qr-v.

[282] See Hans Henrik Brummer, *The Statue Court in the Vatican Belvedere* (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1970), 75.

[283] Pico della Mirandola, *De Venere et Cupidine expellendis* (Rome: Iacobus Mazochius, 1513). English translation E. Gombrich. See Katherine M. Bentz, "Ancient Idols, Lascivious Statues, and Sixteenth-Century Viewers in Roman Gardens," in *Receptions of Antiquity, Constructions of Gender in European Art, 1300-1600,* eds. Marice Rose and Alison C. Poe (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 420-422.

[284] Pietro Sabino and Fra Giocondo: Sara Magister, "Censimento delle collezioni di antichità a Roma. 1471-1503," *Xenia antiqua* 8 (1999): 166; idem, "Censimento delle collezioni di antichità a Roma. 1471-1503. Addenda," *Xenia antiqua* 10 (2001): 125.

opposite of deception and disguise.[285] In the work that the quote comes from, Seneca also applies this figurative interpretation to statues, specifically to three unveiled Graces: *it is fitting that there should be nothing to bind or restrict them, and so the maidens wear flowing robes, and these, too, are transparent because benefits desire to be seen.*[286] According to Lyon antiquarian Guillaume du Choul, nakedness was an attribute of truth and virtue in ancient art. He wrote on this topic in his French treatise on Roman religion based on ancient coins from 1556. The work was subsequently translated into Italian and was one of the sources of Ripa's bestselling work "Iconologia".[287]

Du Choul defends his thesis on nakedness as an attribute of virtue with the argument that Roman coins depicted the naked Hercules with the inscription VIRTUTI AUGUSTI / TO THE VIRTUE OF THE EMPEROR .[288] According to Du Choul, we must interpret Hercules's nakedness symbolically, just as we do his club and lion's skin. It is obvious that he did not walk the world naked: *The club and lion skin are the most powerful things in the world and virtue is always depicted naked, as someone who does not strive towards riches, but immortality, glory and honor, as we read on the ancient marble, which bears the inscription VIRTUS NUDO HOMINE CONTENTA EST.*[289] Du Choul presents Seneca's quote as an ancient inscription that he read on marble, and therefore he may have known it from Mazzochi's catalogue of ancient inscriptions in Rome, which included the epigram from the Galli residence.[290] Seneca's quote was evidently popular between Roman collectors, as we find it on a pseudo-ancient Latin inscription in the Carafa collection.[291] The architectural framework in Tobias Fendt's catalogue may be an addition made by an engraver, but may also have been inspired by the way the inscription was displayed in the villa of Cardinal Oliviero Carafa.[292] The inscription is placed over a half-circular reservoir of water, the side of which is decorated with scenes showing naked figures.

The most popular strategy selected by Roman collectors to defend their collections of ancient statues was presenting them as publicly beneficial institutions that served to perfect the visual arts and the audience's tastes. Cardinal Cesarini placed a telling inscription over the entrance to his garden with ancient statues, among which was the naked Venus: *Giuliano Cesarini, Cardinal Deacon of Sant'Angelo, dedicated this dieta of statues to his own studies and to the decorous pleasure (honestae voluptae) of his countrymen on his 34th birthday, the 1th Kalends of June, in the year 1500, the 8th year of Pope Alexander VI's reign, and the 2233rd year from the founding of Rome*.[293] The owner of the collection used this inscription to endorse the tradition begun by Pope Sixtus IV, who devoted statues from the papal collection to the Campidoglio so all could enjoy them. By dating the inscription to the year "from the founding of Rome," Cesarini was

---

[285] Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, 3.18.2.

[286] Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, 1.4.

[287] Guillaume du Choul, *Discours de la religion des anciens Romains* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouille, 1556); idem, *Discorso della religione antica de Romani* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouille, 1559); Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, ed. Sonia Maffei (Turin: S. G. Einaudi, 2012), 595-597, note 1 on p. 842.

[288] Du Choul, *Discours*, 34; idem, *Discorso*, 33.

[289] Du Choul, *Discorso*, 148. Cf. idem, *Discours*, 174-175.

[290] See Jacopo Mazzochi, ed., *Epigrammata antiquae Urbis* (Rome: Jacopo Mazochi, 1521), 97v.

[291] Christian, *Empire without End*, 292-293.

[292] See Tobias Fendt, *Monumenta sepulcrorum cum epigraphis ingenio et doctrina exellentium virorum* (Wrocław: Kryspin Scharffenberg, 1574), 111.

[293] Christian, *Empire without End*, 197.

also emphasizing the fact that the collection was a part of ancestral cultural heritage, which had to be cared for.

Clear proof of the fact that the ownership of ancient statues in Renaissance Italy was not a common phenomenon can be found in the caution with which Andrea della Valle approached his massive collection. He was promoted to cardinal in 1517, and in 1526 he began to build a new palace (Palazzo Della Valle-Del Bufalo) north of his native home. In 1527, catastrophe struck Rome when the imperial army ransacked and pillaged the city. Catholic Rome was brutally exposed to imperial Protestant mercenaries, for whom ancient statues were deplorable pagan idols, proof of the moral depravity of papal Rome. The della Valle Family maintained good relations with the imperial side, and was thus not only spared from the pillaging but was able to make use of the situation to enlarge its collection. In order to display the ancient exhibits, Lorenzo Lotti (Lorenzetto) modified the walls of the palace courtyard in a unified manner. Statues were placed in rectangular alcoves and niches, portrait busts in circular alcoves, and reliefs in an ornamental rectangular framework.[294] An important part of the decoration also included eight inscriptions, which the cardinal had placed on the western and eastern side of the courtyard. The inscriptions run next to one another above the ancient sculptural works, and function as a sort of heading that instructs the visitor on how to understand the artworks.

The inscriptions, which were evidently formulated by the builder himself, emphasize Andrea della Valle's relationship with ancient Rome. Through these inscriptions, the cardinal emphasized that these rare works of art would have been destroyed without his intervention; nonetheless, he protests against any accusation of excessive self-glorification. The statues are thus mere decoration, adding pleasantness to life. The inscriptions urge the visitor to view the courtyard and its statues as a garden meant to inspire artists. At the same time, the owner of the gallery was also defending himself from any rebukes that the collection was mere profligacy; by exhibiting these expensive items, the cardinal is suggesting others to surround themselves with luxury as well. The inscriptions accentuating those whom the works of art are intended for are also important. They are exhibited for the pleasure of the cardinal, who has allowed guests from the city and abroad to access them; however, this access is controlled. It is implicitly emphasized in the inscriptions that these works do not serve as instruction or education; they have been exhibited exclusively for their beauty and aesthetic pleasure. The inclusion of the statues into a pre-planned architectural framework that they must conform to also pointed to this fact. The works of art not only lost their uniqueness in this new context, but were also made less accessible. Visitors saw the ancient works of art from afar and could not walk around them.

The critical approach to statues of ancient gods gained significant intensity after the end of the Council of Trent, which began to take up arms against the "errors" and "falsities" of artists. In 1566, imperial envoy Niccolò Cusano reported that Pope Pius V (1566-1572) had announced it was inappropriate for the successor of Saint Peter to have ancient statues in his residence. For this reason, he had a score of statues

[294] See Christian, *Empire without End*, 383-388.

transferred from the Vatican collection to the Campidoglio or sold.[295] Prestigious works of art once again became dangerous pagan idols and the Cortile del Belvedere was closed to the public. Ancient statues were hidden behind the doors of closed alcoves, but artists were still allowed to draw them.[296] It is characteristic that statues of naked Venuses from the Vatican collections disappeared from guides to ancient statues in Rome in the second half of the 16th century.

Even those who admired ancient statues realized that papal Rome was losing its prestige because of them in Protestant ultramontane Europe, where they could be accused of idolatry. Classical scholar Antonio Augustín wrote the following in 1566 to antiquarian Fulvio Orsini: *I doubt that it is necessary to bury all the nude statues, since no new information has come out about them, but certainly … the garden of pope Julius III with so many Venuses and other lascivities that, although they are beneficial to young scholars and artists, the Northerners are bestially scandalized and the evil rumors gain strength. So, our City, the Gracious Queen of the Provinces, goes on losing territories*.[297] Bologna bishop Gabriele Paleotti took a harsh stance against ownership and exhibition of ancient statues in his famous book "Discourses on Sacred and Profane Images."[298] In his words, depictions of ancient deities are the seat of demons, and this applied primarily to Venus. According to Paleotti, both the production and ownership of depictions of ancient gods was a sin. Only such works that contribute to moral enhancement and enlightenment can appear in public space. This can certainly not be said of statues of Venus, as they depicted not only an ancient goddess, but also an erotically attractive naked woman, which was inexcusable and, in Paleotti's words, needed to be prevented at all costs.

The main reason why there was no full rehabilitation of the ancient statue of Venus in the Italian Renaissance is apparent. In her famous essay, Joan Kelly asked whether women in the Renaissance experienced the same things as men, and then gave a negative answer to the question.[299] The Renaissance did not bring about anything positive for women. After an era of the relative liberation of women's position in the European Middle Ages, Kelly claims that, on the contrary, a renewal of the traditional patriarchal model took place, in which the primary virtues of women once again became obedience, chastity and fertility. Today's historical consensus is more cautious, but scholars agree on the fact that the position of women did not change in any fundamental way during the Renaissance. The patriarchal character of society did not change in any radical manner, men continued to hold strong superiority, and all power remained in their hands. Moreover, a major change must have taken place at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century. Women began to be presented as an

---

[295] Ludwig von Pastor, *A History of the Popes, from the Close of the Middle Ages,* ed. R. F. Kerr (St. Louis MO: Herder, 1891-1929), vol. 17, 112 no. 1.

[296] This was utilized in the first half of 1591 by Hendrick Goltzius, cf. his drawing of the Venus Felix, 1591, Haarlem, Teyler's Stichting, Portfolio N, 23 r (no. 211). Cf. Aurelia Brandt, "Goltzius and the Antique," *Print Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (2001): 158-149.

[297] Antonio Augustín, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 7 (Lucca: Rocchius, 1772), 247-8. English translation Katherine M. Bentz.

[298] Gabriele Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre et profane diuiso in cinque libri* (Bologna: Alessandro Benacci, 1582). Cf. Vincenzo Caputo, "Gli 'abusi' dei pittori e la 'norma' dei trattatisti: Giovanni Andrea Gilio e Gabriele Paleotti," *Studi rinascimentali* 6 (2008): 99-110.

[299] Joan Kelly-Gabol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, eds. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 174-201.

omnipotent dark power that could overturn all of society if steps against this were not definitively taken. This trend culminated in the second half of the 16th and first half of the 17th century in a series of fabricated trials during which tens of thousands of alleged witches were burned at the stake in southern Germany. And this trend had a fatal impact on the reception of ancient Venus statues.

The updating of the medieval concept of Venus as the arch-demon is attested by a series of German graphics from around 1500. In the most popular book of the European reformation, "Ship of Fools" by Sebastian Brant, which was published first in 1494, an independent chapter is devoted to Venus. By doing so, Brant reacted to the growing interest in the goddess in Catholic Europe, a fact which he sharply condemned. In this book, the winged goddess is not depicted as she was in antiquity; she is dressed according to contemporary fashion, but has a deep neckline, long flowing hair and a coquettish expression.[300] She is accompanied by animals that are linked to foolishness and deceit, i.e. a cuckoo, donkey and monkey. The blind Amor walks in front of her, firing his bow. Venus has three figures bound with a rope and wearing fool's caps as they worship her. The cap has fallen off the man's head on the left, revealing a priest's tonsure, which was a criticism of the Catholic Church for tolerating the renewed interest in pagan deities. Venus has tied the rope binding her captives around her waist and grips it in her hand, holding the rope before her loins, a parody of the typical pose of ancient statues of Venus. She has lifted the other hand in a gesture of blessing her followers. This gesture is repeated to a certain degree by a skeleton, which seems to be coming out of her loins. The skeleton comments on the first known epidemic of syphilis, which broke out in Naples in 1494 or 1495, forming a generally comprehensible argument against Venus.[301]

On a German engraving from around 1500, Venus is depicted as the Europe of the time knew her from ancient statues, i.e. the goddess is naked and positioned in a distinct contrapposto with her head turned to the side (**80**).[302] She is accompanied by the winged Amor with arrows under his belt and his bow resting on a tree, and thus there is no doubt about her identity. She is not, however, the ancient goddess, but a contemporary woman, proof of which is seen in her headdress in the latest Nuremberg fashion of the time. At the same time, however, she is an evil medieval demon, which is seen in the sinister expression, malicious grin and wings of an owl, a bird associated with the night and sin. The demons that fly around her are are also laughing, evidently at the future victims of their ruler. Venus is equipped with a necklace with a love knot, and the many rings on her fingers are trophies of the men that she has seduced and killed. On her right hand, she wears a ring reminiscent of medieval stories about the Venus statue, which we will return to below. Her demonic power is indicated by a thistle that she holds in her hand, and on it is an owl. She is a witch whose goal is to destroy men, which is seen in the skull that she rests her left foot upon victoriously. The audience of the time knew that this was Adam's skull, a reminder of the first man who was seduced by a woman and thus destroyed. Amor aids in alluring men, as he hypnotizes them by singing and playing the lute, which the goddess is tuning with her

---

[300] Sebastian Brant, *Das Narrenschiff* (Basel: Johann Bergmann von Olpe) 1494, 17v.

[301] Cf. Margaret Healy, "Bronzino's London Allegory and the Art of Syphilis," *The Oxford Art Journal* 20, no. 1 (1997): 3-11.

[302] Cf. Scribner III 1976.

right hand. The devil is hiding behind the goddess, who holds a tell-tale object in his hands. It is a bird-call, and once the bird sits on the wood, the bird catcher would press the pieces of wood together, catching the animal in the trap.

80. Daniel Hopfer, Venus and Cupid, engraving, c. 1512.

Ancient statues of Venus are clearly indicated in the moralizing engraving by Albrecht Dürer from 1498 (**81**).[303] The engraving depicts a lazy man surrounded by pillows as he sleeps in the warmth of a wood stove. His laziness is the source of iniquity – the devil stands behind him, blowing sinful thoughts into his mind with a bellows. These ideas are visualized by Venus, who points to the hot stove, as heat evokes erotic desire. Venus's identity is guaranteed by Amor, who is trying in vain to walk on stilts, likely a reference to the futility of the lazy man's erotic dreams. In the visual arts of the 16th century, Venus is presented as a sorceress with power over the elements. In this context, the statue of this goddess appears on the painting "The Fountain of Youth" by Lucas Cranach from 1546.[304] The naked goddess is accompanied by Amor with a honeycomb, which was a common motif of Cranach's paintings.[305] In this context, honey was a symbol of bodily pleasures, which, however, always have a dark side, which is represented by the bee's stinger. Cranach's painting shows both Venus and Amor at the top of a fountain of youth. This theme appears in the court culture of the 12th century in connection with the celebration of ideal love. Later, at the

[303] Cf. Kren, *The Renaissance Nude*, 163.
[304] Berlin, Gemäldegalerie 593.
[305] See Pablo Pérez d'Ors, "A Lutheran Idyll: Lucas Cranach the Elder's Cupid Complaining to Venus," *Renaissance Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007): 85-98.

end of the 15th century, the theme became the subject of engravings, on which its meaning was transformed. By using crude humor, these depictions criticized not only the idea of a magic fountain of youth, but sexuality in general. On the graphic by Erhard Schön from 1525, a clown stands on the column of the fountain, and "magic" water flows forth from his genitals and buttocks.[306]

Ancient statues of Venus are clearly indicated in the moralizing engraving by Albrecht Dürer from 1498 (**81**).[307] The engraving depicts a lazy man surrounded by pillows as he sleeps in the warmth of a wood stove. His laziness is the source of iniquity – the devil stands behind him, blowing sinful thoughts into his mind with a bellows. These ideas are visualized by Venus, who points to the hot stove, as heat evokes erotic desire. Venus's identity is guaranteed by Amor, who is trying in vain to walk on stilts, likely a reference to the futility of the lazy man's erotic dreams.

81. Albrecht Dürer, The Dream of the Doctor, engraving, 1498.

Maarten van Heemskerck, who enthusiastically studied ancient statues in Rome, drew an allegorical scene depicting Venus and Amor as bloodthirsty demons. Bacchus has intoxicated a man, torn his heart from his chest, and hands it to Venus and Amor in order to ensure his doom (**82**). The engraving after the drawing by Christoph Schwartz from the end of the 16th century shows a sculptural group of

---

[306] Cf. Jan-David Mentzel, "Taufe im Sündenbad: Sebald Behams 'Jungbrunnen' von 1531," in *Konvention und Subversion in der Druckgrafik der Beham-Brüder,* ed. Jürgen Müller and Thomas Schauerte (Emsdetten: Imorde, 2011), 98-114.

[307] Cf. Kren, *The Renaissance Nude*, 163.

Venus and Amor standing in the middle of a fountain reservoir at the top left. The goddess is squeezing her breast, from which water spurts, filling the fountain with depravity (**83**). The water spills down the fountain and into a pool below the feet of a woman sitting at a small table with food and drink as she plays the lute. The woman is characterized in the accompanying text as an adulteress calling on her lover. A dog urinates into the pool and under it is a text urging us not to be seduced by harlots, but to drink clean water from a clear source. To the right of the dog, a young man bends down over the pool, drawing water into his hand to drink. Under him, once again, is a cautionary text: *He who lusts after Venus is like the one who wets his lips with the first thing he finds*.

82. Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert, after Maarten van Heemskerck, allegory of drunkenness and sexual exuberance with Venus, engraving, 1551.

83. Christoph Schwartz, engraving by Jan Sadeler I, critique of sexuality with Venus statue, 1588/1595.

On the graphic by Christopher Murer from the beginning of the 17th century, the human soul (*anima*) is being tested in the world (*mundus*), which is depicted as a melting pot (**84**). The counterpart to the good angel (*bonus angelus*), who is cooling the soul with holy water (*spiritus sanctus*), is a naked woman. Venus, who is depicted in the pose of ancient statues, represents the human flesh (*caro*). Venus is adding burning coals to the fire (*cupiditates*), and her hand is on Amor's head. At her feet, there is a bag with gold and a full cup behind her on the table. Behind Venus is the devil, who fans the flames of depravity with temptation (*vanitas, tentationes*).

84. Christoph Murer, *Fidei exploratio* / Test of Faith, etching, 1600-1614.

An explicit reference to the statue of Venus as a source of demonic power is found on a unique painting of naked women dancing around a statue of Venus from the 1570s (**85**). The dancing women are evidently in a trance, raising their hands and legs and bowing their heads down while two dancers have their hands over their breasts. Although they are mostly young women, there are several older women among them, and so the theme of the painting is not motherhood, but women in general. All the women are evidently from higher social classes, which is indicated by their hairstyles and jewelry. The scene takes place in a monumental central building, the architecture of which is reminiscent of Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel in Aachen with its pointed arcades on the ground floor and triple arcades on the upper floor, i.e. of an ancient and holy place. The women are not mythical beings, but contemporary women who have just come together. On the left, a woman walks in, still dressed; on the right, women are taking off their clothes and footwear. Two bearded men stand in the background on the left, who take no notice of the dance and are preoccupied with conversation. On the right in the background are two clothed women. A bearded man with a hood over his head observes the dance from the gallery. Although we have no knowledge of the scene's meaning, there is no doubt that the central figure is the evil

demon. The marble column and its capital with horned heads bears the golden inscription VENUS. The naked Venus stands on the column, holding a pouch of money in her right hand and an object (a mirror) in the other. Venus's demonic character is indicated by her partially shaved head.

85. Hans Bock the Elder, Dance around the statue of Venus, 60 x 80 cm, combined technique on canvas, 1570-1580.

The aversion to the statue of Venus in Renaissance Europe is evidenced by its ritualistic damaging. A fragment of a marble statue of Venus, which is now in a local museum, was housed in the courtyard of the St. Matthias's Abbey in Trier until 1811. The first mention of the statue was made in 1551 by Caspar Brusch, who saw the statue in the abbey's cemetery, which was accompanied by stone stela with an inscription in Latin and German, which he recorded.[308] The inscriptions from around 1500 had been copied onto the preserved stone stela from the second half of the 16th century.[309] The inscriptions speak of a statue of a pagan deity, which the first Trier bishop Eucharius had torn down; the German inscription ends with a declaration made by the statue itself: *[…] I was once venerated as a goddess, but now I stand here to be ridiculed by the whole world.* Between the Latin and German inscription are relief figures of the first three Trier bishops; St. Eucharius has a statue of a naked woman at his feet, a reference to the legend of the tearing down of the pagan statue. Caspar Brusch interpreted the statue as Diana or Venus, giving proof that it was in a relatively intact state. Later

[308] Caspar Bruschius, *Monasteriorum Germaniae praecipuorum ac maxime illustrium centuria prima* (Ingolstadt: Weissenhorn, 1551), 122b.
[309] Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier 1914,1114W. See Wolfgang Binsfeld, "Zur Inschrifttafel bei der Venus von St. Matthias in Trier," *Trierer Zeitschrift* 69-70 (2006-2007), 297–298.

reports claim the statue was stoned, proof of which is found in the state of the preserved statue fragment, the original surface of which has been completely removed.[310] Today, only the torso, which lacks a head and legs, has been preserved; despite this fact, however, it is evident that it belonged to the same sculptural type as the Capuan Venus.[311]

In Renaissance Europe, Venus could still be seen as a mortally dangerous demon, and her statues were also potentially toxic. In Trier, each person was obliged to throw a rock at the statue. In Italy, there were more tolerant conditions, but they had their strict limits. Pirro Ligorio describes in detail the course of a commission meeting to assess thoroughly a series of proposals for a fountain on a public square. Ligorio wrote the following about the drawing of the fountain with the naked Venus: *(it) was ridiculed by some monks who said that for it to be a nude Venus was a dirty and obscene thing*. A design of naked Leda was also considered: *contrary to the examples which should be worthy of decorum in public judgement, and lascivious things should be used or placed in locations which were not always seen, since they are not worthy of being permitted in every location*.[312] It is not clear from the text which fountain was involved, but Ligorio's text can be dated to around 1573. Ligorio's proposal of a fountain with the naked Venus has also been preserved from this time.[313] We can thus deduce from the existence of the unrealized proposal that Ligorio also had personal experience with the critique of depictions of this goddess.

In the 16th century, the demonization of Venus prevailed, but a return to the medieval stance on the matter never took place.[314] Art theorists and clergy carefully differentiated between private and public space.[315] The public space was intended for religious displays to educate the illiterate crowd that frequented them, and therefore it was inappropriate to show statues of a naked Venus here. However, in the private residences of the social elite, the rules were different. The rich and powerful continued to highly value the statues of Venus not only for their erotic charge and aesthetic qualities but also as the embodiment of the prestigious tradition of the ancient Roman Empire.

---

[310] Wilhelm Ferdinand Chassot von Florencourt, "Der gesteinigte Venus-Torso zu St. Matthias bei Trier," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 13 (1848), 128-140.

[311] H. 99 cm, Trier Rheinisches Landesmuseum G. 44 d. Wolfgang Binsfeld et al., *Katalog der römischen Steindenkmäler des Rheiethos ethos nischen Landesmuseums Trier, 1. Götter und Weihedenkmäler*, Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani Deutschland 4,3: Gallia Belgica. Trier und Trierer Land (Mainz: Zabern Verlag, 1988), 165, no. 333.

[312] Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte*, vol. 6, 1420, 1426, English translation D.R. Coffin. Cf. Schreurs, *Antikenbild und Kunstanschauungen des Pirro Ligorio*, 122; Anatole Tchikine, "The 'Candelabrum' Fountain Reconsidered," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 29 (2009): 257-269.

[313] London, The British Museum 1910,0212.36.

[314] Cf. Édouard Pommier, "Diabolisation, tolérance, glorification? La Renaissance et la sculpture antique," *Études littéraires*, 32 (2000): 55–70.

[315] Cf. Elena Lazzarini,. *Nudo, arte e decoro. Oscillazioni estetiche negli scritti d'arte del Cinquecento* (Pisa: Pacini, 2010).

5. GUARDIAN AND WHORE. 17th to the 19th Century

The Cult and its Defamation

While the production of Venus statues decreased in Italy in the 17th century, it began to rise sharply in the Netherlands. In the 18th century, the center of production moved to France, which at the time had become the main European political and cultural power.[1] The total production of Venus statues did increase during these two centuries, but this was solely the result of territorial expansion, the spread of a new lifestyle to all the countries of Transalpine Europe. Stone or bronze statues became a common part of the decoration of elite residences in all countries of the Western Europe, but they are mostly only modifications of types known from the 16th century. They are by vast majority only the work of craftsmen, and we encounter excellent works of art only on rare occasion. The reason for this qualitative change lied also in the fact that ancient statues to Renaissance artists were always primarily a tool used to master the anatomy of the human body. This approach finally culminated in a tendency to eliminate the content of works inspired by ancient myths, including depictions of Venus. As Luba Freedman wrote: *never again in later centuries would autonomous representations of the Olympians in painting or in sculpture be considered among the masterpieces of Western art, as the sixteenth century works of art had been. The zeal for their creation came to its inevitable end.*[2]

86. Jacques Jonghelinck, h. 176 cm, bronze statue of Venus, ca. 1563-1570.

[1] Cf. K. Bender, *The Iconography of Venus, 3.1: The Venus of the Low Countries* (s.l.: Lulu Com 2010); K. Bender, *The Iconography of Venus, 2,1: The French Venus* (s.l.: Lulu Com 2020).

[2] Luba Freedman, *The Revival of the Olympian Gods in Renaissance Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 244.

In this context, public exhibits of the naked Venus took on a whole new meaning. We can demonstrate this with the example of a bronze statue of the naked Venus which stands in the Royal Palace in Madrid in the "Salón de columnas/ Hall of columns", one of the most significant official spaces of the palace, where the most essential audiences sat and state ceremonies were held (**86**). This is the only proof of the exhibition of an early modern monumental statue of Venus in a space designated for state representation. The naked ancient goddess was not exhibited so that visitors could revel in her charming curves; it was there for them to acknowledge fully the absolute power and exclusive position of the Spanish king. In Spain, where the influence of Catholic censorship was the strongest, the creation, import, exhibition and ownership of lascivious depictions was banned. This does not naturally mean that such depictions of naked women inspired by ancient mythology ceased to be produced or purchased; their ownership merely became an attribute of the social elite. It was their privilege to choose not to respect that which others (i.e. the vast majority of the population) were forced to strictly adhere to. Special rooms called "sala reservada" were set up in the residences of the Spanish kings and the highest aristocracy, and entrance to them was strictly controlled. In these rooms, the works of art that censors had banned were displayed. This institution began in the early 17th century and the tradition continued on until 1833.[3]

The statue of naked Venus mentioned above found its way to the Spanish royal court basically by coincidence. It was a part of the collection of the seven planetary deities and Bacchus on a barrel, which was created by Antwerp sculptor Jacques Jonghelinck, who had been trained in Italy.[4] The statues were created from 1563 to 1574 as an order by the sculptor's older brother, who was the banker and renowned art collector Niclaes Jonghelinck. In 1584, a collection of statues fell into the possession of the city of Antwerp, which exhibited them on the most prestigious site in the city, the Groote Marckt. The planetary deities stood on pedestals next to one another before the town hall, and Bacchus was placed at the center of the square. The fame of this series of sculptures is evidenced by the fact that in 1586, when the statues were still in Antwerp, Philips Galle published a series of engravings that he created after the statues in the greatest of detail.[5] Venus is characterized by a richly decorated diadem; she is naked but has a cloth covering her loins, similarly to all the other previous planetary gods, whose genitals are covered. The goddess has a stern expression and looks up to the heavens, and her idealistic character was probably emphasized by an attribute. She holds a short stake in her hand as if to hide it, and therefore it was perhaps an arrow of love which she has taken from Amor.

Antwerp was conquered by Spain in 1585 and Jonghelinck's statues of the planetary deities were subsequently handed over to the property of the Spanish king. In 1647, they were transported to Madrid, where they were placed in the royal palace in the "pieza ochavada", an octagonal hall where King Philip IV exhibited the most

---

[3] Cf. Javier Portús Pérez, "Displaying the Nude in Spain 1550-1834:The Sala Reservada," in *Splendor, Myth, and Vision: Nudes from the Prado* eds. Thomas J. Loughman et al. (Williamstown MA: Clark Art Institute, 2016), 50-66.

[4] Cf. Arie Pappot and Lisa Wiersma, "Jacques Jonghelinck: Bronze Sculptor of the Low Countries in the Sixteenth Century," *Sculpture Journal* 26, no. 1 (2017), 69-82.

[5] Venus: London, The British Museum 1862,0712.312.

valuable works of his collection. The hall was a part of the spaces for audiences and was intended to amaze visitors in the richness of its painting and sculptural decorations, which were dominated by copies and variations of ancient statues. A model for the architecture and function of the hall was the famous "Tribuna" in Florence's Uffizi.

The way in which the hall was perceived at its time is seen in the painting "Queen Mariana of Spain in Mourning" from 1666.[6] The queen is sitting in the Hall of Mirrors, past which the octagonal hall is visible with an alcove with a bronze statue of Luna (Diana) from Jonghelinck's collection, which is naked like Venus, with the exception of a shroud over her shoulders. The author of the painting is Velázquez's pupil, Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, who used the environment to characterize the queen in the portrait and the new political situation in Spain after the death of her husband Philip IV, i.e. a year before the creation of the portrait. The queen dowager became regent in place of the child successor to the throne, who is depicted in the background surrounded by ladies of the court. Her status of queen is indicated by the throne on which she sits and the view of the adjacent hall with the statue of Luna (Diana). This characterizes the subject of the portrait by evoking the moon, which is appearing after sunset, which was an allusion to her status as queen dowager. Simultaneously, the bronze statue of a naked woman points to the ancient Roman empire and hints to the global power ambitions of the Spanish sovereign.

The old palace of the Spanish kings burned down in 1734 and today's palace was built in its place in the mid-18th century. Today, the series of ancient gods of Jacques Jonghelinck is divided into two of the most important public premises of the new palace – Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn and Mars stand in the "Salón del trono / Throne Hall," while Neptune and the female planetary deities, Venus and Luna (Diana), are exhibited in the "Salón de columnas." In their new home, the statues of Venus and Luna (Diana) were not a part of the collection of planetary deities, but perceived independently. The ceremonial context into which the statues are included does not allow visitors to perceive them as naked women. The nakedness of Venus and Luna (Diana) was not intended to evoke erotic ideas during the royal audiences, banquets and other social events, but held significance as a reference to the ancient imperial tradition. This applies to the majority of naked Venuses that decorated the public areas of European aristocratic residences in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, in the recesses and quiet areas of palace parks, statues of Venus could take bear a different significance. Nonetheless, paintings by Peter Paul Rubens, Antoine Watteau and other artists who depict statues of Venus in this environment show that they were perceived only as a decoration without any deeper significance.

Another example of a radical reinterpretation is the Venus column in front of residences of English aristocrats, with which the cult of Venus in the English milieu culminated. In 17th century England, Venus was still an evil sorceress told of in the medieval legend of the ring. *Once more I will relate out of Florilegus, ad annum 1058, an honnest historian of our narration, because he telleth* [the tale of Venus and the misplaced wedding ring] *so confidently, as a thing in those days talked of all Europe*, Robert Burton wrote in his best-selling work published by the author first in 1621 and issued in five other releases until the mid-17th century. After this introduction, he retells the tale by

[6] London, National Gallery NG2926.

William of Malmesbury, and closes with the following statement: *Many such stories I find in several authors to confirm this which I have said.*[7]

Despite the prejudice and critique from church circles, statues of Venus nonetheless brought great social prestige and became an important part of the aristocracy's image, primarily when they originated in the ancient epoch. During his trip through Italy in 1613-1614, Thomas Howard, 2nd Earl of Arundel and Surrey gathered together a remarkable collection of antiquities, forming the first large-scale ancient collection in England.[8] After his return to London, he ordered life-sized portraits of himself and his wife to be made by Daniel Mytens. Both portraits depict the married couple in their home in London's Strand, and the collections that we see in the vista behind them define their social status. The wife is on the ground floor with a view of the garden, and behind her is a room with paintings depicting ancestors – the role of the wife was to care for the house and ensure the continuity of the family. The husband is depicted one floor above on the "piano nobile". Behind him is a room with ancient statues – the role of the master of the house was to ensure the position of the family, whose prestige is heightened by the collection of ancient statues. In the portrait, Lord Arundel is pointing a staff at a statue of the Medici Venus type, as this goddess held "first place" in the self-representation of the English aristocracy in the 17th century (**87**).[9]

87. Daniel Mytens, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, oil on canvas, c.1618.

---

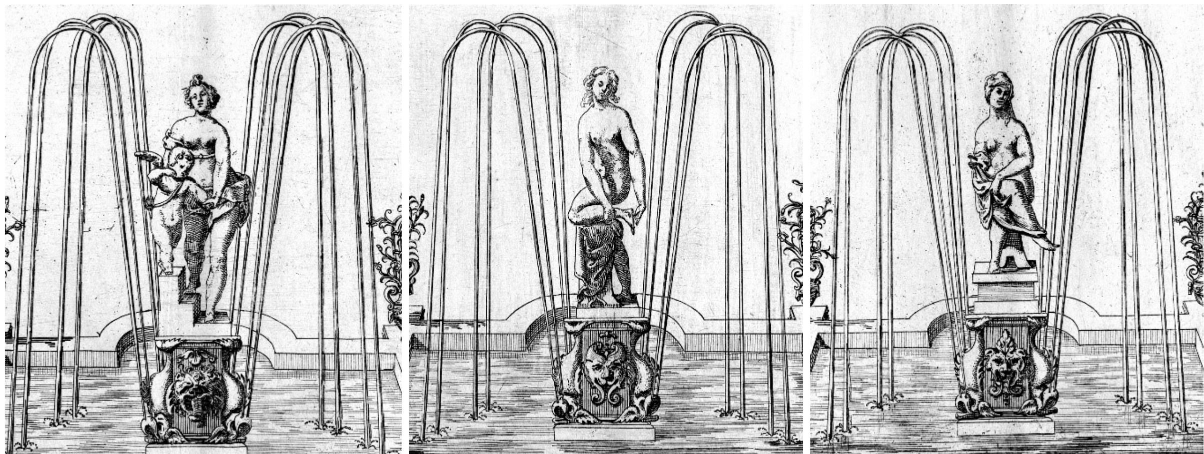
[7] See Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: Dent, 1964), III, 47-48.

[8] Cf. Caroline Vout, *Classical Art: A Life History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 143-144.

[9] London, National gallery NPG 5292.

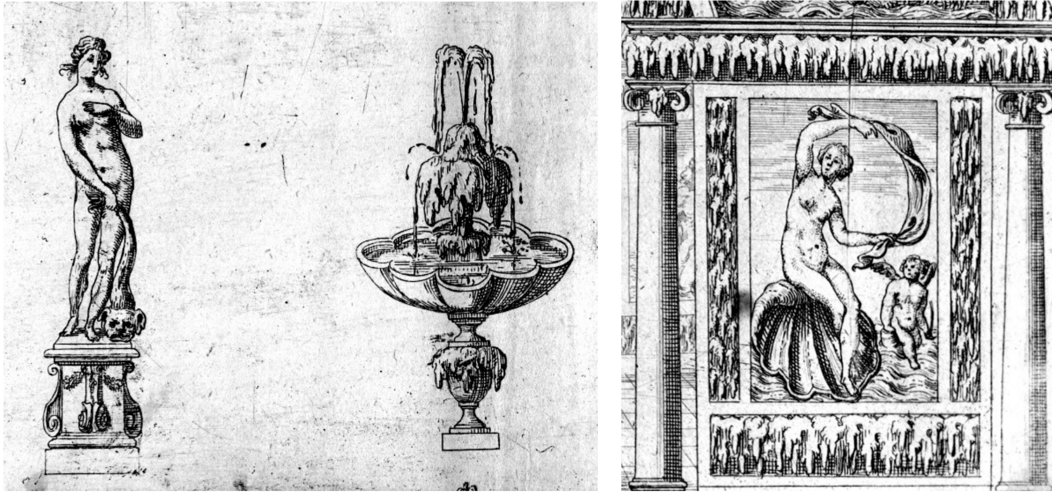
Lord Arundel is joined in his admiration of antiquity by Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke, who had remodeled his family's Wilton House near Salisbury in the classicist Palladian style after a design by Inigo Jones and his aid John Webb.[10] We have an idea of the reconstruction and modification of the manor's garden thanks to a unique collection of graphic pages by Isaac de Caus from around 1640, which reproduce the proposed architectonic designs. The first graphic page gives a general view of the manor garden with the very first French parterre on English soil. Perpendicular to the garden façade of the Wilton house was a broad path with right-angled flower beds on either side with figural fountains at their middle. The collection of graphic pages also contained depictions of four fountains with figural decorations, which correspond to the schematically drawn statues in the general overview.[11]

In front of the house there were four fountains, Venus with Amor were on the left below (**88**), and Cleopatra with a serpent was at the top of it. Venus removing a thorn from her heel was on the right (**89**), and a sitting Venus, drying herself at the top (**90**). A statue of Venus with a dolphin was located in the water parterre (**91**), and a relief with Venus on a seashell with Amor was placed before the entrance to one of the planned grottos (**92**). Statues of Venus, which were the work of local sculptor Nicholas Stone, clearly dominated the park's decoration.[12]



88. Isaac de Caus (left), group sculpture of Venus and Cupid on the fountain in Wilton House Park, engraving, c.1640.
89. Isaac de Caus, statue of Venus pulling a thorn from her heel on a fountain in Wilton House Park, engraving, c. 1640.
90. Isaac de Caus (right), statue of Venus seated and drying herself, on a fountain in Wilton House Park, engraving, c. 1640.

[10] Cf. Jens-Arne Dickmann, "Lord Pembrokes design to form a School of Sculpture – Erwerb, Aufstellung and Fuktion von Antiken in Wilton House während des 17. und 18. Jhs.," in *Antikensammlungen des europäischen Adels im 18. Jahrhundert als Ausdruck einer europäischen Identität,* eds. Dietrich Boschung and Henner Hesberg (Mainz am Rhein: Von Zabern, 2000), 115-129.
[11] Isaac de Caus, *Hortus Penbrochianus. Le jardin de Vuilton* (London, c.1640), 1. Cambridge, Trinity College.
[12] See David R. Coffin, "Venus in the Garden of Wilton House," *Notes in the History of Art* 20 (2001), 27.



91 (left). Isaac de Caus, sculpture of Venus and the Dolphin, engraving, c. 1640.
92 (right). Isaac de Caus, relief of Venus on a shell with Cupid, engraving, c. 1640.

After the French park was transformed to the English style, the statues were moved to the manor's interior, where they were seen in 1751 by Richard Cowdry. In his guide to statues at Wilton House, he writes that in the "Basso Relievo Room" there were four statues in life size: *Venus picking a thorn out of her foot, a Cleopatra with Caesarion, her son by Julius Caesar … Venus holding a shell in her right hand, her left hand has hold of the tail of a dolphin. Venus and Cupid. He is begging for his shaft of arrows.*[13] Venus pulling a thorn from her foot and Venus with Cupid correspond to the statues drawn by Caus in the parterre in front of the garden's frontispiece; the Venus with dolphin were also transferred from the water parterre to the interior. Today these statues of Venus are located in the new garden before the manor houses.[14]

English King Charles I had managed to keep up with the monarchs on the continent in the collection of antiquities. After his execution in 1649, Protestant English monarchs ceased to partake in these activities, and the initiative in this field was taken by prominent English aristocrats. "Grand tours" throughout the continent and culminating in Rome significantly raised the prestige of ancient statues among the English aristocracy, and from the mid-17th century became a part of the education of young English aristocrats.[15] Henry Peacham included a chapter "Of Antiquities" into the second edition of his manual on etiquette which he dedicated to Sir William Howard, Lord Arundel's son.[16] According to this manual, a gentleman had to have knowledge of ancient statues for two reasons. For one, they were generally regarded in high society as valuables that bring prestige to the owner, and they were used in the works of poets, painters, and architects, the works of which were ordered by gentlemen, who should know how to assess them. In his extensive chapter on antiquities, Peacham makes no mention of the naked Venus, who was paradoxically

[13] See Richard Cowdry, *A Description of the Pictures, Statues, Busto's, Basso-relievo's, and Other Curiosities at the Earl of Pembroke's House at Wilton* (London J. Robinson, 1751), 104-105.
[14] Coffin, *Venus in the Garden*, 27-28 obr. 3.
[15] Cf. Malcolm Baker, "La consommation de l'antique: Le Grand Tour et les reproductions de sculpture classique," in *D'après l'antique,* eds. Jean-Pierre Cuzin et al. (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000), 69-77.
[16] See Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman* (London: Francis Constable, 1634), chapter 12.

the pride of every collection. Ancient statues of the naked Venus were a matter that was unsuitable to be written about in a book on etiquette, despite the fact that everyone knew they were the most sought-after collector's item and one of the reasons why young and old aristocrats attended viewings of collections. The painting by Richard Cosway from 1775, which is dominated by statues of Venus, is a caricature revealing the prosaic reason for their popularity. The enthusiastic visitors are all old gentlemen, two of which have one hand thrust deep into their pockets, a detail which is surely not coincidental.[17]

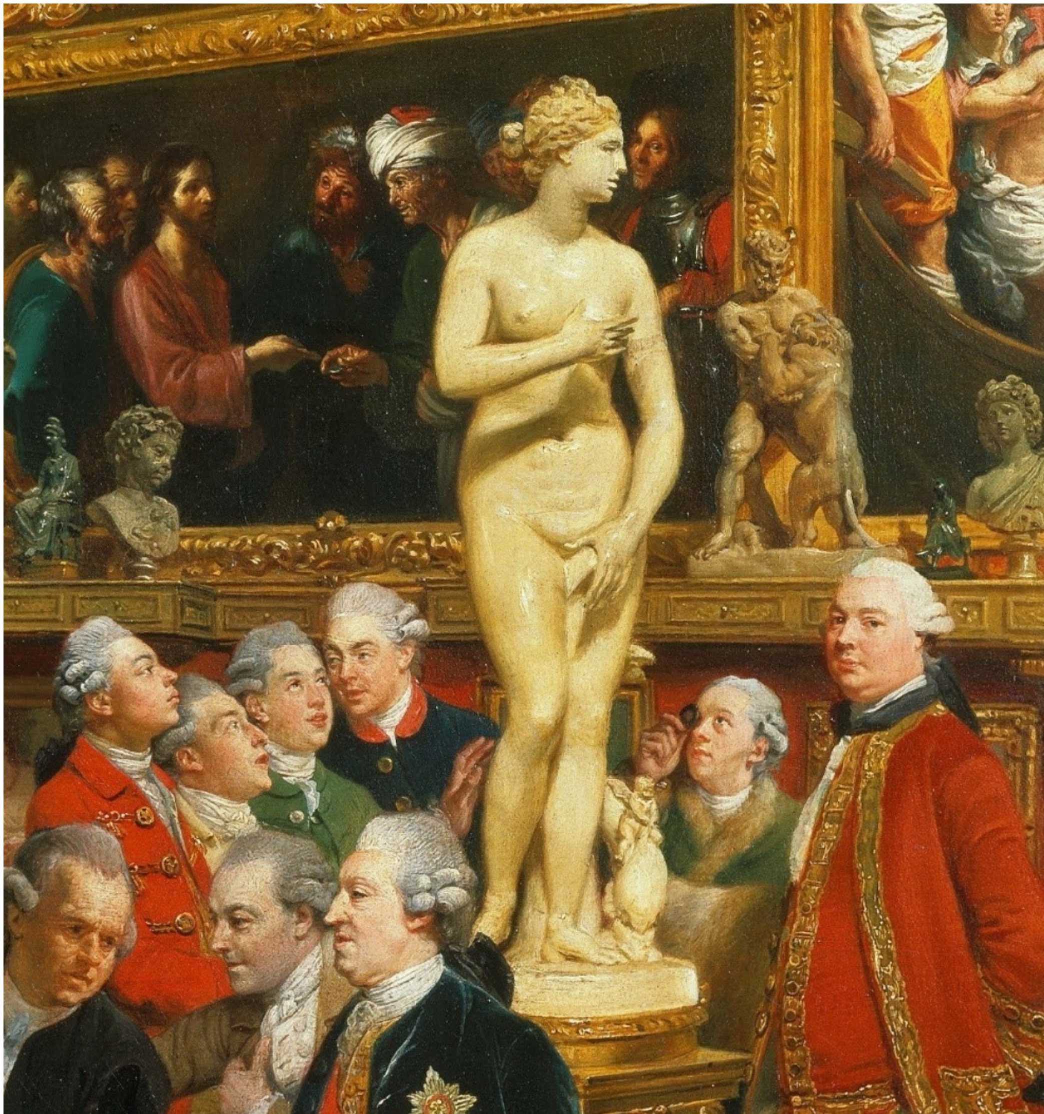
The role of naked Venus statues in the travels of English aristocrats to European galleries is seen in the group portrait of 1715 in the Tribuna of the Uffizi, which depicts visitors in the company of three statues of this type.[18] This is the very first depiction of the Tribuna, and therefore we do not know if the placement of the statues corresponded to reality; nonetheless, the concept of the painting is based on the contrast between the clothed young men and the ancient statues of naked women. The main figure is Sir Andrew Fountaine, who is leaning nonchalantly on the Venus Victrix (**47**), which was located in the Vatican's Belvedere in the 16th century. On the image, we see her in a restored state with an apple in her hand (**46**). In the center is the Medici Venus as one of Sir Andrew's friends points at her knowledgeably (**17**). Both of these statues have been mentioned previously; however, on the right is Venus Ourania, which we have not yet mentioned in this context despite the fact that it was a very famous statue in its time. It is first documented in 1656 in the Palmieri collection in Bologna, and from there travelled to the Medici collections in the following year.[19] Venus Ourania and Venus Victrix were later transferred from the main hall of the Uffizi to a different site, and this hall is now dominated by the Medici Venus.

On the famous painting of 1772 – 1777 depicting the Tribuna of the Uffizi is a statue of the Medici Venus on the right as a group of connoisseurs crowd around behind her to view her backside (**93**).[20] As Tobias Smolett wrote in 1766: *the back parts especially are executed so happily, as to excite the admiration of the most indifferent spectator*.[21] In another painting by the same painter, we see Charles Townley in the middle of his London collection, which is today the pride of the The British Museum in London.[22] In reality, antiquities were placed throughout Charles Townley's house in London in Park Street; concentrating them in one small room was a hyperbole used by the painter to give the impression that the residence was overflowing with ancient statues. At the center in an honorable position is the Townley Venus, a Roman version after the Greek original from the 4th century BC (Venus of Arles type). [23] The next Roman Venus made

---

[17] Towneley Hall Art Gallery & Museums. Cf. Viccy Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain since 1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 159–190.
[18] Giulio Pignatta, Sir Andrew Fountaine and Friends in the Tribune, oil on canvas, 1715, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery NWHCM: 2008.249 (on loan from a private collection, 2008).
[19] Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of the Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), no. 88.
[20] Windsor, Royal Collection RCIN 406983.
[21] See Tobias Smolett, *Travels Through France and Italy*, 2 (Dublin: Robert Johnson, 1766), 75, cf. John Rigby Hale, "Art and Audience: the Medici Venus, c. 1750–c. 1850," *Italian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1976): 45-48.
[22] Towneley Hall, Art Gallery and Museum PA/OAL 120.
[23] Marble, 213 cm, London, The British Museum 1805,0703.15. Cf. Brian F. Cook, *The Townley Marbles* (London: British Museum Publications, 1985), 23-4, fig. 22.

after a Greek Hellenistic original stands at the fireplace, which is a reconstruction by English sculptor Nollekens.[24] Both statues were found in 1775 in Ostia, and their acquisition was mediated by Sir William Hamilton, who identified both statues as Venuses; Townley hesitated as to whether the smaller statue was a Venus or another figure, and identified the larger as Libera or Ariadne.



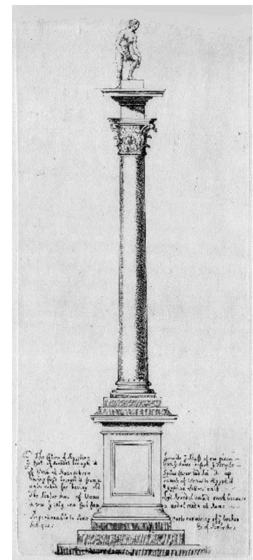
93. Johann Zoffany, Tribune in the Uffizi, oil on canvas, 1772-1777 (detail).

One of the largest English collections of ancient statues was located at Wilton House and created by Thomas Herbert, 8th Earl of Pembroke (1654-1732).[25] In his celebration of Venus, Thomas Herbert was linking himself to his grandfather, Philip Herbert, the 4th Earl of Pembroke, whose French garden with Venus statues was discussed above. The description of his residence written by Richard Cowdry in 1751 reveals the motivation for creating this collection and the reason why it was Venus who dominated it. In the description, we find that *in the court, before the grand front of the house, stands a column of white Egyptian granite, out of the Arundel collection … Mr.*

[24] Marble, 107 cm., London, Bristish Museum 1805,0703.16. Cook, *The Townley Marbles*, 20, 22, fig. 19.
[25] Cf. Dickmann, *Lord Pembrokes design*.

Evelyn bought it for the Earl of Arundel at Rome, where Julius Caesar had set it up before the temple of Venus Genetrix. The statue of Venus, standing on its top, Lord Arundel valued much, because it was the only one from a model made at Rome, proportionable to some parts remaining of the broken antique. This column was never erected since it fell in the ruins of old Rome, till set up here with the Corinthian capital and base of white marble … On the lower fillet of this column are five letters … being read after the manner of the eastern tongues from the right hand to the left, and having the proper vowels supplied, make ASTARTE, the name by which Venus was worshiped among ancient nations of the east." [26]

The column of Egyptian granite from the 3rd century with an Italian statue of Venus from the second half of the 16th century in Giambologna's style, of which Cowdry wrote extensively, was located until the beginning of the 19th century before the main façade of the manor (**94**). In its time, it was one of the most significant sights of Wilton House, which is evidenced by numerous mentions of it in literature from the 18th and 19th centuries; a detailed drawing of a column with a statue of Venus from 1724 and an engraving from 1731 has also been preserved (**95**).[27] At some point between 1758 and 1769, Venus was made even more visible at Wilton House via the purchase of a copy of the Medici Venus. This was a significant acquisition, as a whole page was devoted to it in a guidebook from 1769.[28]



94 (left). The main facade of Wilton House with a column of Venus, engraving, 1782 (detail).
95 (right). Cary Creed, Venus Column in Wilton Park, engraving, 1731.

Exhibiting the naked Venus on a column before an aristocratic residence was a highly uncommon act. At the same time, the English had a much more reserved attitude towards Venus and female nakedness than on the continent. In the guidebook to the Wilton House collections from 1769, the James Kennedy felt the need in the introduction to provide a thorough justification of the nakedness of ancient Greek

[26] Cowdry, *A Description*, 1-2. Cowdry also noted the aforementioned relief of Venus drying her hair by Antonio Lombardo at the Wilton House (ibid., 114).
[27] See Ruth Guilding, *Marble Mania: Sculpture Galleries in England 1640-1840* (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 2001), no. 23.
[28] James Kennedy, *A New Description of the Pictures [...] and other Curiosities at the Earl of Pembroke's House at Wilton* (Salisbury: E. Eaton, 1769), 11-12.

statues.[29] He assumed that the nakedness of the ancient statues would be understood incorrectly, and therefore explains it with both an aesthetical argument (i.e. the effort to display the beauty of the human body's anatomy) and a note on varying climactic conditions, the difference in cultural habits, and finally a reference to ancient Greek philosophy, which in Kennedy's words fundamentally refused obscenity and lasciviousness.

For Venus to become a dominant element of an English aristocratic residence in the 17th and 18th centuries, there had to be a substantial reason. It is not the assumption of the author of this book that Venus's traditional connection to the garden and nature in general was the reason, as is suggested by David R. Coffin.[30] There is nothing written about this in the commentary on Wilton House of the time, and on the contrary it emphasizes the political dimension of Venus and her link to ancient Rome. The tenth publication of the guide to the manor from 1784 begins by stating that Wilton is an ancient town which in Roman times was called Ellandunum. In all probability, the Venus in Wilton House was also meant to emphasize this tradition. Readers of the guidebook learned the same about the column of Venus from Cowdry's description in 1751: *this column supported anciently the statue of Venus Genetrix, and had been set up by Julius Cæsar before the temple of that Goddess, from whom he claimed to be descended***.** *That Caesar had brought them from Egypt, where they had been erected to the oriental deity Astarte, the same with the Grecian Venus.*[31] Local guides evidently presented Venus on the column as a statue that originated in Caesar's temple in Rome, and therefore Alexandre de La Rochefoucauld noted: *A column of blue granite on which is the beautiful Venus Julius set in the temple of Venus Genetrix in Rome*.[32] What was important about the Venus on the column was not her patronage over nature, but her link to Julius Caesar and ancient Rome.

This connection was wholly fictitious and purposefully construed. Antiquities made their way to Wilton House in 1678 under Thomas Herbert, 8th Earl of Pembroke. The import of the ancient column may have also theoretically involved John Evelyn, with whom the column was later associated. However, John Evelyn is renowned for his highly detailed diary entries, and would have almost surely mentioned the ancient and almost ten-meter-high column at least in passing.[33] During his stay in Italy, Evelyn met with Thomas Howard Arundel in Padua in 1645 and later in 1646, just before Arundel's death. At the time, Arundel was an exile on his death bed, and could not have very well planned such a logistically complex action as the transport of an ancient column from Rome to England must have been. His descendants did not collect antiquities, nor did they look after the famous collection in London. In 1654, Evelyn visited Wilton House, but made no mention of the column or statue of Venus on this occasion either. We can also rule out the fact that the column with Venus may have

---

[29] Kennedy, *A New Description*, x-xi.

[30] David R. Coffin, "Venus in the Eighteenth-Century English Garden," *Garden History* 28, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 173.

[31] See George Richardson, *Ædes Pembrochianæ: A New Account and Description of … Antiquities and Curiosities in Wilton-House* (Salisbury: Wilton &c., 1784), 4.

[32] See Norman Scarfe (ed.), *Innocent Espionage. The La Rochefoucauld Brothers' Tour of England in 1785* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995), 186.

[33] Cf. John Evelyn, *The diary of John Evelyn*, 1-6., ed. Esmond S. De Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).

stood in Arundel's residence in London's Strand.[34] The reason this legend arose was likely due to the need to defend this revolutionary novelty, i.e. the column with Venus, by pointing out that it was in fact nothing new; a column had stood one hundred years earlier outside the London residence of the famous courtier to King James I and Charles I. John Evelyn may have made his way into the story because he was famed as a royalist.

The majority of columns in English parks originate in the 18th century and the statues that were placed on them depicted English rulers or members of the royal family.[35] In this century, England became a dominant colonial superpower with global ambitions, and ancient Rome served as its model. Thus, Venus probably did not stand on the column at Wilton House as one of the gods of the Olympian Pantheon, but as the progenitress of the Roman nation and the mother of Aeneas, from whom Roman emperors derived their origin. Statues of Venus and Cleopatra (the last Egyptian female pharaoh and Caesar's lover) that decorated the fountain in the parterre of the garden held a similar significance. In this context, it should be mentioned that the engraving of the garden's layout from around 1640 mentioned above shows two more fountains following those of Venus and Cleopatra, which had a central column with the royal family, linking the whole residence with the English monarchy. Thanks to references to antiquity, visitors should understand Wilton House as a second Rome, which was emphasized by a gate in the style of a triumphal arch from 1758-1762 (which still stands today), on which a lead copy of an equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius from Rome's Campidoglio was placed.[36]

The column with Venus in front of Wilton House may not have been the first to be erected in England. Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington, who took a total of three "grand tours" from 1714 to 1719, presented himself in a similar manner. Boyle was famed as an "Apollo of the Arts," as he was active also as an architect and won merit for promoting classicist Palladian architecture in England. He had a Dorian column with a copy of the Venus Medici erected around 1720, which he likely designed himself, in the park of his Chiswick House residence in 1727-1729. The column with statue can be seen on a drawing by William Kent from around 1730.[37] The column was originally located in an important place in the park, where six straight paths of varying lengths came together. Since 1801, it has formed the center of the rose garden. The Dorian column that Lord Burlington selected in place of the canonical Corinthian column defined the Venus placed upon it as the patroness of rulers and warriors, the mother of Aeneas and progenitress of Caesar.[38]

A significant change took place in the 18th century in the placement of ancient statues and copies of them in connection with the creation of the English landscape garden, in which the formal French-style organization was replaced with idealized

---

[34] See Roy Strong, *The Artist & the Garden* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 47-52.

[35] See David R Coffin, *The English Garden: Meditation and Memorial* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 206-219.

[36] Cowdry, *A Description*, 86. The triumphal arch was originally located south of Wilton House, and was transferred to its present location in 1801.

[37] Chattsworth 26 A/23, Cf. Cinzia Maria Sicca, "Lord Burlington at Chiswick: Architecture and Landscape," *Garden History* 10, No. 1 (Spring, 1982): fig. 12.

[38] See Toby Barnard and Jane Clark, eds., *Lord Burlington: Art, Architecture and Life* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1995), 138-139.

nature. The statues in this new environment hold an equally important place, but they do not stand in rows or in the middle of flower beds as in French-type gardens. On the contrary, they are placed in the landscape, which can evoke ancient myths or directly refer to famous passages of ancient literature. Inspiration for English parks was drawn from the idyllic ancient landscapes of Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin and, most significantly, Gaspard Dughet, a part of which were also temples and statues. The ancient circular temple of Vesta in Tivoli, which was placed on the edge of a cliff to allow it to dominate the surrounding landscape, was a common theme. The first temple of Venus in an English landscape park was built by architect John Vanbrugh and can be found in the park of Stowe House, the author of which was Charles Bridgeman. The structure was built around 1721 as the very first of a rich repertoire of smaller buildings in this park. It was a small Ionic monopteros, a circular shrine with a colonnade lacking a cella, making the copy of the Medici Venus inside visible from afar. The way the statue was staged in the tholos at Stowe was meant to evoke the Cnidian temple which housed Praxiteles's famous statue. The original statue has since been lost, but a gilded replica of the Medici Venus was placed back on the pedestal in 2000.[39]

Another shrine to Venus was built by Colen Campbell at Hall Barn, Buckinghamshire around 1725 in a style similar to Stowe. It was also an open tholos, but in Dorian style; inside it was a copper copy of the Medici Venus statue.[40] In the 1730s, a shrine to Venus was built in Garendon Park and designed by the builder himself, Sir Ambrose Phillipps of Garendon, an amateur architect. This was an Ionian-style tholos with a cella, which housed a now-lost statue of Venus.[41] Monopteroi with statues of Venus played an important role during the expansion of the English landscape park to the European continent at the end of the 18th century. The tradition continued on into the 19th century; however, they began to take on a wholly different significance than in the previous century. They no longer carried an imperial message, but the builders only demonstrated their conservative attitude in this way.

In England in the second half of the 18th century, there is also evidence of a radically different attitude towards the ancient goddess. The man who pioneered the defamation of Venus, her temples and statues was Sir Francis Dashwood (from 1763 Lord le Despencer), who parodied Stowe's park and its temple of Venus at his residence in West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire.[42] The temple of Venus is in line with the north façade of the manor, by which the builder emphasized its significant position in his self-representation. A monopteros designed by John Donowell in 1748 was placed on the hill and modified later by Giovanni Niccolò Servandoni with the help of Maurice-Louis Joliveta (**96**). Inside it was originally a copy of the Medici Venus, which was replaced by a copy of the Venus de Milo during the reconstruction of the damaged

---

[39] Copies of the famous statue in the Uffizi in Florence were a common attraction of English manor parks in the 18th century, cf. Wendy Frith, "Sex, Gender and Politics: The Venus de Medici in the Eighteeenth Century Landscape Garden," in *Sculpture and the Garden,* ed. Patrick Eyres and Fiona Russel (London: Routledge, 2006), 71-84.

[40] See Johann Wilhelm von Archenholtz, ed., *The British Mercury Or Annals of History, Politics, Manners, Literature, Arts Etc. of the British Empire*, 2 (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1787), 339.

[41] See Mark Girouard, "Ambrose Phillipps of Garendon," *Architectural History* 8 (1965): 28 and fig. 5.

[42] Cf. Michael Symes, "Flintwork, Freedom and Fantasy: The Landscape at West Wycombe Park," *Buckinghamshire Garden History* 33 (2005): 1-30.

monument in 1982, the author of which was the prominent architect of post-modern classicism Quinlane Terry. Anyone viewing the shrine from afar will understand its connotations; it stands on a hill, and under it is an oval entrance to Venus's parlour. The architectural framing of the entrance evokes spread legs, emphasizing the fact that the entrance imitates the female vagina. The shrine and Venus parlor were linked to a collection of lead statues in the meadow before them. These statues have not survived, but we know they were at least partially of an erotic nature. A contemporary witness, John Wilkes, commented on this eccentric project in a metaphorical but wholly unambiguous manner.[43]

96. John Donowell, Temple of Venus and Venus's Parlour, West Wycombe Park, c.1748 (repaired 1982).

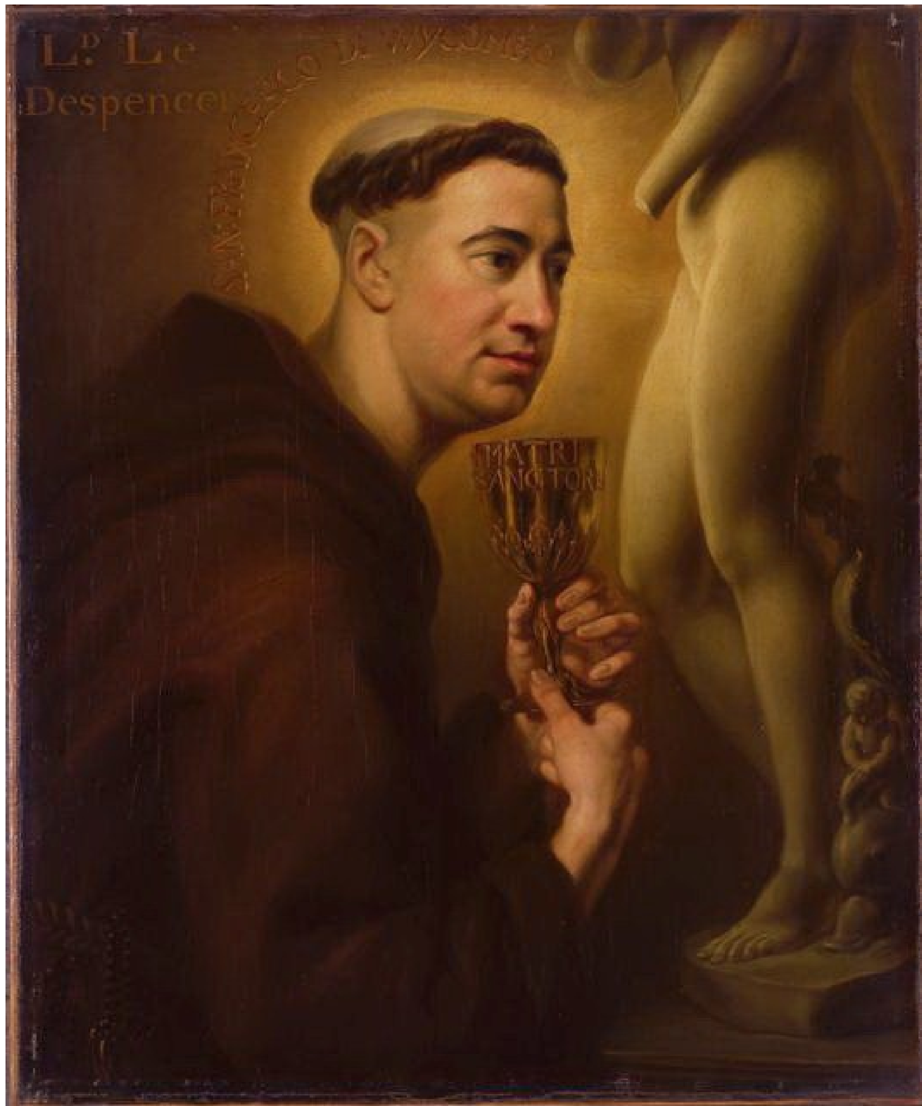
Dashwood was one of the founders of the "Society of Dilettanti" (1734), which in the terminology of the time was an association of art admirers.[44] Its members introduced Italian opera to England, founded the Royal Academy of Arts, and financed scientific expeditions to research ancient monuments in Greece. Members of this elite club associated love for knowledge and art with an anticlerical lifestyle and unrestrained indulgence in wine and sex. In 1742, the members had their portraits painted by their court painter, George Knapton (**97**). Francis Dashwood had himself

---

[43] See John Wilkes, "Curious Description of West Wycombe Church etc," in: *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit. Being a Collection of Several Curious Pieces, in Verse and Prose*, eds. Earl of Chesterfield, et al.. (London, 1768), 44: "the entrance to it is the ſame entrance by which we all come into the world, and the door is what ſome idle wits have called the door of life."

[44] Cf. Bruce Redford, *Dilettanti: The Antic and the Antique in Eighteenth-Century England* (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008).

depicted as a Franciscan monk, "San Francesco de Wycombo", praying with a chalice in his hand with the inscription "Matri Sanctorum" (the Mother of Saints). However, in place of the Virgin Mary on the altar before him is a copy of the Medici Venus statue, the ancient origin of which is emphasized by her missing hand. In addition, the missing hand has revealed Venus's clearly illuminated genitals, which are placed just before Daschwood's eyes as the central point of the parody of the Christian ritual.[45] The painting was hung from 1742 to 1757 in London's King's Arms Tavern, a club room of the "Society of Dilettanti," of which Dashwood was a founding member. This room was publicly accessible, and visitors could view the painting when members of the club were not holding meetings.[46]



97. George Knapton. Sir Francis Dashwood praying to the Venus Medici, oil on canvas, 1742.

[45] See Redford, *Dilettanti*, 63-64. Cf. Jason M. Kelly, "Riots, Revelries, and Rumor. Libertinism and Masculin Association in Enlightenment London," *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006), 759-795.
[46] See John Wilkes, *A Select Collection of the Most Interesting Letters on the Government, Liberty, and Constitution of England*, 2 (London: J. Almon, 1763), 37. Cf. Wilkes, *Curious Description*, 44.

In 1764, Dashwood had a variation of this portrait painted by William Hogarth, which he later had made into an engraving, allowing it to be disseminated.[47] The painting is a parody of the Renaissance St. Jerome Adoring the Crucifix painting by Agostino Carracci (1580-1585). In it, Dashwood is depicted kneeling in a grotto, and in place of the bible before him is an erotic novel by Nicolas Chorier ("Elegantiae Latini sermonis"); in place of a "memento mori" skull is a carnival mask, and Christ on the cross has been replaced by a statuette of a naked woman with her legs spread as Dashwood looks fixedly at her vulva. Another engraving from 1763 called "The Secrets of the Convent" shows Francis Dashwood dressed in a monk's frock, kneeling once again before an altar with a statue of the Medici Venus.[48] The right page of the open book on the altar reads "PRECES VESPERIVE" – evening vespers, anti-religious prayers revealed by the text on the left page, "VOX IN DEUM CONTUMELIOSA" – a voice abusive towards god. On the wall at top is Cicero's lamentation over the depravity of morals "O TEMPORA O MORES."[49] Ovid's hymns, a popular drinker's songbook of the time, lies on the floor.

The "convent" was the ruin of Cistercian Medmenham Abbey on Dashwood's manor, where he met with his friends. There they drank copious amounts of alcohol, parodied Christian rituals, and indulged in sexual orgies with prostitutes. The unconcealed pagan-like activities of these "monks" in Medenham Abbey was general knowledge at the time.[50] Despite its scandals, which were tolerated among the highest English social class, the "Society of Dilettanti" established itself as a prominent European institution that supported the development of art and science, especially classical studies. A condition for membership in the "Society of Dilettanti" was to take part in a grand tour and possess an intimate knowledge of antiquities. The Medici Venus on portraits of Dashwood was not only an allusion to his libertinism, but also to his erudition and classical education. Veneration of Venus in the 18th century in England overlapped with the onset of Venus's depreciation, which culminated in 20th century art.

The Absence of Venus

In 1764, Johann Joachim Winckelmann published his book "History of the Art of Antiquity," which was justifiably welcomed as a revolutionary novelty.[51] Before this German scholar, there were only histories of artists and lists of works of art; on the very first page of his work, however, Winckelmann writes that the target of his research is the essence of art, upon which the individual fates of given artists have very little influence. The subjects of his investigation were not artists or works of art, but rather an abstract concept – art and its history. Winckelmann was evidently attempting

---

[47] William Hogarth, oil on canvas, 1764, Private Collection, England, and engraving: London, The British Museum 1868,0808.4138.

[48] London, The British Museum 1868,0808.4373.

[49] Cicero, *In Catillinam*, 1.1.2.

[50] See Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of King George,* 3,1, ed. Derek Jarrett (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 114.

[51] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums,* eds. Adolf H. Borbein et al. (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2002). Cf., for example, Katherine Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity. History and Aesthetics in the Age of Altertumswissenschaft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

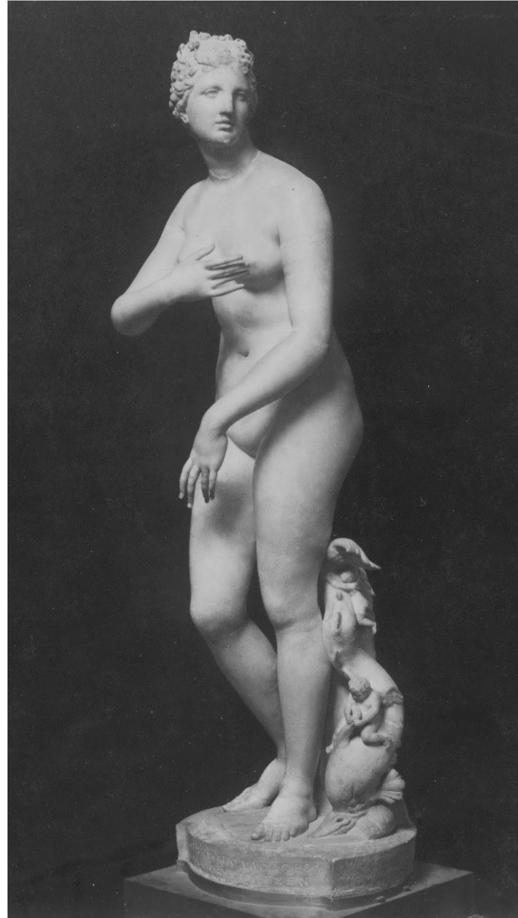
to identify a need that everyone sensed but was unable to define, and find the path to fulfilling it. He discovered that it was possible to enter a painting, and anyone could become a statue, and therefore we are surrounded by as many worlds as there are paintings and statues. Winckelmann thus created a revolutionarily new method of communication with a work of art, which is so widespread today that few realize its relative novelty and dependence on history. From Winckelmann on, viewers no longer needed to understand a work of art; they do not need to understand everything it depicts – it is enough for them to identify with it and let themselves be influenced by it as Winckelmann was influenced by ancient statues.

Nascent civil society enthusiastically welcomed this "history of art", which was created by the son of a cobbler from Stendal, as a new and democratic tool to adopt a world over which the aristocratic elite had hitherto held a monopoly. Statues have owners, but art history belongs to everyone, to the whole of humankind. Winckelmann demonstrated that anyone could identify with a work of art regardless of social class, nationality or religion. Every reader of his "History of the Art of Antiquity" held a ticket to the world of art, and anyone could enter into publicly exhibited ancient works of art, find themselves in them, and use them to perfect themselves. The fact that art can change a person for the better is colorfully described using the example of the Apollo Belvedere. Winckelmann loved this statue above all, despite the fact that it was not his property, and he had to visit the Cortile del Belvedere to look at it. *In gazing upon this masterpiece of art,* wrote Winckelmann*, I forget all else, and I myself adopt an elevated stance, in order to be worthy of gazing upon it. My chest seems to expand with veneration and to heave like those I have seen swollen as if by the spirit of prophecy, and I feel transported to Delos and to the Lycian groves, places Apollo honoured with his presence – for my figure seems to take on life and movement, like Pygmalion's beauty.*[52]

However, Winckelmann had created a history of art that omitted the depiction of women and thus of Venus as well. In his approach to art, a revolutionary novelty was associated with extreme patriarchal conservatism. In his extensive work, we find detailed analyses of naked ancient statues depicting men; however, we only find a very short passage dealing with depictions of the female body and Venus. At the same time, Winckelmann acknowledges that Venus was depicted in ancient sculpture more often than other goddesses. He also writes that she was the only goddess to be depicted naked. Winckelmann does not evaluate statues of ancient Venuses from an aesthetic perspective; he reserves this for depictions of men, as in his words only male bodies can be dubbed beautiful.[53] He explained the general admiration for the Medici Venus in Florentine Uffizi gallery by her age (**98**). According to him, it was nearing maturity: *Like a rose that after a beautiful dawn, unfolds at sunrise – steps from the age that, like a fruit not fully ripened, is hard and slightly tart, as shown in her breasts, which are already more developed than those of tender maidens.*[54] In Winckelmann's words, other Venuses do not captivate viewers like this statue, as the others depict mature women. This is also the reason in his mind that they were taller than the Medici Venus. Winckelmann claims that women are beautiful only while they still resemble young men; thus, a woman's beauty is in essence male beauty.

---

[52] Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst*, 780. English translation H. F. Mallgrave.
[53] Winckelmann 1968, 216.
[54] Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst*, 286. English translation H. F. Mallgrave.



98. Medici Venus, Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.

Winckelmann's evaluation of ancient art was linked to his homosexual orientation, and therefore he was attracted to statues depicting maturing boys and thus also tolerated statues of young girls, in whom both female and male traits were combined.[55] This, however, is not essential here – what is important is that his theses were keenly accepted and no one took offense at his male chauvinism. Winckelmann was aware of the eccentric nature of his misogynist view of the visual arts and therefore presented it as a result of scientific analysis that anyone else could verify. In his words, the dominant position of the naked male body in the visual arts was a exactly provable fact, and to justify it he founded a wholly new scientific discipline – art history. He was the very first to approach the development of art in a systematic and complex manner. He understood the creation of an artistic canon, which in his view formed the basis for all other art, as a result of the interaction of a unique combination of favorable geographic, historical and social circumstances.

Winckelmann not only knew Latin authors, but Greek authors as well, which was uncommon at the time. Despite this fact, he initially had only a vague idea of the ancient visual arts; he was uninterested in contemporary art and had no idea at all of Greek art throughout his life. Nonetheless, he had already written his first and authoritatively written work "Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture" before he moved in 1755 from Dresden to Rome, where he at least had

[55] On Winckelmann's homosexuality cf. Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 47-50, 201-216.

the opportunity to systematically study ancient Roman statutes.[56] At the time, the culmination of world art was generally linked to ancient Rome, an idea which Winckelmann strongly refuted, and adopted the idea from ancient Roman authors that the visual arts had culminated in Athens in the 5th century BC as the starting point for his research. He took from Greek literary tradition both the thesis of the freedom of the Greeks, which differed them from the surrounding barbarians, and the thesis claiming that the reason for the blossoming of art was individual freedom.[57]

This reached its absolute peak during the Athenian democracy of the 5th century BC, which its primary representative, Pericles, confidently claimed in an authentic testimony. In it, he also summarized the patriarchal stance of the time towards women in a memorable sentence: *It will be much for your honour not to recede from your sex and to give as little occasion of rumour amongst the men, whether of good or evil, as you can.*[58] Men clearly dominated Athenian democracy, and therefore in Winckelmann's mind the male nude rightly became the primary means of expression and central theme of the visual arts of the time. For Winckelmann, classical Greece was not only an aesthetic ideal, but an ethical one as well; it was a perfect realization of the thoroughly patriarchal organization of society.

From ancient literary tradition, Winckelmann not only adopted the idea that Roman art was derived from Greek art, but also the characteristics of style development. In Pliny's "Natural History," he read that while beauty, sublimity and magnificence had been the primary goal of artists in the 5th century BC, the times from Alexander the Great onward were dominated by realism, i.e. depictions of people in all their random irregularity.[59] According to Winckelmann, this was an attribute of the anti-art that wholly prevailed in ancient Rome and to which Bernini subscribed in the Europe of the 17th century, leading sculpture into a "dead end." According to Winckelmann, extreme subjectivism dominated this sculptor's work, as he was imitating what he saw in his sculptures. It was a fragment of reality, which was by its very essence random, and therefore could not have general validity.

The next danger of art that did not adhere to ancient models was arbitrariness: *Modern artists, some of whom have not become familiar with antiquity … have depicted not only feelings found in nature but also ones not found there. The tenderness of a seated Venus in marble in Potsdam, by Pigalle of Paris, is in a state of feeling such that from her mouth, which appears to be gasping for air, water seems to be about to run out, and the reason for this is that she should look as though languishing with desire.*[60] The statue that Winckelmann was mocking was a Venus created in 1748 by a famous French sculptor in several variations. In its time, it was a work famous throughout Europe, as French King Louis XV had had an enlarged version of it ordered as a diplomatic present for Prussian King Frederick the Great. Today, a copy of it is located in a park in Potsdam while the original is in Berlin (**99**).

---

[56] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und der Bildhauerkunst* (Dresden: Walther, 1756).
[57] Locus classicus: Longinus, *De sublimitate*, 44.
[58] Thukydides, 2.45.2. English translation T. Hobbes.
[59] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.153, cf. also 36.16, and 36.21, and 24.
[60] See Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Walter Rehm (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1968), 159. English translation D. Carter.

99. Jean-Baptiste Pigalle, Venus, h. 188 cm, 1748, marble copy in Sanssouci Park, Potsdam.

Winckelmann took a strong stance against the way in which Venus was depicted by Giambologna and his successors in the second half of the 16th century. These depictions were characterized by a realistic presentation of the anatomy of the female body, and so the goddess had come down to earth among people. Her divinity was expressed only via improbable poses, which often looked like acrobatic performances. Winckelmann's authority did in no way weaken this strategy's popularity among viewers, which is not surprising. Although he permanently influenced thought concerning art, he had only a minimal impact on the artistic creation of his time.[61]

The Rise of Prudery

The artistic era dubbed neo-classicism began around 1770 and lasted until around 1840. It is considered as the last return to the ancient tradition in Western culture in which the Olympian gods, including Venus, came once again to the forefront of interest. Abbé Géraud de la Chau published a monograph devoted to Venus, the goal of which was to help artists depict her.[62] Swedish sculptor Johan Tobias Sergel arrived in Rome in 1767 at the same time that Winckelmann happened to be murdered in

[61] See Daniela Gallo, *Modèle ou mirroir? Winckelmann et la sculpture néoclassique* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2009).
[62] Géraud de La Chau, *Dissertation sur les attributs de Vénus* (Paris: de Prault, 1776). Cf. Pierre-Henri Larcher, *Mémoire sur la déesse Venus* (Paris 1776).

Trieste, evidently at random. In regard to the perception of female beauty, Sergel was Winckelmann's exact opposite. The sculptor lived a rather exuberant life in the "Eternal City," which is evidenced by his pornographic drawings. Venus's erotic character is celebrated in the statues he created after his return to Stockholm in 1779, in which he revived the traditional types of the Venus Callipyge (**100**) and Venus Anadyomene (**101**).

100 (left). Johan Tobias Sergel, Venus Callipyge, h. 150 cm, marble, 1780.
101 (right). Johan Tobias Sergel, Venus Anadyomene, h. 147 cm, marble, 1785.

The "tabooization" of public displays of female nudity and the demonization of Venus that characterized Renaissance Europe became even stronger during neo-classicism, and this stance also affected Sergel. Neoclassical artists distanced themselves from the frivolity of rococo and presumed that depictions of Venus should carry serious messages. On the sculptural group of Mars carrying away the fainted Venus, the marble version of which is in Stockholm, Sergel presented the goddess as a tragic figure.[63] In place of the all-powerful female ruler of the world, he depicted her as a lamentable woman with her head and arms hanging down passively as she is

[63] H. 93 cm, 1804, Stockholm, Nationalmuseum NMSk 1113.

saved by Mars after being injured by Diomedes on the battlefield beneath Troy.[64] Sergel created the plaster model in Rome towards the end of his eleven-year stay there between 1773 and 1778, adapting the ancient sculptural group of Paetus and Arria for the new statues.[65] Inspiration was taken from Homer's Iliad, in which the goddess is presented outside the framework of her common erotically-charged context.[66] However, the text of the Iliad itself did not inspire Sergel directly; he drew inspiration from a list of suitable motifs for the visual arts compiled by Comte de Caylus.[67] In the Iliad, Ares is Aphrodite's brother; however, Caylus writes about them as "lovers," and thus Ares's hand on Venus's breast may have had an erotic meaning in Sergel's sculptural group.[68]

Sergel introduced the depiction of living, sexually attractive women into traditional schemes inspired by ancient sculpture. His approach stands out when we compare his Venuses to the one created by Charles Dupaty. In 1810, this French sculptor created a heavy-handed allegory, and its overabundance of content neutralized the erotic nature of the depiction of the naked female body.[69] The cosmic dimension of the goddess is expressed in her gaze up to the heavens and the fact that she is holding a torch in her right hand, pointing it downward over the globe of the heavens at her feet. A pair of kissing doves sits on the globe, making it clear that the goddess is initiating cosmic love with her torch. The benignity of her results is expressed by the gesture of the left hand, which is pressed to her breast to squeeze out milk, an attribute of her status as the mother-provider. The statue was exhibited at the Salon of 1812, and was accompanied by a no less heavy-handed text.[70]

Antonio Canova, who came from Venice to Rome in 1780 (one year after Sergel's return to Stockholm) was the most famous neoclassical sculptor. Canova's most famous Venus today is the marble statue from 1804-1808, which depicts Pauline Borghese, the sister of Napoleon Bonaparte, as the goddess (**102**).[71] The sculptor depicted her reclining seductively on a sofa with the upper half of her body unveiled, holding an apple. In Rome, Pauline was famed for her unrestrained lifestyle, which she embraced via her own sculptural portrait, the theme of which she chose herself. Canova had wanted to depict her as Diana, but Pauline insisted on Venus. It is important to note that the statue was designated only for intimate friends, who were allowed to view it only by the light of a torch.[72]

---

[64] Göteborg, Göteborgs Konstmuseum Sk. 369. Cf. Guillaume Faroult et al., eds., *L'Antiquité rêvée. Innovations et résistences au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Beaux-arts éditions, 2010), no. 106.

[65] Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, no. 147.

[66] Homer, *Iliad*, 5.131-430.

[67] See Anne Claude Philippe comte de Caylus, *Tableaux tirés de l'Iliade, de l'Odysée d'Homère et de l'Énéide de Virgile. Avec des osservations générales sur ce costume* (Paris: Tilliard, 1757), 38-39.

[68] Homer, *Iliad*, 5.358; Caylus, *Tableaux tirés de l'Iliade*, 39.

[69] Paris, Jardin des Plantes.

[70] See Pierre Sanchez and Xavier Seydoux, eds., *Les catalogues des salons,* 1 (Paris: Echelle de Jacob, 1999), 240. Cf. *Lucretius,* 1.1-5.

[71] Cf. Anna Coliva and Fernando Mazzocca, eds., *Canova e la Venere Vincitrice* (Milan: Electa, 2007); Maria Anna Flecken, *Die Geburt der modernen Venus: Antonio Canovas Paolina Bonaparte Borghese* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2015).

[72] See Christopher M. S. Johns, *Antonio Canova and the Politics of Patronage in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 115-117.

102. Antonio Canova, Pauline Borghese as Venus, h. 92 cm, marble, 1804-1808.

The predecessors of statues of reclining Venuses that we know from the sculpture of the 17th and 18th centuries are found in Venetian paintings of sleeping Venuses inspired by ancient sepulchral sculptures on the lids of sarcophagi depicting deceased Roman women as sleeping Venuses. Canova's statue was commissioned by Prince Camillo Borghese, who married Napoleon's sister in 1803. This circumstance may have affected the concept of the statue, as the House of Borghese came from Siena, i.e. Tuscany, where the Etruscans dwelled in the ancient epoch. With his portrait, Canova may have been defining the French princess's new identity, which reached back to Etruscan antiquity via her husband. The lids of Etruscan sepulchral urns, which Canova may have known from Florentine collections or publications, depict semi-reclining figures that correspond in great detail to the statue of Pauline Bonaparte. On them we find two pillows, on which the Etruscan woman rests her right elbow, supporting her head in an elegant pose just like Pauline Borghese.[73] The hyper-realistic depiction of the pillows and bed is an important component of the work, as together with the portrait elements of the face they create a contrasting counterpart to the idealized body.

Canova created several variations of the ancient Venus, the most famous of which is the "Venus Italica/ Italian Venus" from 1804-1812 (**103**).[74] The statue was created in the same historical context as Canova's Perseus with the head of Medusa. In 1798, Napoleon had the most famous statue of the Vatican's collections, the Apollo Belvedere, taken to Paris as a spoil of war. The most famous ancient statue in Florence, the Medici Venus, succumbed to the same fate in 1802. Canova created statues that were welcomed by the Italian cultural public as a replacement to the ancient originals, which were returned to their original homes after Napoleon's fall in 1815. However,

[73] See Giuseppe Pavanello, ed., *Canova e l'antico* (Milan: Electa, 2019), 111-114, 322.

[74] Cf. Hugh Honour, "Canova e la storia di due Veneri," in *Palazzo Pitti: La reggia rivelata,* eds. Gabriella Capecchi, et al. (Florence: Giunti 2003, 193-209.

the circumstances of the creation of these two statues differed. The sculptor did not create Perseus based on a specific order, and the pope bought the statue after the Apollo Belvedere was taken away in order to place it on the empty pedestal where the Apollo had stood. According to the original arrangement with Louis I of Etruria, Canova was to create a copy of the Medici Venus, which was intended to replace the stolen original.[75] However, the sculptor did not keep his promise. This was also evidently due to the fact that, during a detailed study of the cast of the Medici Venus, the sculptor realized that the statue had been so poorly restored that it would have to be radically modified.

103. Antonia Canova, workshop, Venus Italica, h. 175,3 cm, probably 1822-1823, variant of marble first executed 1810.

The sculptor later made an agreement with the ordering party, Maria Luisa, the wife of Louis I of Etruria, ruling regent after his death, that he would create his own version of the statue for Florence in addition to a copy of the Medici Venus. Ultimately,

[75] The Kingdom of Etruria was created in 1801 as a successor state to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

the sculptor only finished his version of the statue and sent it to Florence; in the meantime, however, the Kingdom of Etruria had been dissolved and annexed to France, and thus the work was paid for by Napoleon. It may have been Giovanni Degli Alessandri, director of the Uffizi, who negotiated Napoleon's payment, and therefore he presented the Venus Italica as a replacement for the Medici Venus. Nonetheless, when Canova visited the Uffizi and found that his Venus Italica had been placed on the empty pedestal where the Medici Venus had stood, he insisted it be placed on another pedestal to make it clear that this was his own version. Today, the Venus Italica is located in Florence's Palazzo Pitti; other versions of it exist and differ only in certain details.

The number of Canova's versions of the Medici Venus shows that the work was very positively received at the time, there was a great demand for it, and it was imitated soon after it was completed.[76] Canova's success stemmed from the fact that he adhered to the ancient model only loosely. The Venus Italica was larger than the Medici Venus, its hairstyle is different and inspired by the Capitoline Venus and, most importantly, it holds clothing to the body in order to cover the loins and one breast. Another tool emphasizing Venus's chastity is her turned head. Canova evidently adopted the motif of a half-naked woman looking backwards from another very famous statue, the Venus Callipyge.[77] This statue's backward glance has an erotic undertone, which Canova was surely aware of. In addition, the turn of the head on his statue is even more distinct – Venus is no longer looking off to the side, but straight backwards as in Renaissance adaptations of the Venus Callipyge. The viewer must thus ponder why she is covering her breasts and loins before someone, who is behind her as she looks backwards at him or her. The sculptor's ostentatious disinterest in the depicted story shows that his Venus is more similar to statues made by Giambologna than ancient models. Furthermore, Canova has suppressed the relationship to the ancient Venus by replacing the obligatory vessel of water with a chest, which has no direct relation to any mythical story. It is simply a woman covering her nakedness,[78] and it was also perceived in this way by Canova's friend, Quatremère de Quincy, who was aware of the inconsistency of such a concept.[79]

Contemporary commentaries show that the Venus Italica was much more attractive and feminine to people of the time than the Medici Venus. In her they saw the perfect expression of the panicked fear that a woman has of being seen by someone naked. In 1812, i.e. shortly after the statue was put on display in the Uffizi in Florence, Italian author Ugo Foscolo wrote in a letter to Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi: *When I saw this divine work of Canova, I had to sit down nearby immediately … I sighed with a thousand desires, for really, if the Medici Venus is a most beautiful goddess, this is a most beautiful woman.*[80] The exceedingly erotic perception of the Venus Italica evidently surprised the

---

[76] Cf. Christian M Geyer, "Die Venus von Salvatore de Carlis für König Max I. Joseph," *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst, Dritte Folge* 62, 2011 (2013): 261-271.
[77] Cf., for instance, Johns, *Antonio Canova and the Politics of Patronage*; Paola Mangia, *Canova: Artists and Collectors, a Passion for Antiquity* (Roma: De Luca, 2009), 102-104.
[78] See Antonio Canova, *Scritti*, eds. Hugh Honour and Paolo Mariuz (Rome: Salerno, 2007), 473.
[79] See Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, *Canova et ses ouvrages* (Paris: Le Clere, 1834), 137-138.
[80] Ugo Foscolo, *Epistolario 1812-1813* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1949), 177-178.

sculptor, as he abandoned the motif of the clothing held close to the body in another version from 1817-1820 (Hope Venus), which showed a more unveiled goddess.[81]

104. Thorvaldsen, Venus, h. 160.8 cm, marble, 1813-16.

[81] Leeds, Leeds Art Gallery SC.1959.0021.0003.

Canova had only one competitor among his contemporaries – Bertel Thorvaldsen, who began work on his Venus in 1804-1805.[82] The definitive version, which did not differ greatly from previous ones, was created between 1804 and 1816 (**104**). It does not depict Venus born from the sea or bathing, but the goddess who has taken off her clothing to be victorious in the Judgement of Paris. In her raised right hand, she holds an apple, a symbol of victory, and holds her clothing in her lowered left hand. The statue is more all'antica than Canova's in that the goddess is completely naked. Just like ancient statues, it also has a closed composition, the formal and ideological center of which is formed by the apple that Venus is looking at. Thorvaldsen's contemporaries therefore celebrated him as an artist fulfilling Winckelmann's program to revive modern sculpture via a return to ancient models.[83] In reality, however, Thorvaldsen adhered much more strictly to the anatomy of the human body than ancient statues in comparison to Canova.

Thorvaldsen's Venus not only points towards the future and the realistic sculpture of the 19th century, but also to medieval tradition. The posture of Thorvaldsen's Venus evokes depictions of the Virgin Mary in scenes of the Annunciation.[84] Just like the Virgin Mary, his Venus's head is humbly bowed as she leans to one side, her body forming an S-shaped curve. The posture indicates the surprise and respect that the Virgin Mary expressed to the messenger sent by God. Thorvaldsen's Venus evidently influenced the creation of Canova's Venus from the Hope collection, which is more naked and thus more in the manner of the ancients. The position of the hands of Canova's Venus is closer to the Medici Venus, as its raised hand is also touching the breast. Thorvaldsen was aware of the fact that complete nakedness is a tool via which depictions can be shifted to a more ideal level. This is clearly evidenced by a statement made by Thorvaldsen that was recorded in 1829 by Karl Viktor von Bonstetten.[85] Thorvaldsen's contemporaries, who preferred him over Canova, emphasized the fact that, contrary to the Italian sculptor, he did not view nakedness as the goal of his work. Thorvaldsen commented on the matter unambiguously – he had learned to depict nakedness according to ancient Greek models, but it was only a tool for him to celebrate Christ and the apostles.[86] As might be expected, Thorvaldsen had no sympathy for Canova's erotic sculptural portrait of Pauline Borghese which he saw during a visit to the sculptor's studio in 1804.[87]

Neoclassicism differed from the Italian Renaissance not only in its pan-European dimension, as the return to ancient art took place in a wholly different social context, which was marked by prudery. For example, the monumental statues of

---

[82] Paris, Louvre R.F. 3334.

[83] Cf. Lars Olof Larsson, "Zwischen Depression und Neugeburt: Johann Tobias Sergel und Bertel Thorvaldsen in Rom," in *L'Europa e l'Arte italiana,* eds. Max Seidel et al. (Venice: Marsilio, 2000), 517-529.

[84] See David Bindman, *Warm Flesh, Cold Marble: Canova, Thorvaldsen and Their Critics* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 96-97.

[85] Karl Viktor von Bonstetten, *Briefe an Friederike Brun*, 2 (Frankfurt, 1829), 269: (Thorwaldsen) "erzählt, dass wenn sich die Mädchen ausziehen, in ihm das Gefühl erwacht; sind sie aber ganz entkleidet, so ist er von jedem Fehler gegen die Kunst so ergriffen, dass er nur das Kunstgefühl empfindet. Die schönsten Formen begeistern sein Genie, da dann alle niedrigen Triebe schweigen."

[86] See Bindman, *Warm Flesh, Cold Marble*, 155.

[87] See Bindman, *Warm Flesh, Cold Marble*, 11.

Adam and Eve created in 1490-1495 by Tullio Lombardo for the sepulcher of the Doge Andrea Vendramin in the prominent Venetian Basilica of Santi Giovanni e Paolo had to be taken down.[88] Pope Gregor XVI (1831-1846) had the Standing Venus relocated from the Cortile del Belvedere to the Vatican storeroom, despite the fact that her nakedness had already been covered with plaster undergarments. The end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century was a revolutionary era marked by efforts towards fundamental political reforms and a purely rational view of the world uninhibited by tradition, and was dubbed the enlightenment. Nonetheless, the depiction of nakedness, which was one of the most characteristic attributes of the artistic culture of the ancient Greeks and Romans, was not tolerated as it was in 16th century Italy or especially 18th century France. The fact that the bourgeoisie, who condemned the aristocratic art of the previous epoch, had begun to prosper contributed to this. A typical example of the concept of the nude can be found in the Venus painted by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres between 1808 and 1848 after Botticelli's Venus.[89] Ingres's goddess is similarly abstract; she does not imitate true anatomy, nor does she capture any event, and her perfectly smooth body is wholly impersonal and asexual, accentuating her symbolic significance.

As a rule, only heroic male nudes or wholly sterile female nudes were tolerated in the neoclassicist style. The prudishness of the time is documented in a painting by American painter Raphael Peale, who was renowned for his trompe l'oeil paintings, the goal of which was to confuse and entertain the viewer.[90] His painting from 1822 is a copy of the generally known painting at that time of Venus Anadyomene by James Berry from 1772, which was a typical demonstration of rococo frivolity.[91] The fact that the painting depicts Venus is revealed only by the title "Venus Rising from the Sea—a Deception," as only the goddess's hand and leg can be seen. The painter covered her nakedness in his tromp l'oeil painting with a scarf pinned in two places to a ribbon leading across the upper edge of the image. The painting suggests that someone has hastily and tentatively covered the immoral image to prevent it from offending. This covering naturally accentuates the nudity, and the image has the very opposite effect than the one intended. Peale points to this aspect in the object used to cover the nakedness – men and women of the time wore scarfs around their necks, i.e. on their bodies. The racy nature of the humorous drawing stemmed from the fact that Venus's nakedness had been hidden by an intimate article of clothing.

The Venus of British neoclassicist sculptors, the most prominent of which was Joseph Nollekens, did not differ from continental versions building upon the tradition of 16th century Italian art, primarily that of Giambologna and his pupils. The "Marine Venus" relief created by John Deare in Rome in 1787-1790 and signed in Greek, as was common at the time, stands out thanks to its refined erotic nature.[92] The goddess is playing with the whiskers of a sea monster, on which she comfortably sits, while

---

[88] See Anne Markham Schulz, *The History of Venetian Renaissance Sculpture, ca. 1400-1530* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2017), 235.

[89] Chantilly, Musée Condé M726.

[90] Kansas City, MO, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art 34-147. Cf. Lauren K. Lessing and Mary Schafer, "Unveiling Raphaelle Peale's Venus Rising from the Sea--a Deception," *Winterthur Portfolio* 43, no. 2-3 (Summer, 2009): 229-259.

[91] Dublin City Gallery, the Hugh Lane.

[92] Los Angeles, John P. Getty Museum 98.SA.4. Cf. Faroult, *L'Antiquité rêvée*, no. 102.

accompanied by an Amor with a lit torch as another Amor fires an arrow of physical desire. Nollekens, Deare and other neoclassicist sculptors worked for British aristocrats; however, female nakedness was not initially tolerated in the public exhibition halls of Victorian England (1837-1901). This is demonstrated by the fate of painter William Etty, who made no effort to hide the fact that he painted naked women according to live models, a fact which scandalized the audience of his time.[93]

In the 1840s and mainly 1850s, the naked Venus appeared in British exhibitions only on rare occasion.[94] In this context, an exhibition of one of the most famous statues of Venus created in the 19th century, the work of Welsh sculptor John Gibson, was held. In his time, he was highly successful, a fact which was evidenced by his membership in a total of twelve European academies. Gibson worked in Rome, where he studied under Canova and Thorvaldsen; here he also created a statue of Venus in 1833 for British politician, philanthropist and one of the greatest art collectors of the era, Joseph Neeld.[95] Venus holds an apple, characterizing her as victor. This attribute did not refer so much to her victory in the Judgement of Paris as it did to her victory over vice, which is seen in the concept of the statue and the tortoise at her feet. Venus's expression is grave, her head is humbly tilted to the side, and she looks upwards, elements by which the sculptor emphasized her spiritual character.[96] Although her free leg is bent, the goddess stands upright like a saint; her hip is not skewed to one side as is the case among ancient models. She is naked, but her loins are chastely covered with a cloak. It had been known since the Renaissance that the tortoise at her feet characterized the goddess as the patroness of virtuous women. This was Venus Verticordia, whose mission it was to turn women towards virtue.

In 1851-1856, Gibson created a replica of this statue of Venus for Liverpool industrialist Robert Preston and his wife (**105**).[97] This version was covered with wax polychrome; the apple and tortoise are golden, and Venus has blue eyes, yellow hair, red lips and a rosy complexion. The statue in Gibson's Roman studio became an attraction for art lovers visiting the Eternal City. The sculptor exhibited it in a way that was common in the studios of art celebrities of the time. The statue was covered with a cloth veil, and the visitors sat in chairs placed in a row. A servant then unveiled the statue, allowing visitors to reflect on it in a quiet and calm manner.[98] In 1862, Gibson's painted statue of the goddess was exhibited at London's International Exhibition together with two other polychrome statues by Gibson in a pavilion evoking an ancient temple, which was also richly polychromed (**106**). The name, sculptural concept and architectural presentation of Gibson's Venus was meant to emphasize her spirituality,

---

[93] Cf. Sarah Burnage et al., eds., *William Etty: Art & Controversy* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011).
[94] See Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 90.
[95] Today Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum. Cf. John Hussey, *John Gibson R. A. The World of the Master Sculptor* (Birkenhead: Countyvise, 2012), 125-131.
[96] See Elizabeth Eastlake, *Life of John Gibson, RA, Sculptor* (London: Longmans, Green,1870), 210-211: "The expression I endeavoured to give my Venus was that spiritual elevation of character which results from purity and sweetness, combined with an air of unaffected dignity and grace."
[97] Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery 7808. Cf. Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 121–124; Michael Hatt, "Transparent Forms. Tinting, Whiteness and John Gibson's Venus," *Sculpture Journal* 23, no. 2 (2014): 185-196.
[98] See Anna Frasca-Rath, *John Gibson & Antonio Canova. Rezeption, Transfer, Inszenierung* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2018), 162.

but critique at the time condemned its vulgarity, which was surely due at least in part to the polychrome.

105. John Gibson, The Tinted Venus (Venus Verticordia), marble sculpture, h. 176 cm, 1851-1856.
106. William England, The Tinted Venus by J. Gibson, photograph, 1862.

In ancient Greece, statues were also polychrome, a fact which archeologists discovered at the end of the 18th century.[99] Quatremère de Quincy was the first art historian to defend the theory of the colorfulness of Greek statues, and Antonio Canova also began to experiment with polychrome in his work.[100] Gibson became acquainted with polychroming statues during his stay in Canova's studio, but used this technique for the first time in 1837 on a statue of Amor, which is located today in a private collection.[101] Gibson did not intend for the polychrome applied to Venus to give her a stronger semblance of a living being, as sculptors did in the second half of the 19th century.[102] On the contrary, and as he himself stated, he intended to emphasize Venus's relation to ancient sculpture and evoke an impression of the goddess's presence.[103] Nonetheless, critics of the time claimed that the polychrome prevented them from seeing the virtuous goddess – in their eyes, the color evoked immodesty, and a polychrome statue of a naked woman was unacceptable for them. Gibson's critics not only faulted his statue for its naturalism, but also paradoxically for its classicism and inanimateness, which was due to the fact that statues referring to

[99] Cf., for example, Philippe Jockey, *Le mythe de la Grèce blanche* (Paris: Belin, 2015); Bourgeois, Brigitte, and Violaine Jeammet, "Les paradoxes de l'invention de la polychromie antique au XIXe siècle," in *En couleurs. La sculpture polychrome en France 1850-1919,* ed. Edouard Papet (Paris: Musée d'Orsay, 2018), 151-156.
[100] See Bindman, *Warm Flesh, Cold Marble*, 120-135
[101] Frasca-Rath, *John Gibson*, 146-158.
[102] Cf. Karina Türr, *Farbe und Naturalismus in der Skulptur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. Sculpturae vitam insufflat pictura* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1994), 20.
[103] Eastlake, *Life of John Gibson*, 211-12. Cf. Elisabeth S. Darby, "John Gibson, Queen Victoria, and the Idea of Sculptural Polychromy," *Art History* 4, no. 1 (March 1981): 46.

ancient mythology, both white or polychrome, were beginning to lose vogue.[104] Nonetheless, Gibson's polychrome statue of Venus was a success. Despite (or perhaps thanks to) the critique of his "Tinted Venus", collectors began to take interest in the work and today it has been preserved in a total of six replicas created by Gibson himself.[105]

The reception of Gibson's statue on the continent is evidenced by the "Venus with Golden Hair", which was exhibited in 1863 by Charles Auguste Arnaud at Paris's "Salon of the Venuses" as the hall had been dubbed for the number of paintings depicting this goddess. The statue was purchased by Emperor Napoleon III together with paintings of Venuses by Cabanel and Baudry, which aroused the greatest interest in the general public.[106] In a review, Théophile Thoré-Bürger emphasized the fact that the marble was polychromed in ancient Greek style, i.e. with skin-color complexion and golden hair (today no traces of polychrome have remained on Arnaud's statue). The polychromed Venus, which was the very first of its kind in French sculpture, heightened the effect of the statue, which had evidently been created according to a live model. Studio practice also manifested itself in the fact that Venus is holding a lock of her hair in her hand, which is raised high in the air. Arnaud used this lock of hair on the final statue to replace the rope that his female model held onto to allow her to stand motionless in this position. Camp sharply criticized this type of statue exhibited at the Paris Salon: (these) *nymphs, bacchantes, Venuses and also philosophers assume the most violent postures, indulging in the most unnatural contortions to place before the viewer's eyes precisely what he doubtless has no wish to see*.[107] Arnaud was still working on the statue since 1859, when the press of the time wrote about the plaster model and still unfinished marble statue that it was neither a virtuous Venus nor an overly feminine Astarte, but a Venus of our times.[108] In its concept, the statue foreshadows the 20th century.

[104] Francis Turner Palgrave, *A Handbook to the Fine Art Collections in the International Exhibition* (London: Macmillan, 1862), 89: "Serious as the subject claims to be, I confess it is difficult to think of Nolleken's Venus, Canova's Venus, Gibson's Venus, everybody's Venus, with due decorum, – one fancies a healthy modern laugh would clear the air of these idle images, – one agrees with the honest old woman who preferred a roast duck to all the birds of Heathen."
[105] Frasca-Rath, *John Gibson*, 254.
[106] H. 210 cm, Compiègne, Château RF 424.
[107] Maxime Du Camp, "Le salon de 1863," *La revue des deux mondes* (15th June, 1863): 907-908. English translation W. Vaughan – F. Cachin.
[108] Henrys, "Gazette du Palais" *L'illustration* 35, (7th January, 1860): 10: "C'est bien la Vénus de notre âge."

6. ICON AND VICTIM. Mid 19th Century to the Present

"Venus of our Time"

The tradition of depicting the naked Venus, which was introduced in the 4th century BC by Praxiteles, continued on to a limited degree even in the 20th century, but often in a radically different form. Decently coquettish eroticism of neo-classical Venuses was the norm in academic art until the mid-19th century. The new image type that replaced it, whose roots go back to Giambologna, is characterized by fully developed female curves and a posture expressing solid moral principles. A representative example of the production of the time is the statue of Aphrodite made in 1859 by Georges Clère, whose teacher was the famous François Rude. Clère was also in high demand in his time and his ancient goddess was received favorably. In his concept, Aphrodite is a young villager, and he has completely replaced her ancient posture and stylized anatomy with the study of a live model (**107**). [1]

107. Georges Clère, Rustic Aphrodite, marble statue, 1859.

[1] For models cf. Susan Waller, *The Invention of the Model. Artists and Models in Paris, 1830-1870* (London: Routledge, 2016).

The goddess is holding a non-ancient attribute, a cob of corn, and is standing in an unharvested wheat field. The ancient goddess is indicated only by the Greek inscription "Rustic Aphrodite." According to the generally widespread racial theories of the time, the unsurpassable level of ancient art was a result of the ancient Greek lifestyle, a part of which was physical exercise and spending time in the open air. This explained why Greek men were muscular and Greek women were beautiful. Their bodies were symmetrical and said to be perfectly proportionate as we see them on classical Greek statues. These theories were explicitly racist. In his influential essay "Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines" published in 1853, Joseph Arthur de Gobineau wrote the following about Europeans: *Not only are these peoples more beautiful than the rest of mankind, which is, I confess, a pestilent congregation of ugliness; not only have they the glory of giving the world such admirable types as a Venus, an Apollo, a Farnese Hercules … the Europeans are the most eminent, by their grace of outline and strength of muscular development*.[2]

The cult of the beautiful and healthy body gained intensity in France after the country's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, when national regeneration via a return to Mediterranean roots, athletics and spending time in the sun became a highly current topic.[3] The vast majority of artists at the time agreed that the goal of depicting Venus must be a goddess "of our times," not only beautiful, but also strong and exceedingly healthy and vivacious. There were of course great differences between individual artists. Explicit eroticism is characterized by Auguste Rodin, for whom ancient sculpture was an important source of inspiration, which was typical for the French culture of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.[4] In his art, however, Rodin never adhered to ancient conventional schemes and worked primarily according to live models, which is evidenced by his many studies of Venus. He dealt with this topic intensely in connection to his "Gates of Hell" work inspired by Dante's epos. It remained unfinished despite the fact that he worked on it from 1880 until his death in 1917. He planned to put Venus over the doors to the right of the statue of the Thinker. He depicted her differently than was customary in antiquity, and also interpreted her in a wholly different manner. Primarily, however, he had a relationship with the statue that was different from ancient sculptors.

Rodin depicted Venus in various poses, the inspiration for which he gained from his female models, who were also usually his lovers. The model for his statuette from around 1888 was the model Adèle Abruzzeti, which is visible at first sight from her slim, limber body that nonetheless shows full female curves.[5] For Rodin, working on a female nude was primarily an opportunity for erotic contact with the model with whom he worked and thus appropriated. In his mind, the statue was primarily meant to express the fact that the depicted woman would have willingly accepted the sculptor's erotic advances and satisfied his physical needs. The sculptor was convinced that ancient sculptors had approached the depiction of Venus in the same manner.

---

[2] See Joseph-Arthur, comte d Gobineaue, *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, 1 (Paris: F. Didot frères, 1853), 179-180.

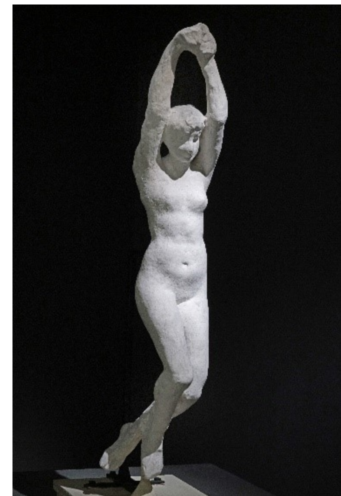
[3] Cf. Athena S. Leoussi, "From Civic to Ethnic Classicism: The Cult of the Greek Body in Late Nineteenth century French Society and Art," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 16, no. 3-4 (September – December 2009), 393-442.

[4] Cf. Richard Warren, *Sex, Symbolists and the Greek Body* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

[5] Paris, Musée Rodin S 02898.

Proof of this is found in Paul Gsell, who published interviews with Rodin in 1911 before the sculptor's death. He once remained in Auguste Rodin's studio late into the night, and the sculptor showed him a small ancient version of the Medici Venus in the light of a lamp in order to bring it to life. By doing so, he intended to show Gsell that it had been *moulded by kisses and caresses*.[6] Ancient sculptors naturally never approached statues of Venus in such a way; for them, these statues were primarily the visualization of an inaccessible goddess.[7]

In 1914, Rodin created the sculptural decoration for the dramatisation of Pierre Louÿs' decadent novel "Aphrodite," staged at the Théatre de la Renaissance in Paris (**108**). In it, the sculptor created a statue based on the dead body of the courtesan with whom he played a perverse love game. He represented her *in the violent attitude in which he saw her in his dream, to create from the corpse the statue of the Immortal Life*.[8] Rodin enlarged one of the nudes created for his "Gate of Hell" for the theatrical production (**109**). The only statue, which Rodin himself named Aphrodite, had nothing in common with the ancient Venuses. If we wanted to find an ancient pattern for Rodin's Aphrodite, it would be the famous ancient statue type of Marsyas hanging by his arms to be flayed.[9]



108 (left). Scene of Pierre Louÿs' play "Aphrodite"
(in the centre, Rodin's life-size plaster statue, lost), photo, 1914.
109 (right). Auguste Rodin, Aphrodite, plaster created around 1888
and enlarged by Henri Lebossé around 1914.

French sculptor Raoul Lamourdedieu, who was influenced at the time by Rodin, called his statue "Modern Venus."[10] The "modernity" lied in the fact that the sculptor had depicted the anatomy of a specific female model who had not assumed an ancient pose. Lamourdedieu exhibited his work with success at the Salon of 1908; the author of the catalogue did not mind that the sculptor had emphasized his

[6] Auguste Rodin, *Rodin on Art and Artists*, conversations with Paul Gsell, translated by Romilly Feden (New York: Dover, 1983), 21.
[7] Cf. Cf. Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 115-117.
[8] Louÿs 1896, 366.
[9] Cf. Pascale Picard, ed., *Rodin: La lumière de l'antique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013), 148, 172.
[10] Charles Saunier, *The Salons of 1908,* 2 (Paris: Goupil & Cie, 1908), 2, pl. after p. 36.

adherence to the model, and on the contrary said the following of this ostentatiously non-ancient and temporal Venus: *this woman has beauty which is for all time.*[11] He only marveled at the fashionable clothing that had fallen to the goddess's feet, by which the sculptor intended to put an even greater emphasis on the modern element.

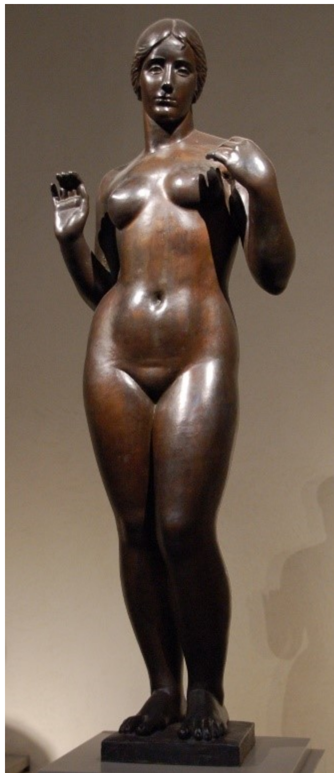
The most famous modern Venus is also the most famous work of sculpture by painter Pierre-August Renoir.[12] The bronze statue of 1913 is removing her clothing to reveal her well-built body with wide hips, promising healthy offspring, which had already been used by Clère to characterize the goddess (**110**). Renoir's Venus is holding an apple, a symbol of victory, in her outstretched hand. The goddess gained the apple in the beauty contest which Paris presided over, which is the theme of the relief on the statue's pedestal. Renoir planned to place the statue in the "Shrine of Love" in the garden of his Provence residence "Les Collettes" in Cagnes. German sculptor Peter Christian Breuer also conceived his statuette as a modern Venus around 1911; his goddess is presented as a concerned mother, and she reaches down towards Amor, who has been stung by bees and turns his head away from her rebelliously.[13] The topic may have simply represented the anguish of a young mother with a mischievous son if not for the fact that both are naked and an arrow is lying on the ground.[14]

110. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, realized by Richard Guino, Venus Triumphant, bronze, 1913.

After the years of deprivation and destruction during the First World War in Western culture, a desire for the carefree prosperity of the never-ending "Gilded Age" and nostalgia for the classical tradition in the visual arts distinctly intensified, a fact which we can observe also in avantgarde artists such as Pablo Picasso.[15] Sculptural

[11] Saunier, *The Salons of 1908*, 35.
[12] See Paul Haesaerts, *Renoir, Sculptor* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947), no. 6.
[13] Ca. 1911. Münster, private collection. Cf. Bloch, Peter, Sibylle Einholz, and Jutta Simson, eds., *Ethos und Pathos: Die Berliner Bildhauerschule 1786-1914* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1990), 57, no. 41.
[14] An enlarged bronze version of this sculptural group created in 1915 has been exhibited in Berlin's Greek park Köpenick since 1925, cf. Sibylle Einholz, *Peter Breuer (1856-1930): Ein Plastiker zwischen Tradition und Moderne*. Phil. Diss. (Berlin: FU Berlin, 1984), no. 57.
[15] Cf. Enrique Mallen, *Pablo Picasso: Aphrodite Period 1924-1936* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2020.

work came once again to the forefront, in which Aristide Maillol won recognition. Maillol was venerated in the interwar period as the greatest living French sculptor. Maillol's monumental statues radically abandoned the dynamism and melancholy expressiveness typical for works by Auguste Rodin from the turn of the century. On the contrary, his statues took a programmatic stance against the chaos of modern life via their static nature and positive energy.[16] Maillol exhibited his "Venus with Necklace" in Paris in 1928, but selected the mythical name for the statue only to give it greater esteem (**111**).[17] According to the artist's own words, it was the result of many years of searching, which began before the war (in 1910) with a very similar statue called "Summer". Standing by the torso of one replica of the ancient Venus Esquilin (**15**), Maillol claimed that he had never been interested in the content of ancient statues, and was inspired exclusively by their perfect timeless shapes.[18] Maillol's goal was to create perfectly designed statues; their postures are calm and do not express any emotion, and their expressions are serene. This is not, however, a return to the abstract and timeless nature of neo-classical statues; the surface of Maillol's statues always gives a lively and wholly specific impression.[19] This is why he did not hesitate in wholly removing the illusion of reality by creating various versions of Venus's torso lacking a head, arms or legs next to complete versions of Venus; however, even these incomplete figures give off a lively impression.



111. Aristide Maillol, Vénus au collier, h.75.3 cm, bronze, 1918-1928.

[16] Cf. Kenneth E. Silver, ed., *Chaos and Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918-1936* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Pubblications, 2010), 17.
[17] See Ronald Alley, *Catalogue of the Tate Gallery's Collection of Modern Art Other than Works by British Artists* (London: Tate Gallery,1981), 466-8.
[18] See Henry Frère, *Conversations de Maillol* (Genève: Cailler, 1956), 186.
[19] See Judith Cladel, *Maillol, sa vie, son oeuvre, ses idées* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1937), 83.

The term torso for a sculptural depiction of a person without a head and limbs came into use in Italy in the mid-16th century in connection with a fragment of a marble statue of a man in the Vatican collections regarded as Hercules sitting on a lion (Torso Belvedere).[20] The idea, however, already existed – a bronze statuette of a naked woman from the end of the 15th century was found with her arms removed in order to liken her to ancient statues, which were usually discovered in incomplete states.[21] While the torso during the Renaissance was an imitation of an ancient work, we find it for the first time in Rodin's work as a tool to negate imitation as such.[22] In 1875-1877, he created a statue of a male torso without a head or limbs, and in 1900 completed his famous statue of a walking man without arms or a head.[23] In Maillol's work, the torso played in important role, as it was the basis of his creative process.[24] The torso itself may have been the sculptor's goal, as he was not interested in circumstantiality, which he saw to be represented not only by the limbs, but also the head. His goal was to depict the essence of the human body and its ideal, embodied by the torso, from which all movement of the human body arises.[25] This was also why he belonged to those who were not bothered that the ancient Venus de Milo statue had no arms. In Maillol's view, the depicted action only drew attention away from the beauty of this statue's shapes.[26]

Maillol's uncompromising classicism was an exception among the authors of modern Venuses in the 20th century, but not unique. Leon Indenbaum, similarly to Georges Clère mentioned above, named his 1925 statue "Rustic Venus."[27] The sculptor was a member of the famous Parisian school and in the same year created and successfully exhibited a marble statue at the Salon, which he simply dubbed "a reclining woman." At first glance, the "Rustic Venus" looks like a well-built and self-contented villager, but at the same time advocates ancient tradition. Indenbaum hailed from today's Belarus, and began to study in the studio of Antoine Bourdelle immediately after his arrival to Paris in 1911, where he remained until 1919. Similarly to Rodin, Bourdelle was strongly influenced by antiquity and kept both ancient statues and books on ancient sculpture in his studio.[28] The pose of Indenbaum's Venus, with her head supported by her hand and one leg over the other is strikingly similar to the ancient statues of deceased Roman women characterized as Venus via the revealed upper half of the body (**42**-**43**). It also shares one other detail – the cloth that is thrown over the thigh and which covers the loins. Indenbaum could have come to this design independently of ancient Roman sculptors; he had dealt with the theme of a reclining figure for a long time and named a similar plaster statue from 1922 "Figure."[29]

---

[20] Cf. Christa Schwinn, *Die Bedeutung des Torso vom Belvedere für Theorie und Praxis der bildenden Kunst vom 16. Jahrhundert bis Winckelmann* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang,1973), 1, 36.
[21] Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer 5600. Cf. Werner Schnell, *Der Torso als Problem der modernen Kunst* (Berlin: Mann, 1980), 20-21.
[22] Schnell, *Der Torso*, 25-67.
[23] "Torso", 1875-1877, Paris, Petit palais; "L'homme qui marche", bronze, ca. 1900, Musée Rodin.
[24] See Pierre Camo, *Aristide Maillol* (Paris: Nouvelle revue française, 1926), 8.
[25] Frère, *Conversations de Maillol*, 273.
[26] Cladel, *Maillol*, 141.
[27] See Adolphe Basler, *Indenbaum* (Paris: Le Triangle, ca 1933), pl. 4.
[28] Cf. Claire Barbillon et al., eds., *Bourdelle et l'Antique: Une passion moderne* (Paris: Paris Musées, 2017).
[29] Cf. Basler, *Indenbaum*, pl. 2.

However, the fact that he named his statue after Venus may be proof that he was aware of its links to ancient tradition.

112. Gerhard Marcks, Thüringer Venus, h. 177 cm, bronze, 1930.

When sculptors of the 20th century decided to depict Venus, they did not usually strive for timeless beauty as Maillol did, but rather to depict a goddess localized in time and place. Therefore, we encounter "American,"[30] "Australian,"[31] "Ukrainian,"[32] "Nordic"[33] and other Venuses – the list is vast, as the series of statues is essentially endless. Probably the most famous of these national goddesses is also the oldest, the "Thüringer Venus" by Gerhard Marcks from 1930 (**112**).[34] The sculptor adopted not only the gestures from ancient tradition – like Renoir's Venus, the goddess is also holding an apple in her outstretched right hand, which could, however, be Eve's apple.

---

[30] Albino Manca, 1942-1943. Tertenia, Museo Civico d'Arte Moderna "Albino Manca."

[31] Rayner Hoff, 1926, Art gallery of the New South Wales. Cf. Anna Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 243, fig. 5.6.

[32] Mykola Shmatko, 1993, sculptor's collection.

[33] Elena Surovtseva, 1988. Moscow, Tretiakov Gallery.

[34] Cf. Günter Busch, ed., *Gerhard Marcks: Das plastische Werk* (Frankfurt: Propyläen Verlag, 1977), no. 204.

With her left hand, she lifts up a lock of her hair, which has characterized the newly-born Venus emerging from the waves since antiquity. The differentiation of the free and supporting leg, which is typical for Venuses in ancient tradition, is only subtly suggested in Marcks's statue; the figure stands firmly in stride so that her robust frame with wide shoulders and full breasts stands out. Her wide face is also individualized, and she has graceful but irregular features with slightly slanted eyes, a large nose and a pointy chin. She does not look excessively noble or smart, but, on the contrary, agreeable and likeable, like a good-hearted "girl next door" that we can recognize even years later. Statues depicting Venus as a devoted mother are conceived in a similar manner. Gerhard Marcks created also a similar sculptural group as the aforementioned work by Peter Christian Breuer; the woman is also leaning over a boy, but the action is different, as Venus teaches Amor to fire a bow.[35] In this sculptural group, Venus is dressed in simple clothing, and in this case the goddess in no way differs from the average woman in 1952, when the sculptural group was created.

The negative version of the realistic depiction of the modern Venus was selected by the greatest of all modern Italian sculptors, Arturo Martini, who is little known outside of Italy as a consequence of his engagement in Mussolini's political regime. Martini was aware of the fact that Western sculptural tradition, which was rooted in antiquity, was definitively coming to an end in his era.[36] He attempted to overcome this alienation of the public and sculpture through spontaneity, i.e. the coherence of depicted themes, the unpretentious nature of their concept, and formal imperfection inspired by folk art. He experimented with technique while returning to a traditional Italian material, pottery, for which he took inspiration from Etruscan statues that were a sensational discovery of Italian archeology of the time. For Martini, the Etruscan statues, which did not adhere to classical Greek canon, were an alternative version of African ritual mask art discovered by French avantgarde artists.

The sophisticated classical form and myth was replaced with naivety, playfulness and folk tales full of fantasy but lacking any philosophical ambitions. Martini adopted the title of the statue, "Venus of the Ports" of 1932 (**113**), from a painting by Mario Sironi from 1919.[37] The scene on the painting is of a port and an inbound vessel, and a woman in summer clothing exhibiting her drooping breasts stands on the pier. She is a wholly forgettable woman, who waits for sailors in every port, which is expressed by the fact that she has no face; her blouse is formed by old newspapers which no longer interest anyone. Martini's naked Venus is a disinterested prostitute who does not care in the least what she looks like.[38] She has taken a comfortable seat and is almost semi-reclining. Her mouth is open as she props her head up with her hand, making her features grotesquely misshapen. Her status is also indicated by what she sits upon, i.e. a fragment of an old mooring, which like her has evidently discarded and thus lies upside down on the pier.

---

[35] See G. Marcks, Venus and Amor, 1952, Bremen, Gerhard Marcks Stiftung. Cf. Rudolf Blaum et al., *Gerhard Marcks und die Antike* (Bremen: Gerhard Marcks-Stiftung, 1993), 40.

[36] Arturo Martini, *La scultura lingua morta e altri scritti*, ed. Mario De Micheli (Milan: Jaca Book, 1982), 116.

[37] Combined technique, 98 X 73,5 cm, Milano, Casa Museo Boschi - Di Stefano. Cf. Silvia Bignami, ed., *Mario Sironi: Venere dei porti* (Milan: Skira, 2000).

[38] Treviso, Museo Civico "Luigi Bailo."

113. Arturo Martini, Venus of the Ports, h. 115 cm, terracotta, 1932.

"Venus in Furs"

My company was charming. Opposite me by the massive Renaissance fireplace sat Venus; she was not a casual woman of the half-world, who under this pseudonym wages war against the enemy sex, like Mademoiselle Cleopatra, but the real, true goddess of love. She sat in an armchair and had kindled a crackling fire, whose reflection ran in red flames over her pale face with its white eyes, and from time to time over her feet when she sought to warm them. Her head was wonderful in spite of the dead stony eyes; it was all I could see of her. She had wrapped her marblelike body in huge fur and rolled herself up trembling like a cat. [39] Thus begins the famous novel "Venus in Furs" by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, after whom the sexual deviation known as masochism was named. In the book, Venus is the alter ego of a sadomasochistic dominatrix, an icy merciless woman with a heart of stone. Her fur coat implies that the beautiful and unmoving marble surface hides an animalistic sexual desire. Venus thus represents an even greater danger than meets the eye. Von Sacher-Masoch simultaneously points out her *white eyes*, which evoke a classical statue, an object of indubitable and universal admiration.

[39] Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Das Vermächtniß Kains. Erster Theil. Die Liebe. Zweiter Band* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1870), 121–368. English translation W. Vaughan – F. Cachin.

The hero of the novel "La Vénus d'Ille" expresses himself similarly concerning the ancient bronze statue of the goddess, which an admirer of the statue proudly showed him in the south of France: *Disdain, irony, and cruelty could be read on this face, which was nonetheless incredibly beautiful. In fact, the more you gazed at this admirable statue, the more you experienced a painful feeling at the way such marvellous beauty could be allied with the absence of any sensibility. "If the model ever existed," I said to Mr. De Peyrehorade, "and I doubt that Heaven has ever produced a woman such as this, how I pity her lovers. She must have taken great pleasure in making them die of despair. There is something ferocious in her expression, and yet I've never seen anything so beautiful."*[40] The plot of the novel, which was written by accomplished expert of ancient culture Prosper Mérimée, was inspired by the aforementioned medieval legend on the statue of Venus and the ring. The beautiful Vénus d'Ille statue kills, and according to general opinion is the embodiment of the devil and is therefore ultimately melted into a church bell, which, however, continues to do harm.

"Venus in Furs" and "Vénus d'Ille" do not express the personal opinions of the authors of these works on the ancient goddess. The first of a series of famous literary works from the 19th century on seductive statues of Venus that destroy men is the novella entitled "Marble Statue" by Joseph von Eichendorff.[41] In it, Venus was an evil and mortally dangerous demon, but the ancient statue that depicted her was an unsurpassable aesthetic example. The 19th century's attitude towards Venus was ambivalent; the condemnable depiction of a naked woman was the very thing that raised fascination. In late antiquity, Christian authors primarily attacked Venus, who tempted with her beautiful appearance and sexual attraction only to destroy the individual in question.

The concept of Venus as a mortally dangerous monster lived also in the medieval myth of the unhappy Tannhäuser.[42] The most famous version of the myth was the opera of the same name by Richard Wagner according to the composer's own libretto that premiered in Dresden in 1845. At the beginning of the opera, the hero turns away from Venus, whom he had planned to replace with the Virgin Mary, but fails to break the magic of the evil demon. Charles Baudelaire, one of the few French admirers of the German composer, summarized the transformation of the ancient goddess into a demon in his essay "Wagner and Tannhäuser" in 1869: *No longer does she inhabit Olympus or the shores of some sweet-smelling archipelago. She has withdrawn into a cavern, admittedly magnificent, but illuminated by fires other than those of the kindly Phoebus. In going underground Venus has come nearer to hell, and, no doubt, on the occasion of certain abominable solemnities she goes and pays regular homage to the Archdemon, prince of the flesh and lord of sin.*[43]

---

[40] Prosper Mérimée, *Colomba. La Vénus d'Ille. Les âmes du purgatoire* (Paris: Magen et Comon, 1841), 300-301. English translation A. Brown. Cf. Günter Grimm, "Prosper Mérimées tödliche Frauen oder 'Die Venus von Ille' und ihr Vorbild aus Melos," *Antike Welt* 30 (1999): 577-586.

[41] Joseph von Eichendorff, "Das Marmorbild," in *Frauentaschenbuch für das Jahr 1819*, ed. Caroline de la Motte-Fouqué (Nurnberg: J. L. Schrag, 1818), 555-595. Cf. Robert Velten, *Keusche Madonna – verführerische Venus: Die Frauen in Eichendorffs Marmorbild* (Münster: Universität Münster, 2012).

[42] Heinrich Heine, *Neue Gedichten* (Hamburg, 1844), 111-128.

[43] Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gaillmard, 1961), 1219. English translation P. E. Charvet. Cf. Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau, "Aphrodite wagnérienne ou la leçon de classicisme," *Revue de littérature comparée* 309 (2004): 37-54.

The "updating" of the medieval attitude towards Venus in the 19th century was without a doubt strongly influenced by the fact that she had begun to appear in public space, which drew resistance from the middle class, for which hypocritical morals and obligatory social conventions were typical. As a consequence of revolutionary changes, all the privileges of the elite including the visual arts, which had until then been designated exclusively for their private consumption, slowly began to become generally available to all. In the centuries prior, the aristocracy had lived behind the walls of their residences, which were suddenly toppled. Statues and paintings that hitherto had been hidden away from the lower classes became readily accessible, which must have shocked the bourgeoisie. Such a confrontation naturally led to scandals, which is illustrated in a famous case of a common girl, Susan Flood, who converted to the ultraconservative movement dubbed the "Plymouth Brethren" in the 1860s. The girl had gone with her relatives to visit London's Crystal Palace, which had been moved to Sydenham after the Great Exhibition ended in 1851. In the statue gallery, the naked statues outraged her to such a degree that she began to knock one statue after another over with the handle of her umbrella until she was stopped by the police. The girl returned triumphantly to her community in Devonshire, where she proudly told of her victory: "*In the very temple of Belial.*"[44]

Private parks and gardens opened their gates to all who bought tickets, but such a visit may have been highly frightening for commoners. Another notable example comes from Stuttgart, where William I, King of Württemberg built his summer residence, Rosenstein. The king had a weakness for statues of naked women. He gradually ordered the creation of all of the most famous exemplars from antiquity until the present; these decorated the interiors and the garden of Rosenstein Palace, the most famous English landscape park of its time in southwestern Germany.[45] According to a guide from 1856, a whole set of eight of the most famous statues of naked Venuses were exhibited together in the park.[46] The citizens of Stuttgart were hardly prepared for such a concentration of nakedness and sharply criticized these statues, which is documented in a lithograph from 1855, which shows an old married couple draped in layers of clothing and standing before a statue of the naked Venus (**114**). The expressions on their faces and gestures clearly show what they think of this copy of the Medici Venus that they have suddenly happened upon. The statue belonged to a series created by a local artist, Ludwig Hofer, who studied from 1823-1838 in Rome under Thorvaldsen.[47]

---

[44] See Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son* (Portsmouth NH: W. Heinemann, 1907), 161.

[45] Cf. Bernhard Maaz, "Das Alte am Neuen und das Neue im Alten. Die Erwerbungen zeitgenössischer Skulpturen durch König Wilhelm I. von Württemberg als Spiegel individueller Interessen und zeittypischer Tendenzen gegen Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft* 67 (2013): 128-129.

[46] See Karl Büchele, *Stuttgart und seine Umgebungen für Einheimische und Fremde* (Stuttgart: K. Aue, 1858), 277.

[47] The statue survived the destruction of the park during the Second World War but is now lost, cf. Patricia Peschel, *Der Stuttgarter Hofbildhauer Johann Ludwig von Hofer* (Stuttgart: Hohenheim Verlag, 2009), 200-201.

114. Outraged Citizens/"Empörte Bürger," lithograph, c.1855.

115. Honoré Daumier, lithograph, 1850.

The public's attitude towards statues of naked Venuses was not always unified. The most liberal of cities was Paris, where no one was scandalized by such statues in the mid-19th century; on the contrary, the statues became proof of the modernity of this world metropolis and a symbol of a new era. The lithograph of 1850 by Daumier shows an old married couple in exactly the same situation as on the lithograph from Stuttgart, but the reaction to the statue is wholly different (**115**). The old woman sighs as she

looks at the copy of the Medici Venus: "*No matter what one says, old things are always beautiful*". The old man counters dryly: "*Yes, my dear, but only in marble.*" On Daumier's lithograph entitled "The Connoisseur" from 1864-1865, a smaller-than-life plaster copy of the Venus de Milo holds a central position.[48] She stands on a table next to other books and works of art, and the room is completely full of images and antiques. The old man in the painting in the middle of the round frame and the young satyr characterized by pointy ears depicted as a sculptural bust on the right are carefully gazing along with the art lover, who sits comfortably in his chair. It is clear from the smile on his face that owning the statuette brings him great pleasure. The Venus de Milo is placed so that her dynamic posture stands out, and she faces the statuette's owner; however, she looks down at him from above, from the ideal world of art, youth and beauty. The fact that their gazes have met even more accentuates the collector's passivity and unsightliness. His face is creased, his hair thin, and the features of his elderly face are almost caricature-like.

Although the copy of the ancient statue of Venus forms the central point of the collector's study in Daumier's graphic, there is an unsurpassable void between it and the collector. On the contrary, nakedness had become a common part of the modern Parisian world. The first erotic daguerreotypes depicting live female models appeared in the middle of the 1840s, and in 1854 Auguste Bruno Braquehais created a series of six studio photographs which showed naked women confronted with a smaller-scale plaster replica of the Venus de Milo. One of them has a composition similar to that of Daumier's later graphic, but the art connoisseur has been replaced by a naked woman, who is not looking at the plaster statuette of Venus, but looks coquettishly back at the viewer while showing off her naked body. The ancient statue was intended to elevate the photograph to a work of art. This, however, was unnecessary, as the distinguished critic Ernest Lacan commended the photograph but denounced the plaster cast as a visually intrusive element.[49]

The focal point of artistic production in the 19th century explicitly shifts from the statues that only monarchs and the aristocratic elite could afford to paintings that became generally available in bourgeois society. French painting of the third quarter of the century demonstrates the transformation of artists' attitudes and the public towards the depiction of naked women and Venus. What audiences in Paris, the most liberal metropolis in the world at the time refused to accept was clearly demonstrated in the scandals linked to paintings by Gustav Courbet. His work "La baigneuse" was groundbreaking, and caused a scandal at the salon in 1853. A portly half-naked woman is standing on the wooded bank of a river and raising her hand at a sitting woman, who is also gesticulating. The meaning of the communication between the women is unclear, and Courbet's intent was primarily to create an unidealized depiction of live models.[50] The work was viewed as a provocation and mockery of traditional

[48] E.g. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 29.100.200. See Jean-Pierre Cuzin et al., eds., *D'après l'antique* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000), no. 249.
[49] See Ernest Lacan, "Études d'après nature. M. B. Braquehais," *La Lumière* 37 (16. septembre, 1854), 147.
[50] Courbet, La baineuse, 1853, Montpellier, Musée Fabre 868.1.19. Cf. Dominique Massonnaud, *Courbet scandale: Mythes de la rupture et Modernité* (Paris: Harmattan, 2003).

depictions of the naked bathing Venus. Critique of the time claimed that the author had originally intended to name the image "La Venus Courbet."[51]

The program of transformation of the goddess into a real woman, i.e. a "Venus of our times," which she came to be known as, culminated in Courbet's painting dubbed "L'Origine du monde / The Origin of the World" from 1866.[52] This painting depicts only a female torso without a head, arms or legs, which was an explicit reference to the plaster cast of the ancient female torso that was an essential teaching tool in art studios of the time. The female genitals, which had been omitted in depictions of the naked female body since the times of Praxiteles's Cnidia, were displayed by Courbet from a closeup perspective and in full detail, revealing the fact that they are slightly swollen. This was a parody of the ancient model, as what had been censured now became the primary theme of Courbet's painting.[53]

In Courbet's works or Manet's Olympia of 1863, the ancient Venus was replaced by a "girl next door,"as this was a characteristic trait of the world in which they lived and one they wished to record in their paintings exactly as they saw it. At the center of these changes were women and sexuality, and therefore the greatest scandals were caused by paintings of naked women. Around the mid-19th century, the process focusing on equality between men and women began, fundamentally transforming society. In 1866, John Stuart Mill was the first member of the British Parliament to make a strong call for women's voting rights and in 1869 published a revolutionary essay defending gender equality, "The Subjection of Women." However, these revolutionary social transformations also had a darker side, which was the general prevalence of prostitution. This evoked panic in society, which began fully to acknowledge the power of sexuality and its potentially destructive effects. One of the manifestations of this panic was the birth of a new word – pornography – which came into use at the time for virtual prostitution, i.e. obscene images, which began to spread like wildfire.[54] Everyone knew about pornography, brothels, and prostitution but it was unsuitable for artists to make so much as a mention of its existence.

Liberalization in the depiction of female nakedness evoked obstinate resistance from conservative circles, and ancient statues of the naked Venus once again came to the forefront of the public discussion that arose on the subject. The contradicting reactions that statues of Venus evoked in men and women are expressed in the German caricature depicting tourists staring aghast at the Medici Venus (**116**). The confused visitor turns to his wife with the following words: "*What do you think about that, mum? Does a decent girl have to be so pretty?"*[55] The caricature by Linley Sambourne

---

[51] Nadar (G. F. Tournachon), *Nadar jury au Salon de 1853. Album comique de 60 à 80 dessins coloriés* (Paris: J. Bry aîné, 1853), no. 300: "S'il est vrai qu'il ait eu un instant la pensée d'intituler sa baigneuse la Vénus Courbet, il fait qu'il soit perfidement et cruellement conseillé."

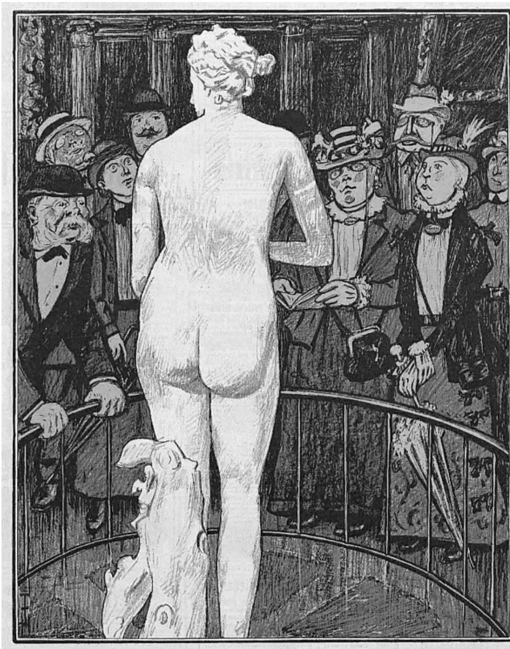
[52] Paris, Musée d'Orsay, RF 1995 10. Cf. Thierry Savatier, *Origine du monde Histoire d'un tableau de Gustave Courbet* (Paris: Bartillat, 2006).

[53] See Peter Brooks, "Storied Bodies, or Nana at Last Unveil'd, " *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1989), 22. The revolutionary nature of this painting is evidenced by its subsequent history – the work was first publicly exhibited in 1988, but since then has become a magnet for a score of exhibitions and permanent displays in Paris's Musée d'Orsay, joining its collections in 1995.

[54] Cf. Chantelle Thauvette, "Defining Early Modern Pornography: The Case of Venus and Adonis," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2012), 26-48.

[55] *Simplicisimus* 4 (1899), 292.

also places the viewer in the Uffizi in Florence, where the treasurer of the Royal Academy J. C. Horseley stands dressed in women’s clothing as he gesticulates disapprovingly towards the statue of the Medici Venus, which is looking back at him with scrutiny (**117**).[56] The caricature is titled “The Model ‘British Matron’;” Horseley, in female garb, asks in offence: *“Oh dear! Oh dear! Who could ha’ sat for THAT?”* Horseley was an infamous mouthpiece for those who opposed the depiction of women in art and a sworn opponent of art made according to live female models. In the spring of 1885, he sent a letter to the Times called “A Woman’s Plea,” which he signed as a “British Matron;” his identity, however, was later revealed.[57]

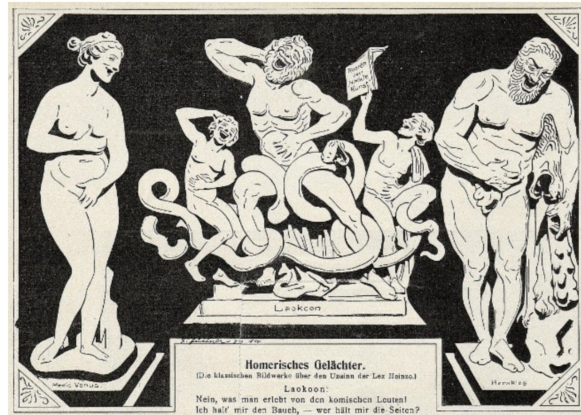


116 (left). Thomas Theodor Heine, Before the Medici Venus, 1898.
117 (right). Linley Sambourne, The Model ‘British Matron,’ 1885.

In Wilhelmine Germany, the so-called “Lex Heinze,” a law named after Berlin pimp Gottfried Heinze, who became a symbol of the immorality of the time, excited great outrage among intellectuals and artists.[58] The law from 1900 was initiated by the emperor himself and banned pornography with a punishment of up to one year of imprisonment and a fine of up to 1,000 marks.[59] The perpetual problem, however, is that the boundaries of pornography can never be defined in exact terms. Where does art end and pornography begin? It was for this very reason that caricaturists used ancient statues, including both of the most famous Venuses, to mock this law. In the caricature entitled “Homerian laughter. Classical statues on the absurdity of Lex

[56] *Punch* (24 October 1885), 195.
[57] *The Times* (20 May 1885), cf. Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 227-229.
[58] Cf. Gustav Eberlein, “Die Lex Heinze von Standpunkt des bildenden Künstlers,” in *Das Buch von der Lex Heinze ein Kulturdokument aus dem Anfange des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Otto Falckenberg (Leipzig: Staackmann, 1900), 32-33.
[59] Cf. Christina Templin, *Medialer Schmutz: Eine Skandalgeschichte des Nackten und Sexuellen im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1890-1914* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016).

Heinze," the Medici Venus and the other ancient statues are doubled over with laughter (**118**). Laocoön is saying "*Oh my, what one lives to see from these comical people. My sides are splitting – who will hold my pages?*" while looking at a newspaper with the headline "Roeren on 'naked art'", which his son holds before him.



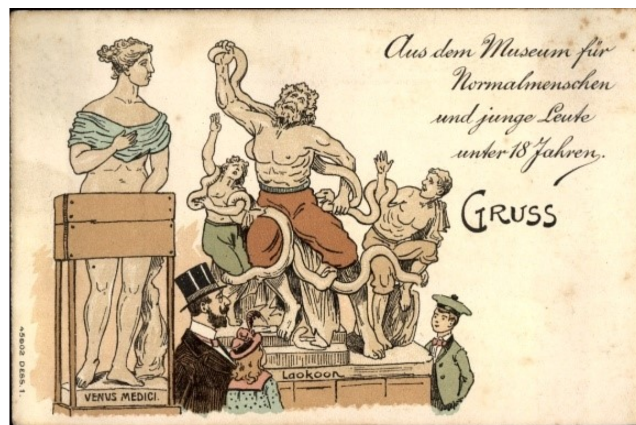
118. Franz Jüttner, Caricature on Lex Heinz with Venus de Medici, 1900.

In a similar caricature called "The Revenge of the Gods," the Medici Venus is once again on the left, and an inscription is found below the text: *Due to Lex Heinze, Roeren and Gröber dream that the gods will bring them to justice in a hall of the Vatican museum in Rome* (**119**). Deputies of the Reichstag, Adolf Gröber and Hermann Roeren, who were engaged in promoting Lex Heinze, are being punished in the caricature's Vatican collections because the clergy was highly involved in the campaign against pornography. In the caricature, the clergy is represented by a monk, who has fallen head first into water as Venus's Neptune spits more onto his head.

119. Ferdinand von Reznicek, Caricature on Lex Heinz (detail), 1900.

120 (left). Ferdinand von Reznicek, Caricature of Lex Heinz with Venus de Milo, 1900.
121 (right). Caricature on Lex Heinz, 1900.

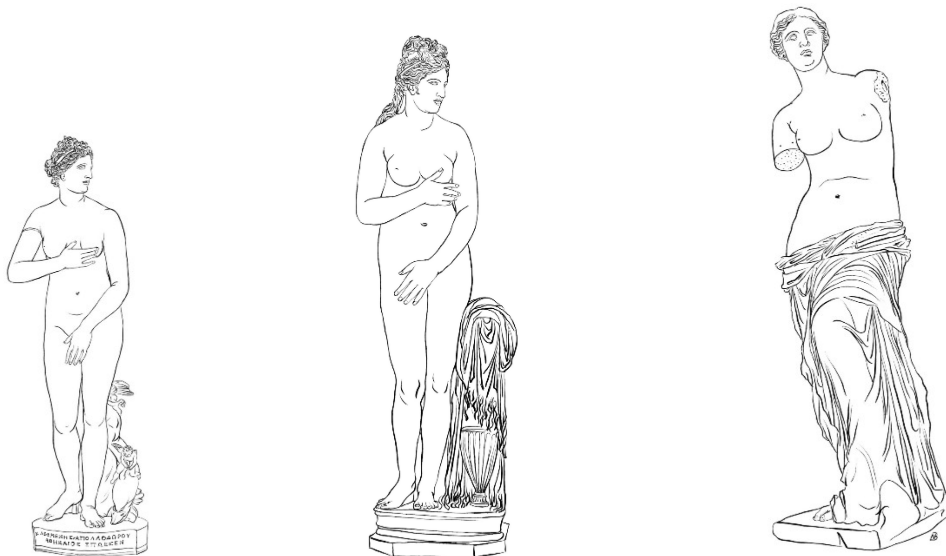
The sublime nakedness of the ancient statues stands out in confrontation with a pig, a traditional embodiment of impure earthliness. The pig snaps at the Venus de Milo: "*Ugh! How can someone walk around without bristles*?" (**120**). The caricature dubbed "Lex Heinze in practical use" depicting German police officers destroying plaster statuettes of ancient Venuses evokes the atmosphere of ancient cities after the onset of Christianity (**121**). A number of the caricatures pointed to the absurdity of the law by depicting the dressing of ancient statues. The postcard of the Venus de Milo in her underwear bears the inscription: *Lex Heinze. The lady Venus has until now unfortunately gone without her necessary undergarments. In contemporary fashion, we see today the wholly unashamed lady of Medici* (**122**). A different postcard with this statue's breasts covered by a shawl and her loins boarded up with planks bears the inscription: *Greetings from the museum for normal people and youth under the age of 18* (**123**). The message of their drawings was that the generally admired ancient statues of Venus of the time were an irrebuttable argument against the puritanical criticism of nakedness in art. These images are characterized by the fact that the caricaturists assumed that their audience would recognize the Medici Venus and the Venus de Milo to which they were referring to.



122 (left). German postcard with the dressed Venus Medici, circa 1900.
123 (right). German postcard with the boarded up Venus Medici, circa 1900.

Icon

Why Medici Venus, Capitoline Venus or Venus of Melos? To what do these ancient statues owe their worldwide fame? It is certainly no coincidence that these ancient statues were closely associated with the modern states. In the 18th century, the Venus de Medici was undoubtedly the most famous, successfully presenting the Grand Duchy of Tuscany as cultural superpower (**124**). The statue was located since 1575 in the Rome's Villa Medici. However, it was moved to Florence in 1677 by Cosimo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, allegedly upon pleas by Pope Innocent XI, as it raised a scandal.[60] The erotic appeal was also the reason, besides artistic mastery and venerable origin, why ancient statues of Venus became the object of political manipulation. From beginning to present, the ancient statue of Venus has been closely linked to the state because it depicted a naked woman, thus in an erotic context. The enormous potential of this emblem was already recognized by Roman emperors beginning with Augustus, whose tradition was followed in post-ancient Europe by the Pope, the rulers of Medician Florence, French Kings or Napoleon Bonaparte. The last-mentioned ruler had an eminent interest in this glorified statue and finally managed to have it moved to Paris in 1803, which was celebrated in a bronze medal depicting Medici Venus and his portrait.[61]



124 (right). Medici Venus, h. 135 cm, 1st century BC version of the Hellenistic original.
125. Capitoline Venus, h. 193 cm, The Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.
126 (left). Venus de Milo, height 204 cm, Greek marble version from 125-100 BC after the Greek original from the end of the 4th century BC.

One of the best-preserved ancient statues is the Capitoline Venus, which in its time was also the subject of intensive diplomatic negotiations (**125**). It differs from the relatively small Medici Venus in its height and the fact that instead of the usual dolphin, it has a hydria, water vessel, cast-off clothing, and attributes of the bath,

---

[60] Cf. Stijn Bussels, "Da'più scorretti abusata. The Venus de'Medici and its History of Sexual Responses" in *The Secret Lives of Artworks: Exploring the Boundaries Between Art and Life* eds. Caroline Van Eck et al. (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014), 38-55.
[61] Romain Vincent Jeuffroy, 1805-1815. E. g. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum NG-VG-1-3115.

evoking the birth of the goddess from the sea foam. The way the statue looks, however, is not as important as its placement in Rome's Campidoglio (the ancient Roman Capitol), the symbolic center of the Eternal City of which it has become an emblem. For this reason, Napoleon had the statue also taken to France. He made it the pride of the Louvre, yet another proof of the fact that Paris had definitively replaced Rome in the role of the metropolis of the Western world. The statue triumphantly returned to the Roman Campidoglio museums after Napoleon's fall in 1816. The Medici Venus had already returned to Florence one year earlier.

The political use of the ancient statue of Venus in the 20th century illustrates the Venus of Cyrene, which promoted the entry of occupying troops into foreign territory and subsequently served to celebrate its "liberation." When Italian soldiers found a Roman marble version of the Hellenistic Aphrodite in 1913 in Cyrenaica, Libya, it was used to legitimize the Italian occupation of Libya, which had taken place two years prior. Thanks to its high aesthetic quality and depiction of female nakedness, the statue evoked the interest of the international public, and was thus highly useful as a reminder that North Africa had once been a part of the ancient Roman Empire, a fact which Mussolini's Italy built upon. The statue was taken to Rome, where it stayed until Libya gained its independence. After long diplomatic negotiations and two legal disputes, the Italian state gave the statue back to Libya in 2008, where it was lost without a trace in 2013, probably destroyed as the result of the country's civil war.[62]

The choice of a particular specimen of Venus statue was essentially random. It could theoretically have been any of those that survived. Some, however, were better suited to a political career; it all depended on the particular circumstances. From the 19th century, the brightest "star" was the Venus de Milo (**126**), and the reasons were obvious. In neoclassicism, the prestige of ancient Greek statues grew distinctly, and they began to be valued more greatly than Roman statues. This was caused by the cult of Greek art initiated by Winckelmann, but also by the fact that there were less Greek statues than Roman ones and it was more difficult to find them. Already in the second decade of the 19th century, a race had begun among European powers to collect them. In 1812, Bavarian crown prince Ludwig I acquired the sculptural decoration of the pediments of the Temple of Athena Aphaia in Aeigina; in 1816, the British Crown purchased sculptures from Lord Elgin that had been imported from the Parthenon in Athens, a treasure which Napoleon had also attempted to acquire. In 1821, the Louvre in Paris finally acquired an ancient Greek statue of Aphrodite, which was found a year earlier on the island of Melos.[63]

Thanks to this acquisition, which was made by the most prestigious museum of the time, this exemplar of the ancient statue of Aphrodite became the center of the cultural public's attention and has remained there to this day. The emphasis of the Greekness of the statue manifested itself in its name – the Venus de Milo – which stresses the location in which it was found, while the Medici Venus celebrates its

[62] Cf. Alessandro Chechi, "The Return of Cultural Objects Removed in Times of Colonial Domination and International Law: The Case of the Venus of Cyrene," *Italian Yearbook of International Law* (2008): 159-181.

[63] Cf., for example, Dimitri Salmon, *La Vénus de Milo: Un mythe* (Paris: Gallimard – Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000); Elisabeth Prettejohn, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture: Greek Sculpture and Modern Art from Winckelmann to Picasso* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 73–95.

modern owner. The statue in the Louvre, however, continued to bear the prestigious title of Venus despite the fact that it depicted the Greek Aphrodite. In accord with the new emphasis on the originality of ancient statues and the positive evaluation of statues' fragmentary nature as a guarantee of authenticity, arms were never added on to the Venus de Milo. This made the statue into an enigma, similarly to Mona Lisa's smile, which was something the general public loved, as it gave them something to ponder as the groups of tourists stopped for a moment with their tour guides to view the statue.

The fame of the Venus de Milo was solidified by academic studies written by prominent French art historians shortly after the statue's placement in the Louvre. Based on the head turned to the right and the drapery lying mostly on this side of the statue, Antoine-Chrysostome Quatermère de Quincy assumed that Mars had stood next to her and the sculptural group was meant to celebrate the victory of peace over war. He attributed the statue to Praxiteles's circle and dated it to the mid-4th century BC.[64] Comte de Clarac agreed with the dating, and also attributed the statue to Praxiteles or his workshop.[65] The value of ancient statues in the eyes of the public even today still depends on whether they are mentioned in ancient literary sources; therefore, Clarac linked the Venus de Milo with Pliny's claim that Praxiteles had created a naked Aphrodite for Knidos and a clothed one for Kos. Because Pliny does not state whether the statue for Kos was completely veiled or only in part, Clarac hypothesized that the Venus de Milo is a copy of Praxiteles's clothed goddess. Toussaint-Bernard Éméric-David assumed that the statue depicts a nymph of Melos, the personification of the island, but contrary to previous scholars dated it to an older epoch, i.e. the period between Phidias and Praxiteles.[66] All three scholars agreed that the statue in the Louvre came from classical Greece and was thus an equally valuable counterpart to the Elgin Marbles.

After losing the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the Venus de Milo became a beauty in distress, a symbol of France as a cultural superpower threatened by brutal enemies. French sculptor Emmanuel Frémiet, who gained fame with his statues of gorillas/kidnappers of women, created a wax statue of a gorilla abducting the Venus de Milo. The gorilla represented the Prussian aggressor and the statue Alsace, which Prussia had torn away from France.[67] The statue has since been lost, and all we know is that the sculptor sent it to be auctioned in New York in 1872. In the English caricature by Frederick Barnard from 1880, the same ancient statue was used in the opposite sense. It served to mock France's military impotence.[68] The goddess, whose lover was the god of war Ares, the Roman Mars, is depicted on the caricature with the modern anti-Mars. The goddess is depicted by the gigantic statue in the Louvre, and her

---

[64] Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, *Sur la statue antique de Vénus, découverte dans l'Ile de Milo en 1820* (Paris: Debure frères, 1821.

[65] Frédéric comte de Clarac, *Sur la statue antique de Vénus Victrix découverte dans l'ile de Milo en 1820* (Paris: P. Didot, l'ainé, 1821).

[66] Toussaint-Bernard Éméric-David, *Histoire de la sculpture antique* (Paris: Charpentier, 1853), 189-234.

[67] See Truman Howe Bartlett, "Emmanuel Frémiet," *The American Architect and Building News* 32 (1891), 115: "Some people were wicked enough to affirm that it was a skit on the English, because of their fame in buying so many fine works of art, and so seldom producing them."

[68] *The Illustrated London News* (January 17th, 1880). Cf. Caroline Arscott and Katia Scott, *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2000), 7-9.

mythical lover by the small figure of a French soldier, who looks up at her with a dull-witted expression on his face.

At the end of the 19th century, German-French antagonism manifested itself in classical archeology. A prominent world authority on ancient sculpture, Munich professor Adolf Furtwängler, raised the idea that the opinions of the French scholars on the Venus de Milo were wrong.[69] He subjected the statue, which was so highly loved by the French, to crushing criticism, which still remains valid today and the statue is thus thought by the scholarly community to be a late eclectic work from around 100 BC. Furtwängler's concept dominated thanks to the authority that German classical archeology won in the second half of the 19th century through its large-scale excavations in the Eastern Mediterranean, systematic classification of archeological material in museums, and its complex approach summarized in the German term "Altertumswisseschaft", i.e. the study of the ancient world. However, the scientific reevaluation of the Venus de Milo never affected the statue's popularity, and it remains to this day one of the greatest magnets of the Louvre in Paris, and citations and paraphrases of it appear in every generation of modern art.

The negative approach of experts towards the Venus de Milo in the 20th century was thanks to the fact that they devoted their attention almost exclusively to her artistic form and her development. In recent years, however, research in the field of classical archeology has begun to intensely study those who commissioned the statues, and thus the famous Paris statue has once again come to the center of scholars' attention. The reconstruction of the historical circumstances that the statue reacted to has helped us understand why the statue continues to fascinate the broad cultural public today. The conscious return to the artistic form of the 5th and 4th centuries BC, which was the primary trait of the Venus de Milo, was a reaction to the radical change in the political, social and economic conditions of the time in which the statue was created. In the Hellenistic epoch, a radical infiltration of cultures and economies took place and changed the world in which the Greeks lived. Syncretism manifested itself in everything, e.g. the spread of non-Greek fashion and non-Greek motifs, styles and ideas in the visual arts and architecture. The identity of the Greeks quickly began to erode in the Hellenistic epoch, and nothing was as it had been before. Greek communities began to defend themselves against this through political conservatism and visual arts that returned to the past, proof of which is the Venus de Milo.[70]

Thus, French scholars emphasizing the bonds between the Venus de Milo and classical art were just as correct as was Adolf Furtwängler's criticism, which placed the creation of the statue to the very end of the Hellenistic epoch, when the development of Greek art had already exhausted its possibilities. The admiration of the modern public, which is experiencing something very similar to that of the Hellenistic Greeks, is also wholly reasonable. Today we are also vexed by the fact that nothing is in its proper place and that we are losing our understanding of the outside world. The

---

[69] Adolf Furtwängler, *Meisterwerke der griechischen Plastik. Kunstgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1893), 599-655; Adolf Furtwängler, *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture. A Series of Essays on the History of Art,* translated by Eugenie Strong (London: W. Heinemann, 1895), 367-401.

[70] See Rachel Meredith Kousser, "Creating the Past: The Venus de Milo and the Hellenistic Reception of Classical Greece," *American Journal of Archaeology* 109, no 2 (April 2005): 227-250; Andrew Stewart, *Art in the Hellenistic World: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 19-20.

Venus de Milo's missing arms forcefully remind us of the fact that the past is irretrievably lost, and we will never know exactly what this statue said to the audience of the time. The Venus de Milo's dynamic posture and clothing, which in the following moment will fall down from her hips, is simultaneously in harmony with the feeling of a radically transforming present. The refined eroticism and aesthetic and technical perfection of the Venus de Milo predestined this statue to become an icon of a disappearing old world, in which a sophisticated power elite with a conservative worldview set the tone.

20th-century advertising reinforces the aura of celebrity in ancient statues of naked Venus by emphasizing their perfection, eternal beauty and exclusivity.[71] The most famous ancient exemplars – the Medici Venus and Venus de Milo – appear again and again; the stereotypical repetition of one and the same sculptural type heightens advertising potential because it strengthens the aura of its fame. Statues of Venus most often appear in advertisements for perfumes, in which the image and text emphasize the fact that, just like Venus, no one can resist the perfume and women can use it to find and keep a man for good. They also appear often in advertisements for female undergarments, but the sex-appeal of ancient statues of Venus came to be used to sell anything from home furnishings and clothing to various services and cars. In 1929, the Lincoln automobile is presented as a similarly perfect masterpiece.[72] The fragmentary state of the Venus de Milo makes it possible to emphasize that the advertised product is lacking nothing. In the phone's advertisement, on the other hand, the presence of the Venus de Milo draws attention to the fact that the famous statue could also use the device because it is "hands-free."[73]

Statues of the Medici Venus and Venus de Milo and other works of art take on the role of the promoter to make sales, thus making the themes of statues into a mass-produced and sellable commodity, which is available in all price categories and designs that aim to fit the needs of customers. Because these depictions have become a commercial commodity, the law of the market is at play here, and only the meaning that surpasses other products will win recognition within this strong competition. This situation is documented and simultaneously criticized by a statue by Russian artist Alexander Kosolapov, who has lived in New York since 1975. His bronze cast of the ancient Venus de Milo statue has the head of a rabbit, and her naked body is covered with commercial logos: Gazprom, Marlboro, Coca Cola, McDonald's.[74] The topic of the works of art is often not the famous statue itself, but lesser-size copies of it that tourists take back from their travels. The fact that Venus statue has reached today's audience via the world of industrial production and services has fundamentally affected the way in which she is perceived. Thanks to Venus statue, the viewer not only accepts anything, but can also require anything; this is due to the fact that Venus statue has been torn from its cultural context and stripped of all content, and thus it must be filled with wholly new meanings.

The tremendous prestige of depictions of Venus was reflected also in the feminist movement. On 10 March 1914, Mary Richardson attempted to destroy

---

[71] See Karelisa V. Hartigan, *Muse on Madison Square* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002), 65-78.
[72] *L'Illustration* (October 19th, 1929).
[73] American advertisement for a "hands-free" telephone, 1963. General Telephone and Electronics.
[74] Bunny Gazprom, bronz, 209 cm, private collection.

Velázquez's famous painting of the Rokeby Venus because it was considered to be a national treasure – a Venus of the whole British nation, despite the fact that it had made its way into London's National Gallery only several years prior, in 1906.[75] *I have tried to destroy the picture of the most beautiful woman in mythological history as a protest against the government for destroying Mrs Pankhurst, who is the most beautiful character in modern history,* Richardson said in her official statement in 1914.[76] She revealed the reason, which she failed to speak of in 1914, in an interview in 1952: *I didn't like the way men visitors to the gallery gaped at it all day.*[77] The actions of feminist activists feature depictions of Venus as a patriarchal idol, a symbol not only of the oppression of women but also sexual minorities. In the 1920s, Claude Cahun together with her lover Marcel Moore used ancient statues of Venus to create *a photomontage that argues against idealization, or any other fixing of human characteristics by removing individual idiosyncrasies*.[78]

In 1962 in New York, Niki de Saint Phalle, dressed in the uniform of a Napoleonic officer, shot at bags filled with paint placed on a plaster cast of the Venus de Milo, creating red and black stains on the statue.[79] By doing so, she was protesting the violence committed against women. The Venus de Milo was also the subject of a feminist protest in the bloody video by Jillian Mayer from 2011 called H.I.L.D.M.A. The abbreviation, which stood for "How I Lost My Darn Arms," was a reference to an abbreviation written by Marcel Duchamp under his reproduction of the Mona Lisa, to whom he added a moustache. Duchamp's abbreviation L.H.O.O.Q. was a phonetic transcription of a vulgar French term for the feminine sexual urge. In the video, Mayer, who is covered in white paint, appears in the position of the Venus de Milo; first she tears off one of her arms, then bites off the other; the ideal of beauty is transformed into a bloody torso. The author and main heroine spoke clearly about the meaning of the film: *It is a critique on beauty. Venus de Milo knowingly rips her arms from her torso as a notion of self-sacrifice in order to seek beauty and worldly admiration. By making the gesture of arm removal a choice for Venus, the ideal form of Western beauty becomes empowered.*[80]

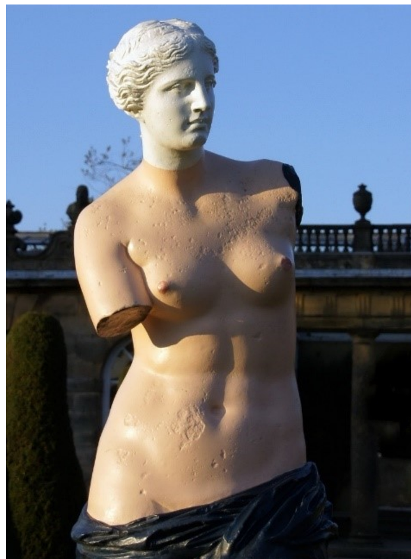
Victim

When modern artists exceptionally returned to the ancient statue of Venus, they often did so only to mock her. This trend began in the second half of the 19th century. In his poem titled *Venus Anadyomene* from 1870, Arthur Rimbaud cruelly parodies the traditional visual type. The final verses upend not only the traditional concept of Venus, but the traditional method in which connoisseurs who admired her from behind looked at these statutes. *And that whole body moves and extends its broad rump*

---

[75] London, National Gallery NG2057. Cf. "The Nation's Venus," *Daily Express* (March 11th, 1914).
[76] See Midge Mackenzie, ed., *Shoulder to Shoulder: A Documentary* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 261. Cf. Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude. Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality* (Routledge: London 1992), 34.
[77] Nead, *The Female Nude*, 37 (*Star*, February 22nd, 1952).
[78] See Jennifer L. Shaw, "The Figure of Venus. Rhetoric of the Ideal from Cabanel to Claude Cahun," in *Venus as Muse. From Lucretius to Michel Serres*, eds. Hanjo Berressem et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 71.
[79] Camille Morineau, ed., *Niki de Saint Phalle* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2014), 102.
[80] See Amanda McCorquodale, "Jillian Mayer: Artist Chews Off Her Own Arms For Art," *Huffpost* (Nov 30, 2011), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/jillian-mayer-artist-chews-off-arms_n_1121366

hideously beautiful with an ulcer on the anus.[81] One of the earliest and most interesting parody is a drawing by Van Gogh created between October 1886 and January 1887, which depicts a plaster copy of the fragment of an ancient statuette of Venus, which served as the holder for his top hat.[82] Van Gogh made drawings after ancient casts in 1885-1888 during his stay at the academies in Antwerp and Paris, where he visited the studio of the historical painter Fernand Cormon. There he was most captivated by the plaster casts of Venus, and most often drew the cast to which he ultimately added the top hat.[83] The main idea lied in the contrast between the small ancient statuette and the large top hat, between a work of art of great prestige and a banal object characteristic of the modern age.



127. Rene Magritte, Shackles of Copper, coloured plaster sculpture, 1936.

Ancient statues of Venus were a favorite theme of surrealist artists, as these embodiments of beauty and perfection were preserved as fragments without heads, arms or legs, which elicited Freudian interpretations and provocative manipulations. A torso without any intervention by the artist was a surreal artifact; it was enough merely to point this out, and René Magritte did this in one of his first surrealist works – a lesser-than-life-size plaster statuette of the Venus de Milo modified in the 1930s (**127**). [84] Magritte colored the statue, but left the head white, emphasizing the connection with the famous marble original. He painted it from the head down with a

---

[81] English translation W. Fowlie revised by S. Whidden.

[82] Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) d36V/1962r. Cf. Marije Vellekoop et al.. *Vincent Van Gogh Drawings, 3. Antwerp and Paris, 1885-1888* (London, Lund Humphries, 2001), no. 267. This was likely to have been a humorous drawing; similarly to other painters, he also contemplated the idea of making extra money by selling his drawings to magazines, cf. Vellekoop, *Vincent Van Gogh Drawings*, 19-20. However, he created only several drawings, none of which he sold. His Venus with the top hat is likely to have been one of these attempts.

[83] Once in the Arenberg Gallery, Brussels, today known only from a photograph (Jean De Mot, "L'Aphrodite d'Arenberg," *Revue Archéologique* 2 (1903), pl. 10). Van Gogh also kept a small collection of plaster casts in his apartment, which included a cast that was very similar to the one that so strongly caught his attention in Cormon's collection.

[84] See Cuzin, *D'après l'antique*, no. 257; David Sylvester, *Magritte,* mit einer Einführung von Michel Draguet (Cologne: Parkland Verlag, 2009), 240, 256-261.

skin-like color and denoted the nipples in pink, painting the clothing dark blue. The surfaces where the arms have been broken off are painted black, contrasting with the hint of naturalism; the artist used the same color for the pedestal. He exhibited one of the many versions of this statuette that he created throughout the years in 1936 at an exhibition in the Charles Ratton Gallery in Paris. For the occasion, Magritte sent André Bretton a letter asking for him to name the statuette. Breton called it "Les menottes de cuivre / Copper Handcuffs," extending the colors to include the one linked to the planet Venus. The handcuffs in the statue's name refer both to the refusal of constrictive classical traditions, but also to sado-masochistic fantasies, which was a cliché of the surrealism movement.

Ancient statues of Venus are referenced in the painting "La représentation" from 1937, the title of which suggests that surrealistic works do not depict what is most important. The image is a fragment of a naked female body, of which we see only the abdomen, loins and a part of the thighs.[85] The painting is placed in an atypical frame, which copies the curves of the hips and thighs, giving it the semblance of a key hole. It is as if the viewer's eye is pressed up to this key hole, through which he sees a naked woman; however, his expectations are disappointed, because there is in fact nothing to see. The woman's crotch is unnaturally smooth, and there is no naked woman beyond the key hole – only an ancient statue.

The first version of the painting "La représentation" is captured in a photograph from 1937, in which Irène Hamoir holds the painting in a rectangular frame in front of her so we see under the painted torso the legs of the living woman, as if they were a continuation of the painted legs.[86] This even more accentuates the fact that the painting does not depict what the viewer is expecting. The next semantic layer of the painting and its title lies in the fact that this segment of the female body is not a depiction of it, but a depiction of a depiction. What Magritte painted was not the body of a naked female model, but a plaster cast which he had on view on a wardrobe in his apartment in Brussels, rue Esseghem 135, and his friends knew the cast well. It was an important part of his abode, and therefore appears on a photograph of the artist by Roland d'Ursel from around 1950 (**128**).

This cast appears at the beginning of the 1930s in a whole score of Magritte's works evoking classical tradition and timelessness. However, this is a sophisticated game of "hide-and-seek" that was typical for the artist. Although this artefact endorses the tradition of ancient statues of Venus with smooth loins, it is a cast of a live female body.[87] Such casts were used commonly at art schools as a tool of instruction on the anatomy of the female body, and therefore it is lacking a head or limbs. Its crotch was modified, and the cast thus combines the shapes of a real female body with the ancient artistic convention; Magritte took notice of this surrealistic detail. In 1927 Magritte painted three shrinking hollow casts of female torsos inserted into each other, he repeatedly returned to the theme and in 1949, he used this motif in a painting

[85] Rene Magritte, La Représentation, 1937, Edinburgh, The Scottish National Gallery Of Modern Art GMA 3546. Cf. Sylvester, *Magritte*, 238-240.
[86] See Lisa Lipinski, *René Magritte and the Art of Thinking* (London: Routledge, 2019), fig. 3,4.
[87] See Sylvester, *Magritte*, 263.

"Delusions of Grandeur."[88] Magritte was a painter, but in 1967 came to the decision to create a statue during a conversation with his agent Alexander Iolas. He had a bronze version of his painting created; he did not, however, live to complete the statue in Verona. The illusion of the size of the statue stands out even more thanks to the fact that the viewer can look inside the hollow casts (**129**).[89]

128 (left). Roland d'Ursel, René Magritte in his Brussels apartment, photograph circa 1950.
129 (right). René Magritte, La Folie Des Grandeurs (Delusions of Grandeur), bronze, 1967.

Surrealist photographer Man Ray worked intensively with casts of ancient statues of Venus during his stay in Paris, where he settled in 1921.[90] The most famous work from this large series of provocative manipulations is "Venus restaurée / Venus restored," which Man Ray began to work on at the end of the 1920s. In 1936, he photographed a hollow plaster cast of the torso of the Venus de Medici, which he bound with rope; in 1971, he transformed the photograph into a three-dimensional object (**130**).[91] By doing so, the artist challenged cultural tradition, which is seen in the title, which can be understood ironically as the opposite of what has taken place. The appearance of the statue did not come closer to the original state but, on the contrary, moved farther away from it. At the same time, the artist also challenged the concept of authorship. The artist self-ironically linked himself to a number of replicas of the original work, which began with an ancient Roman copy of a Greek statue and

---

[88] René Magritte, Delusions of Grandeur II, 1948, Washington D.C., Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Collection 66.3199. See Sylvester, Magritte, 128-133.
[89] See Antonia Boström, ed., *The Fran and Ray Stark Collection of 20th-Century Sculpture at the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), no. 13.
[90] Cf. Adina Kamien-Kazhdan, *Remaking the Readymade: Duchamp, Man Ray, and the Conundrum of the Replica* (London: Routledge, 2018).
[91] Cf. Arturo Schwarz, *Man Ray, 60 anni di libertà. Man Ray, 60 ans de libertés. Man Ray, 60 Years of Liberties* (Paris: E. Losfeld, 1971), no. 73.

continued on with the creation of a plaster cast of it, by figuratively binding the shapes of the statue with a rope and then multiplying his work *ad infinitum* through photography. In any case, the binding of Venus's torso in rope created a mysterious object. It is important that it was not merely a capricious improvisation – Man Ray had already created a ready-made called "The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse" in 1920. It was a sewing machine wrapped in a brown blanket, and a photograph of it was published in the first edition of "La révolution surréaliste" magazine on the first page of the surrealist manifesto, which emphasized the role of dreams in this artistic movement. Ray threw away the objects after they were photographed, but he later reconstructed this ready-made as well.[92]

130. Man Ray, Venus restaurée / Venus restored, photography, 1936

Isidore Ducasse was the common name of the author known as Comte de Lautrémont, author of "Les Chants de Maldoror", which was greatly admired by surrealists. The work writes the following of a young man named Mervyn: *He is as handsome … especially as the fortuitous encounter upon a dissection-table of a sewing machine and an umbrella!*[93] The surrealists were fascinated with the randomness and absurdity of these phrases, which, however, could be related to human sexuality. This created a central point in the work of Sigmund Freud, which was the primary inspiration of surrealists. The umbrella can be understood as a metaphor for the penis and the visualization of the male principle; the sewing machine represents the woman and the

[92] 1972, London, Tate T07957.

[93] Comte de Lautrémont (Isidor Ducasse), *Les Chants de Maldoror* (Bruxelles 1874), 290. English translation G. Wernham.

dissection table the marital bed. "Venus restaurée" is thus enriched to include another level – Venus is restored to her original form in the way she exists in the male subconscious. This Venus is a male fetish, an object of sexual desire, which men simultaneously fear and therefore need to subjugate and enslave. Ray's "Venus Restored" in this regard is typical for the surrealists' provocatively misogynistic attitude. The perfect ancient form and exalting theme with a remarkable tradition intertwines in Ray's photograph with the sadistic earthly idea of a bound naked female body with severed limbs.

131. Salvador Dalí, Venus de Milo with Drawers, h. 98 cm, plaster, 1936.

In the 1930s, Salvador Dalí began to work intensively with ancient statues of Venus for the same reason and with the same intent. His "Venus de Milo with Drawers" overshadowed other works and became an icon of the surrealist movement (**131**).[94] In Dalí's own words, he was inspired by Marcel Duchamp. It was perhaps thanks to Duchamp that a lesser-than-life-size plaster copy of the Venus de Milo made its way into Dalí's new apartment in Paris at 101bis, rue de la Tombe-Issoire, which Duchamp often visited. Dalí drew drawers on the cast at the beginning of 1936, but it was Duchamp again who began work on implementing this typical "assisted ready-made" project. Dalí furnished the drawers in the plaster cast of the Venus de Milo,

[94] Cf. Francesco Miroglio, "Marcel Duchamp and Salvador Dalí: The Eroticism Between Sculptures and Ready-made," *Avant-garde Studies* 3 (Spring – Summer 2018), 1-22.

which parodied the modern obsession with functionality, with tufts of fur in place of the knobs, which was meant to evoke erotic stimulation.

Dalí may have added the tufts of fur to the drawers after 1936; however, drawers in the human body had already appeared in Dalí's paintings and drawings at the beginning of the 1930s. Dalí perhaps understood them as a metaphor for the secrets hidden within the human body and mind. According to him, Sigmund Freud had discovered that there are "hidden drawers" within each of us.[95] The drawers are placed in the forehead of Venus de Milo and breasts so the tufts of fur cover her nipples – the next two drawers are located on her bare abdomen and one is on the lifted knee covered with cloth. Dalí intended to present the depiction of the naked woman from the ancient epoch in the way that it was interpreted by post-ancient Europe, which made depictions of nakedness into a taboo.[96] By doing so, the ancient goddess with smooth crotch evoking her inaccessibility had been suddenly and forcefully opened. However, we must not forget that works of surrealism always strive towards impossibility, and thus interpretations of them can never be final.

Surprisingly, "Venus de Milo with Drawers" was not exhibited in May 1936, at the exhibition in Paris's Ratton Gallery, where Magritte's aforementioned version of the Venus de Milo was exhibited. The first presentation of Dalí's modified cast of the Venus de Milo was held in the rue de la Tombe-Issoire on 19 June 1936, but only for the artist's friends; its next private exhibition was held in 1939. Hundreds of exemplars of this work have been created in various colors; the statue, however, was not publicly exhibited until 1979. In 1964, Dalí sold his exemplar and agreed to the creation of a bronze cast that was painted white. For the occasion, he created a new version of the Venus de Milo in life size and other variations on the statue's theme, including a bust of the Venus de Milo, which had an ear instead of a nose and a nose instead of a left ear.

We encounter manipulation with the Venus de Milo from the time before Salvador Dalí, and there are so many of them at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century that they can be seen to form their own independent artistic genre.[97] American artist of French origin Armand Pierre Fernandez (Arman) dealt with this theme systematically since 1963, vertically cutting through casts of ancient statues of the Venus de Milo and putting all kinds of objects (propellers, musical instruments, cogwheels) in the panels that this cutting produced.[98] Danish artist Bjørn Nørgaard also specialized in the Venus de Milo.[99] In 2005, he held an exhibition titled "Venus Spejler Spejler Venus / Venus mirrors mirrors Venus" in the Danish National Art Gallery (Statens Museum for Kunst). Seven casts of the Venus de Milo were exhibited in the gallery in various situations: bending over, wrapped up, deformed by the addition of various objects, burned, equipped with lightbulbs and locked in a cage, and locked blindfolded in a cage with barbed wire and holes allowing the viewer to look inside. In 2009, he carried out his first exhibition of "Recycling Art" with a cast of the Venus de Milo in a container for plastic recycling.

---

[95] See Gilles Néret, *Salvador Dali, 1904-1989* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996), 44.
[96] See Robert Descharnes, *Dalí de Gala* (Lausanne: Edita, 1962), 164.
[97] Cuzin, *D'après l'antique*, 432-499.
[98] Paris, Rue Jacques-Callot. Cf. http://www.armanstudio.com/
[99] Cf. https://www.bjoernnoergaard.dk/

Michelangelo Pistoletto has also systematically worked with the statue of Venus, and first exhibited his “Venere degli stracci / Venus of the Rags” in 1967 (**132**). The very title of the work is an allusion to the conventional naming of various ancient statues of Venus, and the author used it to express his ironic distancing from Italian cultural tradition. The sculptor used a concrete copy of the neoclassical Venus with an apple by Bertel Thorvaldsen, which was sold as a garden ornament. He placed it directly facing a pyramid of various-colored rags. The viewer thus sees the statue from behind, which is another ironic reference to the veneration of the ancient statue of Venus, which connoisseurs have enjoyed viewing from behind since antiquity. Nevertheless, the viewer has to ask, what is Venus doing by the pile of rags? It looks like she is entering it, only to turn into worthless refuse the next moment. However, what is most important about Pistoletto’s work is the contrast between the concentrated whiteness and perfect shapes of the sculpture and the distracting pile of colourful and shapeless rags, between the admired work of art and the rubbish that nobody cares about. This statue of Venus stands on the border of sense and nonsense. This precarious position is characteristic of ancient statues of Venus in today's world and our existence in general.

132. Michelangelo Pistoletto, Venus of the Rags (Venere degli stracci), first installation 1967.

Return of the Goddess

133. William Turnbull, Aphrodite, h. 190.5 cm, bronze statue, 1958.

In the 20th century, some artists attempted to rethink ancient myths in order to be nearer to their protagonists.[100] British sculptor William Turnbull was the first post-ancient artist to attempt to make an approximation of Venus's divinity. His statue looks like a prehistoric statuette deforming the female anatomy beyond recognition (**133**).[101] Such archeological finds had been ironically dubbed "Venuses" since the 19th century, as they were the opposite of ancient Greco-Roman Venuses. However, Turnbull named his statue Aphrodite to make it clear that this was a modern version of the ancient Greek goddess. This Aphrodite from 1958 is made up of a column and an ovoid formation balancing on its rounded top. The statue evokes the goddess in that it is as tall as a person and is remotely reminiscent of the human form with some sort of head and body. The viewer has the impression that the two sections are not related to one another and can be divided at any time, which is an important message that the statue conveys. The momentary balance that connects the ovoid formation with the column is accentuated as an important aspect of divinity. The instability of

[100] Cf. Judith E. Bernstock, "Classical Mythology in Twentieth-Century Art: An Overview of a Humanistic Approach," *Artibus et Historiae* 14, no. 27 (1993), 153-183.
[101] See Amanda A. Davidson, *The Sculpture of William Turnbull* (London: Lund Humphries, 2005), no. 88.

the connection between both parts of the statue is not a trait of divinity, which must be static, eternal and perfect but is fully determined by our imperfection. People can neither see nor comprehend a deity; they can only come near it in mystical exaltation, which lasts for only a moment, during which both parts of Turnbull's statue form a whole. In the next moment, the ovoid structure will fall from the column and the person will lose contact with divinity. The deity will naturally continue to exist; only the person ceases to sense it.

In Turnbull's mind, an important aspect of divinity is its incomprehensibility thanks to the limited nature of human perception and understanding. Turnbull is not interested in the deity; he is fully devoted to himself and analyzes the way in which he perceives the world and how he thinks about it. The sculptor was also in no way religious, and deities themselves were of no interest to him. He did not try to convey through his sculptures what deities are and what their relationship to humans is. He limited himself to the analysis of an extreme situation in which a person is confronted with something he or she cannot understand, as it is something that transcends him or her. Turnbull was interested in Aphrodite because she represented something exceedingly important, something people have been intensely involved with for millennia without reaching any final conclusions. Turnbull was not interested in the world, but in man, who tries to tear away the binds to the material world and step out of the stream of time in order to think about him or herself and the world.

For Turnbull, Aphrodite was an idol, which he began to devote himself to in 1955. One year later, he created a statue that looks the same as the aforementioned Aphrodite, but named it "Sungazer."[102] This confirms the theory that Turnbull was not primarily interested in deities, but man's relationship to god. On this statue, the ovoid object placed vertically on the column suggests a head tilted backwards. The statue refers to North American shamans, who purposely blinded themselves by staring into the sun, strengthening their inner vision and the spiritual aspect of their existence. The statue was shown at an exhibition in Whitechapel Art Gallery that was groundbreaking for English art titled "This Is Tomorrow," which is seen to be the beginning of pop art in England. However, Turnbull did not at all intend to capture the lifestyle of the time, but on the contrary the timelessness that was embodied by idols, which were the beginning of the development of the visual arts. For him and the members of the "Independent Group" to which he belonged, no progress in the visual arts existed. Prehistoric artifacts are not only as inspiring as works created in his own time – they could even be more "modern" thanks to the fact that they speak to the contemporary viewer much more intensely. Turnbull was inspired by cultic objects of the stone age, archaic Greece or Egyptian mummies. These works have been taken out of their original religious context, but their forms have maintained the ability to evoke sublime secrets. Turnbull's aim was to create statues that continued on in the tradition of the oldest works of art but were simultaneously a part of the modern world.

The combination of the vertical column and horizontal ovoid object on top of it, which is the primary feature of Turnbull's Aphrodite from 1958, is also characteristic for a number of his other statues, which he created from 1956 to 1962. Their names point to objects ("Ancestral Totem"), figures from ancient myths ("Janus," "Prometheus," "Pandora," "Agamemnon," "Oedipus"), but also explorers and

[102] Davidson, *The Sculpture of William Turnbull*, no. 74.

adventurers ("Cortez," "Columbus," "Magellan"), who managed something that their contemporaries thought to be impossible. Turnbull always created a statue first and then gave it a name. In the 1980s, Turnbull returned to the totems that he had devoted himself to in the 1950s. He depicted Aphrodite in the same way as in 1958 on only one other occasion.[103] In his new series, Venuses have more compact forms, in which their anatomic details are denoted by various protuberances, depressions and grooves.[104] It is not clear whether these statues are intended to evoke the Greco-Roman goddess or prehistoric statues of women also conventionally called Venuses.

Variations of the Venus de Milo by one of the greatest contemporary American artists, Jim Dine, are a striking part of the present world. A group of three gigantic bronze statues of Venus have been located in New York on Sixth Avenue since 1990. Dine also simultaneously created marble versions of them in larger-than-life size.[105] At the beginning of his artistic career in the 1960s, the artist radically deviated from the tradition of the fine arts by depicting everyday objects such as parts of clothing, home furnishings and other attributes of the daily life of the modern person. Similarly to artists like Andy Warhol, inconspicuous inanimate objects formed the center of his attention, although he never considered himself to be a member of the pop art movement, which always approached these objects in an aloof manner just as creators of advertisements would.

For Dine, even the most ordinary things were always animate and in the mid-1970s he logically came to paint according to live models. At the end of the same decade, he had a fated encounter with the Venus de Milo, which he described many times over, making the story now generally known. He bought a miniature replica of the famous statue that was being sold at the Louvre as a souvenir for tourists, and in 1977-1978 incorporated it into his still-lifes. The painting "My Studio # One: The Vagaries of Painting 'These are sadder pictures'" from 1978 is dominated by empty bottles, among which are various objects such as rubber boots, a gourd, an onion, a plaster cast of a human hand, a skull and also a statuette of the Venus de Milo.[106] At the time, he also used the replica as a symbol of fleetingness.[107] The statuette still has a head in the painting, but soon lost it, as Dine noted. *I knocked the head off and eventually started making my own version, because it was too personal otherwise. But, it's like the heart, or the Pinocchio, or the bathrobe. It's mine. It's one of my icons.*[108]

The Venus de Milo was one of the artist's fetishes, which linked the things that meant something to the author such as the aforementioned heart, bathrobe or Pinocchio, but also the skull, owl and raven. In his sculptural group in Ottawa, he placed Venus and a large heart in mutual reference to one another.[109] The author's appropriation of the Venus de Milo manifested itself not only in the fact that he broke

---

[103] Davidson, *The Sculpture of William Turnbull*, no. 231.
[104] Davidson, *The Sculpture of William Turnbull*, no. 199.
[105] "The Grove, Uppsala," Frankfurt, Dresdner Bank. Cf. Cuzin, *D'après l'antique*, no. 267.
[106] Oil on canvas, Minneapolis, MN, Walker Art Center 1982.167.
[107] See Collette Chattopadhyay, "A Conversation with Jim Dine," *Sculpture* 30 (2011), 35: "I originally used the Venus de Milo because I was making still-life paintings and looking at memento mori. I thought that the cast of this classical sculpture would look great in a still-life." Cf. Marco Livingstone, "Jim Dine et le mariage de Vénus," in Cuzin, *D'après l'antique*, 468-70.
[108] Chattopadhyay, *A Conversation with Jim Dine*, 35.
[109] Bronze, h. 214 cm, Ottawa, The National Gallery of Canada 39706.

off her head, but also that he radically simplified her perfect shapes, making his variations look more like a spontaneous improvisation. The artist's fetishes are also linked by the fact that they are usually generally known motifs of artistic work that have been sanctified by tradition.

Dine was intensely interested in psychoanalysis and saw the Venus de Milo and other icons of international visual arts as a part of a global collective subconscious. In his mind, the Venus de Milo was one of the most significant constants of our world, and therefore he intentionally simplified its forms for it to be more similar to prehistoric statuettes of Venus. The historical dimension of his version of the Venus de Milo is also suggested in his bronze sculptural group called "The Stew." Dine's Venus de Milo stands in a pot next to a statue of a Christian female saint with a symbol of a heart on her chest, which suggests the intertwining of the ancient and medieval embodiment of love.[110] He emphasized this ever-present and varying nature of this idol, which in no way affects its essence, by constantly modifying his versions of the Venus de Milo, refusing to depict her even once in an identical manner. He doubled or tripled his versions of the statue in the Louvre, or combined them with common objects. He sat his version of the Venus de Milo in a real chair or placed her on an old vertically standing shovel, which formed her protective shield.[111] He began to express the general validity of his private version of the Venus de Milo via monumental proportions and a rough surface and patina, making the statues look aged (**134**).

134. Jim Dine, Looking Toward the Avenue, bronze sculptures (427, 550, 700 cm), 1990.

---

[110] Private collection, cf. Livingstone, *Jim Dine et le mariage de Vénus*, 469 fig. 4.
[111] Cuzin, *D'après l'antique*, no. 265.

135. Jim Dine, Cleveland Venus, bronze statue, h. 1127 cm, 2003.

The first of a long series of versions of the famous statue was created by Jim Dine in 1983 in life size.[112] This series culminated in 2003 in his gigantic Venus for the city of Cleveland (**135**). On the corner of a functionalist skyscraper by architect Michael McKinell, a feature reminiscent of an ancient column stands out from the building. On

[112] Venus in Black and Gray, private collection.

it stands Dine's torso of Venus without a head or arms, which is the largest statue of the goddess ever created. The statue was constructed using traditional lost-wax casting methods; the artist's ceramic 66cm-high model was enlarged to its gigantic dimensions with the help of computer technology. The effect of the statue is strengthened by its integration and architecture, which Dine emphasized with a caramel-colored patina matching the walls of the building. The purpose of the statue was determined by the function of the building, which serves as a courthouse, as it stands above its entrance – the statue is meant to evoke the ancient roots of modern law and civilization in general. In terms of size, the Cleveland torso of Venus will probably never be surpassed. It will also probably remain the culmination of the purported patriarchal vision of the world embodied by the torso of Venus, on which the critique of the feminist movement was focused. In the so-called "second wave" of feminism, the primary demand was a woman's right to her own body.[113] The statue of the naked Venus came to be understood as a patriarchal demonstration of the attainability of women and the legitimization of sexual terror. Dine's statue was bitterly condemned as a memorial to women who had been not only stripped and raped, but also tortured and killed; as the celebration of the criminal acts that men commit on women.[114]

Ancient statues of Venus also appeared in a criminal context on the television screens in millions of households in the third season of the series "Twin Peaks" by David Lynch and Mark Frost aired in 2017.[115] In the Black Lodge, a unique place outside human time and space, the main hero of the series, special agent Dale Cooper meets with the doppelganger of a girl, Laura Palmer, whose death he is investigating. A plaster cast of the Medici Venus is placed behind Laura's chair. The statue is turned as if the goddess wants to look at her. In a certain way, Laura is Venus's reincarnation. The visual type of the ancient goddess used in the series is characterized by erotic attraction suggested by her nakedness and her aloofness, which is suggested by one hand covering her breasts and the other covering her loins. Beauty, attraction and reserve were also traits of Laura Palmer. Cooper sits in a chair, and next to it is a copy of a lamp from the world expo in 1939 in the form of Saturn. This may indicate that Dale Cooper is the reincarnation of Saturn, the Greek Cronus, who created Aphrodite by cutting off his father Uranus's penis and throwing it into the sea. The goddess was born from his severed member and stepped out of the sea foam onto the shore, similarly to the way in which the body of the murdered Laura Palmer appeared on the bank of the river in the series. Is Dale Cooper thus Saturn, who created Laura Palmer as the second Venus by revealing the secret of her sexually motivated murder?

Objections can be made to this interpretation, as plaster casts of Venus appear in the Twin Peaks series in other contexts, and therefore clearly have a more general meaning. We find them in the hallway leading to the Black Lodge. In the second season

---

[113] Cf. Margaret Walters, *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 77-88.

[114] Anonym, "Venus for the Rest of Us," *Cleveland Magazine* (March 1st, 2004): "a larger-than-life female double amputee, decapitated and half-clothed, just doesn't say beauty, femininity and justice. Instead, she makes me think about the mutilated corpses, usually female, that dominate TV crime dramas … Viewed from all angles, it becomes obvious that a more appropriate name for our sculpture would be 'Venus de Victim.'" See https://clevelandmagazine.com/in-the-cle/commentary/articles/venus-for-the-rest-of-us

[115] Cf. Franck Boulègue, *Twin Peaks: Unwrapping the Plastic* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2017), 78-80.

in 1990, viewers could see the Venus de Milo here, and in the third season in 2017 it was the Venus of Arles; in both cases, however, they were statues of naked women with the top half of their bodies unveiled and lacking arms, and they were always placed at the end of the hallway. Whatever their significance, it is clear that they were linked to the primary theme of the series, i.e. doppelgangers who exist at the same time in various dimensions. The cast of the ancient statue is in essence a doppelganger in and of itself. Each plaster cast is a double of both the original statue and the figure that the statue refers to. Each copy, modification or recycling of an ancient statue potentially draws into the present not only the original and everything it referred to in its time, but also the creator and era in which the copy was made, fundamentally determining its significance.

136. Michal Gabriel, The birth of Venus, h. 96 cm, plaster composite, 2011-2012.

Multiplication is also the central theme of the sculpture "Birth of Venus," created by Czech sculptor Michal Gabriel in 2011-2012 (**136**). Gabriel's Venus is a real woman, the portrait of a well-known personality from the sculptor's city. So, how did Gabriel get the audience to think that his statue depicts Venus? There are no classical allusions in her beautiful facial features, proportions or posture. The only ancient feature is the absence of genitals, a standard part of academic female nude without any deeper meaning. Gabriel is well aware that a quote from an ancient statue of Venus will not impress anyone. Today's viewers usually cannot see an ancient statue even if it is right in front of them. In Western culture, ancient works of art and mythical stories have been rendered meaningless by endless reproduction to the point that we have almost lost the ability to perceive them. On the contrary, we view repetitions and transformations themselves intensely. They are attributes of virtuality on which our existence is based. Virtuality surrounds us from all sides; it helps us and threatens us.

In Gabriel's group statue, the virtuality surrounding us has become a metaphor for the birth of Venus. In the virtual world, we turn into omnipotent gods, but at the same time, we lose ourselves. Gabriel’s Venus walks forward self-confidently and from under her hands grows an endless line of other goddesses. However, she never breaks away from the floor from which she was born. The infinite number of identical Venuses which grow around deny the uniqueness and existence of the central figure. Gabriel has opened a gateway with his group statue, allowing the transition from one dimension to another, but every gateway is an entrance and an exit. It can lead to divinity, which exists here and now, but it works just as well in the other direction. From corporeality and being, it can get to incorporeality and emptiness. Michal Gabriel based his depiction of the birth of the ancient goddess on our contemporary lifestyle. On our daily routine and our fears. This Venus is born from a floor that we walk upon. It is an analogy of the flat sea surface from which the goddess was once born. She exists only as a program, but thanks to it, she is a goddess whom we may encounter at any time.

CONCLUSION

William Hogarth's frequently reproduced engraving of 1752 summarizes the central position that the ancient sculpture of the naked Venus holds in Western imagination (**137**). The engraving depicts the courtyard of John Cheere's sculpting studio, where copies of ancient statues were created for English aristocratic residences – at the center is a copy of the ancient Venus Medici. In the comment on the engraving, Hogarth quoted a sentence from the famous Renaissance tractate of Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, which ends with: *Venus the goddess of divine beauty, from whence all the beauty of inferior things is derived.*[1] If this were indeed the case, the naked Venus would have dominated modern sculpture. Despite thorough preparation, numerous attempts and authoritative proclamations, however, this never happened.

137. William Hogarth, Statue of Venus as the Embodiment of Beauty, engraving, 1753.

The goal of this book has been to explore how and why the depiction of the seductive goddess over the centuries has come closer to or farther away from what real women look like. This has proved to be a problem since the statue's creation until the present, and is one that visual artists have had to deal with continually in order for their creations to meet the requirements of their time. From antiquity until the 21st century, sculptors and painters have oscillated between the ideal (and therefore insipid) beauty characterizing the goddess and the seductive shapes of the body of a

[1] William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty. Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (London, 1753), xvii. Cf. Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura* (Milan: Paolo Gottardo Pontio, 1585), 99.

living woman, which for various reasons could never fully prevail. In antiquity, this was prevented by the fact that the statue was a depiction of a goddess; in post-ancient Europe, it was primarily due to the taboo of depicting female nudity. Venus could have been depicted as a naked woman with all the racy details, but such a depiction would hardly be taken seriously by the viewer. The artist could have eliminated attractive references to the female body from her portrayal, but how would the viewer be expected to believe that she represents the goddess of love?

The oldest depictions of Aphrodite from the 8th to 7th centuries BC depicted the goddess clothed, including a veil over her face. Very little of her body was visible, making it clear that she was a goddess. The Greek goddess of sex is characterized by the fact that she revealed herself in the visual arts slowly and intermittently. A careful transformation of her appearance took place in the 5th century BC, when the oldest monumental statues of Aphrodite are attested. The goddess is depicted in a relaxed pose, as if we were gazing into the privacy of her bedroom, bath or garden, but she is dressed, and only the upper section of her bust is slightly revealed. Only at the end of the 5th century was the goddess first depicted with one breast completely unveiled.

The first depiction of the wholly naked Aphrodite appeared around 360 BC, when Praxiteles elegantly solved the problem that had plagued his predecessors. He was the very first sculptor in the world to create an inaccessible goddess who was at the same time erotically attractive. Praxiteles used an ingenious strategy to connect both contradicting poles in the statue he created for Knidos, heightening the intensity of some potentially erotic traits to their maximum. The most striking element is the distinct differentiation of the free and supporting leg, which evokes the seductive figure of a dancer. This feature became essential of all later depictions of naked Venus. On the contrary, Praxiteles turned the other potentially erotic traits down to the minimum or eliminated them. This primarily applied to the genitals, the most important part of the female body's sex life, the unmistakable absence of which defined the depicted woman as a goddess beyond all doubt.

As can be expected, modern scholars have approached ancient sculptures of deities just like any other work of art; this, however, was not the case in antiquity. Ancient sculptors creating likenesses of a deity to a certain degree contributed to the way in which people imagined her. However, visual artists held a wholly different position and function in antiquity than they do today. Although they were sometimes admired, their social status corresponded to that of today's craftsmen and their creative freedom had clearly defined boundaries. They naturally dealt with artistic problems while creating sculptures of deities, but always exclusively treated them as tools via which they satisfied the contemporary needs of embodying a deity. This is without a doubt evidenced by the taboo concerning the depiction of Venus's genitals, which was adhered until the end of Greco-Roman antiquity.

At the beginning of the 5th century BC, the statue and the depicted deity was differentiated. This differentiation allowed for dynamic developments in depicting the gods. However, developments in the depiction of Greek Aphrodite or Roman Venus were never the result of the development of artistic form exclusively; this development only created new tools and opportunities to bring the gods closer to mortals. Already at the end of the 5th century BC, deities were differentiated from the statues that depicted them in Athens. Athenians began to return for political reasons to famous

temples, statues and paintings from the past. The original references of these works, which had been canonized by tradition, may have been partially or completely overshadowed by what they meant for the following generations, for whom these works became a part of their cultural heritage, which legitimized the present. Taking a work out of its original religious, political and social context was a basic prerequisite for the birth of what we call classical art. It is the art of the past to which later generations return, not because of what it depicts, but because of the associations that it evokes in the audience, which returns to this art as a generally binding model. For Aphrodite's statue, which became a part of classical art, it is no longer so important *who* is depicted, but above all, the form of depiction has become the bearer of meaning.

In the Greek imagination, statues of deities in the 4th century BC began to live their own separate lives, which to a large degree were independent of the deities. In the late Republican and early Imperial Rome, the cult of famous Greek statues from the "classical epoch," i.e. from a half-millennium earlier, became an integral part of culture and also of social and political life. Thanks to this fact, depictions of Aphrodite, whom Romans venerated as Venus, ceased to be exclusively linked to religious rituals. It also became a means of self-representation of members of the political elite, who publicly exhibited them and used them to decorate their private residences. Owning famous originals or their copies heightened social prestige in Rome, which explains the existence of a vast number of Roman versions of famous Greek statues and variations of them made from different materials and in different sizes.

Post-ancient Europe knows Greek Aphrodite primarily thanks to the countless Roman versions of unpreserved Greek originals. However, the Romans adopted Greek models to fit their own specific needs. An original Roman version can be found on coins of the first Roman emperor Augustus, who had them minted in 32-29 BC as he prepared to take over power. In order to do so, he skillfully used a depiction of Venus, which the Romans venerated as their progenitress. Augustus transformed Rome into a second Athens, but systematically utilized Roman tradition simultaneously for purposes of propaganda. Augustus's goddess is depicted naked after the Greek model, but we see her from behind in order to cater to Roman prudery. We do not see what is most important, and in this respect Praxiteles's artistic strategy was taken to the extreme. At the same time, it was modified to satisfy Roman pragmatic thought. Contrary to the Cnidia, whose genitals were erased by Praxiteles, Venus may theoretically have both genitals and breasts on Augustus's coins. Nonetheless, the viewer sees nothing of the sort, as the goddess has turned her back to him. The relief or painting that the coins reproduce is now irretrievably lost, but its echo was known by every Roman from the coins which they could inspect in the palms of their hands whenever they felt so inclined.

Depictions of deceased Roman women were also typical of Roman artistic culture and combine the physiognomic portrait with an ideal naked body. The depiction of the unseemly and old face of a deceased Roman woman came from local "Roman" artistic tradition; the "Greek" style was used to depict her young and beautiful body, which is a reference to statues of Venus. Simultaneously, these statues were meant to celebrate the deceased woman by linking her with the tradition of Greek culture and Roman state ideology, in which this goddess held a central position. These

statues of Roman matrons as Venuses are characterized by the unity of their sensual experience, religious respect and political loyalty, which has no parallel in post-Ancient Europe.

After the rise of Christianity, Venus became a pagan demon. Still, the goddess survived the demise of the ancient Roman Empire and remained a permanent part of collective memory, even though her character was at odds with Christian morality. In the Middle Ages, the ancient statue of naked Venus had no justification, and there were excellent reasons for it to disappear from the cultural horizon for good. Nevertheless, it never disappeared. There was a never-broken tradition in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in Constantinople. In the capital of the Byzantine Empire, nude statues of Aphrodite were on display until its conquest by the Ottoman army in 1453. In the same century, the statue of Venus retook centre stage in Rome after a thousand-year hiatus. At the beginning of 16th century, the public display of ancient statues of the naked Venus in the Vatican's Belvedere demonstrates its full rehabilitation by the head of the Catholic Church. This rehabilitation, while surprisingly vigorous, was not permanent. The immense popularity of ancient Venus statues has therefore not resulted in their reception in contemporary monumental sculpture.

Until the mid-16th century, no significant sculptor had created a statue of the goddess, whose ancient form was known and admired by every prominent individual of the time. Proof of this admiration is found in the drawings of ancient originals and the small statuettes and paintings inspired by them, which depict Venus in life size. The absence of a monumental statue of Venus in the high Renaissance was the result of the lingering medieval concept of Venus as an evil demon, which was deeply rooted in Europe. In the second half of the 16th century, the attempt to integrate the ancient concept of the world and Christian faith came to a definitive end, but did not spell a return to the previous state.

Thanks to the condemnations and bans by the Christian Church, the depiction of Venus was given the status of a prestigious object, which the social elite hid in their private residences to show off their privileged position. Giambologna created statues of Venus for these residences that respected the morality and religious taboos of the time but were made in monumental dimensions and on an aesthetic level comparable to ancient models. He was dealing with the same problem Praxiteles had dealt with, but his task was much more difficult. Praxiteles could not have depicted Aphrodite as a naked woman with all her anatomical details. Giambologna had to depict Venus as neither a naked woman nor an ancient goddess, as nakedness and pagan antiquity in his time were a veritable "minefield" for sculptors.

Giambologna's statues of Venus distanced themselves both from ancient models and traditional mythical tales and situations. The fact that they are naked and bathing is the only thing Giambologna's Venuses have in common with their ancient predecessors. They tell no stories and their shapes and postures come from live models, but the life-inspired movements and details are always placed into abstract patters, stripping them of meaning. The patterns, which depict nothing, take the role of the clothing that veils female nudity, which had begun to be viewed as a fundamental problem. The erotic attractiveness of Giambologna's statues was ensured by the masterfully conceived details of the female anatomy. Thanks to these details, he

created an impressive illusion of optical contact with female nudity, an element which, however, he cast doubt upon by using improbable poses that were given no justification. The rich folds of the drapery, which carry little meaning, serve to evoke the effect of reality and at the same time to weaken it. In addition, the overly complicated nature of the depicted postures, which would require an exceptional exertion of strength, contrasts with the absence of emotion in the facial expression, which is a typical attribute of Giambologna's statues. The extreme twist of the torso and all the limbs promised a specific action and the strong emotions linked to it; viewers, however, found nothing of the sort on the statue, even when they observed it from all possible angles. It is as if the naked ancient goddess disappears from view the moment someone attempts to approach her. In short, Giambologna carried out his reform of the depiction of Venus by breaking the boundaries between depicting the goddess and a mortal woman, and between a clothed and naked woman.

The most ambitious sculptors of the time passed through Giambologna's workshop in Florence, and thanks to them the new concept of the statue of Venus spread throughout all of Europe. However, the territorial spread did not affect the way Venus was depicted; her statues, wherever they were created, did not bring anything fundamentally new. The waves of returns to the classical tradition in the 17th-19th centuries, did not change this much. Nevertheless, sculptors' returns to this theme show the great prestige the ancient models enjoyed (**138**). Thanks to this prestige, Venus de Milo and other statues of the naked ancient goddess could also become emblems of the states that identified with them. However, the politicization of ancient statues of naked Venus and their association with the conservative establishment negatively affected their reception in the 20th century. In any case, it is true that when artists did exceptionally depict Venus in the second half of this century, they mostly problematized her. For the vast majority of artists, the depiction of Venus was conceivable only as a parody.

In the 20th-century avant-garde artists' milieu, the ancient statue of Venus became a symbol of the past to which few people openly subscribed anymore, and all of them distanced themselves from it somehow. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the history of Western art is proving to be a never-ending confrontation with the works that arose in ancient Greece and Rome. Jim Dine created the largest ever sculptures of Venus in the United States, and Michal Gabriel in the Czech Republic surprised us with a monumental sculpture that depicts the traditional theme of the birth of the ancient goddess with contemporary means and from today's perspective. Ancient statues of Venus are once again fascinating, as they are a visual representation of eternity but also exist in the "here and now." They tell the story of a goddess with all the attractive anatomic details of the female body captured in a situation that all people can imagine, thus allowing them to identify with the bathing goddess and the person who has surprised her in this intimate moment. This development is not surprising; the perception of the ancient statue of Venus constantly oscillated between power and erotic symbol, artwork and depicted reality, goddess and naked woman. From antiquity to the present, Venus statues characterise a contradiction between what the public wished to see and what can be depicted.

A statue has immense power – the moment a person creates one, it may continue to address viewers millennia later. Regardless of what one thinks of it, it

awakens in artists a desire for a work of art that will also last an eternity – and this can be said of no other statue more than the ancient Venus. The eternity of a statue is its most important aspect, but it is also the main obstacle that prevents us from understanding it. Indeed, the permanence of a sculpture's existence implies the impression that it is something that has been there from age to age without change so that its tradition-sanctified meaning does not change either. The same applies to works inspired by ancient Venus. The sculptural type of naked Venus has not changed much since it was created in ancient Greece. Later artists have merely varied the attitude and attributes of Praxiteles' statue, which may lead to the erroneous conclusion that they too have merely retold the contents of the Cnidia in their own words. A closer look reveals that each epoch has infused this sculptural type with new meanings, and its functions have changed just as radically. If the hitherto commonly shared self-evidency of the Venus statue was challenged, the purpose of this book has been served.

Each of the statues of Venus we discussed in this book tells its own story and tells it differently to each generation. That was the reason we followed the Venus statues from the beginning to the present day. What will happen next? How will Venus statues and the reception of their ancient models evolve? The development from the Italian Renaissance to the present day shows a clear tendency, which has no clear outcome. In England, in the 17th and 18th centuries, we saw the emergence of the cult of Venus statues and their subsequent defilement. We observe similar reversals in Western culture in later centuries, so we can assume that Venus statues will forever oscillate between the two opposing poles of icon and victim in the future.

138. Abraham Bosse, A Sculptor Presenting his Statue of Venus and Cupid, etching, 1642 (detail).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abdy, Richard, and Peter Mittag, eds. *The Roman Imperial Coinage, vol. II - part 3 from AD 117-138 Hadrian*. London: Spink, 2019.

Alberti, Leon Battista. *Über die Malkunst – Della pittura*. Edited by Oskar Bätschmann and Sandra Gianfreda. Darmstadt : Wissenschaftiche Buchgesellschaft, 2002.

Albertini, Francesco. *Opusculum de mirabilibus novae et veteris urbis Romae*. Rome: Jacobus Mazochius, 1510.

Alciato, Andrea. *Emblematum libellus*. Paris : Christianus Wechelus, 1534.

Alciato, Andrea *Il Libro degli Emblemi secondo le edizioni del 1531 e del 1534.* Translated and commented by Mino Gabriele. Milan: Adelphi Edizioni, 2009.

Aldrovandi, Ulisse. "Delle statue antiche, che per tutta Roma, in diversi luoghi e case si veggono." In *Le antichità de la città di Roma,* edited by Lucio Mauro, 115-316. Venice : Giordano Ziletti, 1556.

Alexandridis, Annetta. "Mimesis oder Metapher? Aphroditekörper im römischen Frauenporträt." In *Formkonstanz und Bedeutungswandel*, edited by Dietrich Boschung and Ludwig Jäger, 67-102. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2014.

Alley, Ronald. *Catalogue of the Tate Gallery's Collection of Modern Art Other than Works by British Artists.* London: Tate Gallery, 1981.

Allison, Ann H. "Antique Sources of Leonardo's Leda." *The Art Bulletin* 56, no. 3 (September 1974): 375-384.

Andreae, Bernard. "Ist die sogenannte Venus vom Esquilin ein Körperportät der unbekleideten Kleopatra?" In *Amicitiae Gratia: tomos stē mnēmē Alkmēnēs Stauridē*, edited by Alkmini Stavridis and Diana Zapheiropoulou, 97-104. Athens: Tameio Archaiologikon Porōn, 2008.

Anguissola, Anna. *Difficillima imitatio. Immagine e lessico delle copie tra Grecia e Roma*. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2012.

Anonym. "Una statua greca trovata in Siena nel sec. XIV. " *Miscellanea storica senese*, 5 (1893): 175-176.

Anonym. "Venus for the Rest of Us." *Cleveland Magazine*, March 1, 2004. https://clevelandmagazine.com/in-the-cle/commentary/articles/venus-for-the-rest-of-us

Archenholtz, Johann Wilhelm von, ed. *The British Mercury Or Annals of History, Politics, Manners, Literature, Arts Etc. of the British Empire*, 2. Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1787.

Arscott, Caroline, and Katie Scott. *Manifestations of Venus. Art and Sexuality*. Manchester: Manchester University, 2000.

Ashby, Thomas. "Antiquae Statuae Urbis Romae." *Papers of the British School at Rome* 9 (1920): 107-158.

Auguste Rodin, *Rodin on Art and Artists, conversations with Paul Gsell*. Translated by Romilly Feden. New York: Dover, 1983.

Augustín, Antonio. *Opera Omnia*, vol. 7. Lucca: Rocchius, 1772.

Avery, Charles. *Giambologna*. Florence: Cantini, 1987.

Aymonino, Adriano, and Anne Varick Lauder, eds. *Drawn from the Antique: Artists and the Classical Ideal*. London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 2015.

Bahrani, Zainab. "The Iconography of the Nude in Mesopotamia." *Notes in the History of Art.* Essays on Nudity in Antiquity in Memory of Otto Brendel 12, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 12-19.
Bahrani, Zainab. *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia*. London: Routledge 2001.
Baker, Malcolm. "La consommation de l'antique : Le Grand Tour et les reproductions de sculpture classique." In *D'après l'antique,* edited by Jean-Pierre Cuzin et ali., 69-77. Paris : Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000.
Barasch, Moshe. *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea*. New York: New York University Press, 1992.
Barbillon, Claire, et al., eds. *Bourdelle et l'Antique: Une passion moderne*. Paris: Paris Musées, 2017.
Barkan, Leonard. *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1999.
Barkan, Leonard. "Praxiteles' Aphrodite and the Love of Art." In *The Forms of Renaissance Thought,* edited by Leonard Barkan et al., 15–45. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
Barnard, Toby, and Jane Clark, eds. *Lord Burlington: Art, Architecture and Life*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1995.
Barocchi, Paola, ed. *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, 1-9. Turin: Einaudi, 1971- 1979.
Barrow, Rosemary. *Creating Continuity with the Traditions of High Art: The Use of Classical Art and Literature by Victorian Painters 1860-1912*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007.
Barrow, Rosemary. "The Female Body: Aphrodite of Cnidos." In: *Gender, Identity and the Body in Greek and Roman Sculpture*, edited by Michael Silk, 35-48. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
Bartlett, Truman Howe. "Emmanuel Frémiet." *The American Architect and Building News* 32 (1891): 113–115.
Bartman, Elizabeth. *Portraits of Livia: Imagining the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
Bartoli, Cosimo. *Ragionamenti accademici sopra alcuni luoghi difficili di Dante*. Venice: Francesco de Franceschi Senese, 1567.
Basler, Adolphe. *Indenbaum*. Paris : Le Triangle, ca 1933.
Bassett, Sarah. "Excellent Offerings: The Lausos Collection in Constantinople." *The Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (March 2000): 6-25.
Bassett, Sarah. *The Urban Image of Late Constantinople*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2004.
Baudelaire, Charles. *Oeuvres complètes.* Paris: Gaillmard, 1961.
Baum, Paull Franklin. "The Young Man Betrothed to a Statue." *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 34, no. 4 (1919): 523-579.
Baxandall, Michael. *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
Bažant, Jan. *Les citoyens sur les vases athéniens* (Rozpravy ČSAV, řada společenských věd, 95,2). Prague : Academia 1985.
Bažant, Jan. "The Legend of Knidia Today." *Eirene* 53 (2017): 79–112.

Bembo, Pietro. *Prose e rime*. Edited by Carlo Dionisotti. Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice 1960, 73-309.

Bender, K. *The Iconography of Venus, 1.2. The Italian Venus Revisited*. Lulu Com, s.l. 2018.

Bender, K. *The Iconography of Venus, 2,1.4 The French Venus*. Lulu Com, s.l. 2021.

Bender, K. *The Iconography of Venus, 3.1. The Venus of the Low Countries*. Lulu Com, s.l. 2010.

Bender, K. *The Iconography of Venus, 4.1. The German, Swiss and Central-European Venus*. Lulu Com, s.l. 2012.

Bender, K. *The Iconography of Venus, 5.1. The British and Irish Venus*. Lulu Com, s.l. 2013.

Bender, K. *The Iconography of Venus, 6.1. The Venus of the Eastern-, Southern- and Northern- European Regions*. Lulu Com, s.l. 2014.

Bensoussan, Nicole. "From the French Galerie to the Italian garden: Sixteenth-century Displays of Primaticcio's Bronzes at Fontainebleau." *Journal of the History of Collections* 27, no. 2 (2015): 175–198.

Bentz, Katherine M. "Ulisse Aldrovandi, Antiquities, and the Roman Inquisition." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 43 (2012): 963-983.

Bentz, Katherine M. "Ancient Idols, Lascivious Statues, and Sixteenth-Century Viewers in Roman Gardens." In *Receptions of Antiquity, Constructions of Gender in European Art, 1300-1600,* edited by Marice Rose and Alison C. Poe, 419-449. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Bentz, Katherine M. "The Afterlife of the Cesi Garden: Family Identity, Politics, and Memory in Early Modern Rome." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 72, No. 2 (June 2013): 134-165.

Benvenuto da Imola: *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*, 3. Edited by William Warren Vernon and Giacomo Filippo Lacaita. Florence: G. Barbera, 1887.

Berchorius, Petrus. *Ovidius Moralizatus*. Editedy by Joseph Engels. Utrecht: Instituut voor Laat latijn der Rijksuniversiteit, 1962.

Bernoulli, Johann Jacob. *Aphrodite: Ein Baustein zur griechischen Kunstmythologie*. Leipzig: Wilhlem Engelmann, 1873.

Bernstock, Judith E. "Classical Mythology in Twentieth-Century Art: An Overview of a Humanistic Approach." *Artibus et Historiae* 27 (1993): 153-183.

Bertalot, Ludwig. *Studien zum italienischen und deutschen Humanismus*, 2. Edited by Paul Oskar Kristeller. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1975.

Beschi, Luigi. "Contributi di topografia ateniese." *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene* 45-46 (1968-1969): 518-519.

Bettini, Maurizio. *The Portrait of the Lover*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Bevan, Elinor. "Ancient Deities and Tortoise-Representations in Sanctuaries." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 83 (1988): 1-6.

Bignami, Silvia, ed. *Mario Sironi: Venere dei porti*. Milan: Skira, 2000.

Bindman, David. *Warm Flesh, Cold Marble: Canova, Thorvaldsen and Their Critics*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

Binsfeld, Wolfgang. "Zur Inschrifttafel bei der Venus von St. Matthias in Trier." *Trierer Zeitschrift* 69-70 (2006-2007): 297–298.

Binsfeld, Wolfgang, et al. *Katalog der römischen Steindenkmäler des Rheinischen Landesmuseums Trier, I. Götter und Weihedenkmäler. Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*

Deutschland 4,3: Gallia Belgica. Trier und Trierer Land. Mainz: von Zabern Verlag, 1988.

Blaum, Rudolf, ed. *Gerhard Marcks und die Antike*. Bremen: Gerhard Marcks-Stiftung, 1993.

Bloch, Peter, Sibylle Einholz, and Jutta Simson, eds. *Ethos und Pathos. Die Berliner Bildhauerschule, 1786-1914*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1990.

Bober, Phyllis Pray, and Ruth Rubinstein. *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources*, second revised edition. London: Harvey Miller, 2010.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*. Milan: Ugo Mursia,1987.

Böhm, Stephanie: *Die "nackte Göttin." Zur Ikonographie und Deutung unbekleideter weiblicher Figuren in der frühgeschichtlichen Kunst*. Mainz : von Zabern, 1990.

Bol, Peter. *Die Skulpturen des Schiffsfundes von Antikythera*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1972.

Bolder-Boos, Marion. "Der Krieg und die Liebe – Untersuchungen zur römischen Venus." *Klio* 97, no.1 (2015): 81–134.

Bonstetten, Karl Viktor von. *Briefe an Friederike Brun*, 2. Frankfurt, 1829.

Borbein, Adolf Heinrich. "Die griechische Statue des 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. Formanalytische Untersuchungen zur Kunst der Nachklassik." *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Archäologischen Instituts* 88 (1973) : 43-212.

Borghini, Raffaello. *Il Riposo, in cui della pittura, e della scultura si favella, de' più illustri pittori, e scultori, e delle più famose opere loro si fa mentione*. Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1584.

Borzello, Frances. *The Naked Nude*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012.

Boschung, Dietrich. "Die Rezeption antiker Statuen als Diskurs: Das Beispiel der Venus Medici." In *Zentren und Wirkungsräume der Antikerezeption. Zur Bedeutung von Raum und Kommunikation für die neuzeitliche Transformation der griechisch-römischen Antike*, edited by Kathrin Schade et al., 165-176. Münster: Scriptorium, 2007.

Boschung, Dietrich. "Fragmentierung und Persistenz: Antike Statuen im Mittelalter." In *Persistenz und Rezeption: Weiterverwendung, Wiederverwendung und Neu-interpretation antiker Werke im Mittelalter,* edited by Dietrich Boschung and Susanne Wittekind, 319-348. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2008.

Boschung, Dietrich. "Unheimliche Statuen und ihre Bändigung." In *Leibhafte Kunst: Statuen und kulturelle Identität,* edited by Dietrich Boschung and Christiane Vorster, 281-306. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015.

Boschung, Dietrich. "Die Narracio de mirabilibus urbis Romae des Magister Gregorius : Die Ewige Stadt im Blick des gelehrten Romreisenden." In *Wunder Roms im Blick des Nordens*, edited by Christoph Stiegemann, 76-89. Petersberg: Dr. M. Imhof, 2017.

Boström, Antonia, ed. *The Fran and Ray Stark Collection of 20th-Century Sculpture at the J. Paul Getty Museum*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008.

Boucher, Bruce. *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1991.

Boulègue, Franck. *Twin Peaks: Unwrapping the Plastic*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 2017.

Bourgeois, Brigitte, and Violaine Jeammet. "Les paradoxes de l'invention de la polychromie antique au XIXe siècle." In *En couleurs. La sculpture polychrome en France 1850-1919,* edited by Edouard Papet, 151-156. Paris : Musée d'Orsay, 2018.

Bracciolini, Poggio. *Opera omnia, 1. Scripta in editione Basilensi anno 1538 collata*. Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1964.

Brain, Carla. "Venus in Pompeian Domestic Space: Decoration and Context." In *Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Rome 2016*, edited by Roberta Cascino et al., 51-66. Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2017.

Brandt, Aurelia. "Goltzius and the Antique." *Print Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (2001): 135- 149.

Brant, Sebastian. *Das Narrenschiff*. Basel: Johann Bergmann von Olpe, 1494.

Bravi, Alessandra. "Ornamenta, Monumenta, Exempla: Greek Images of Gods in the Public Spaces of Constantinople." In: *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome,* edited by Joannis Mylanopoulos, 289-301. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Breitenberger, Barbara. *Aphrodite and Eros: The Development of Erotic Mythology in Early Greek Poetry and Cult*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Bremmer, Jan N. "The Agency of Greek and Roman Statues: From Homer to Constantine." *Opuscula. Annual of the Swedish Institutes at Athens and Rome* 6 (2013): 7–21.

Brinckerhoff, Dericksen M. *Hellenistic Statues of Aphrodite: Studies in the History of their Development*. New York: Garland, 1978.

Brinkmann, Vinzenz, et al. *Bunte Götter – Golden Edition: Die Farben der Antike*. Munich: Prestel, 2020.

Brock, Maurice. "L'anecdote de Pline sur l'Aphrodite de Cnide dans quattre lettres de Bembo à Dolce." In *Le mythe de l'art antique,* edited by Emmanuelle Hénin and Valérie Naas, 346-364. Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2018.

Brody, Lisa R. *Aphrodisias, 3. The Aphrodite of Aphrosidias.* Results of the Excavations at Aphrosidias in Caria Conducted by New York University. Mainz: von Zabern, 2007.

Broekema, Henriette. *Inanna, Lady of Heaven and Earth: History of a Sumerian Goddess*. Leeuwarden, Netherlands: Elikser B. V. Uitgeverij, 2014.

Brooks, Peter. "Storied Bodies, or Nana at Last Unveil'd." *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1989): 1-32.

Brummer, Hans Henrik. *The Statue Court in the Vatican Belvedere*. Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1970.

Bruschius, Caspar. *Monasteriorum Germaniae praecipuorum ac maxime illustrium centuria prima*. Ingolstadt: Weissenhorn, 1551.

Büchele, Karl. *Stuttgart und seine Umgebungen für Einheimische und Fremde.* Stuttgart: K. Aue, 1858.

Bückling, Maraike. *Die Negervenus*. Frankfurt: Liebieghaus 1991.

Budin, Stephanie Lynn. *The Origin of Aphrodite*. Bethesda MD: CDL Press, 2003.

Budin, Stephanie Lynn. "Aphrodite Enoplion." In *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite,* edited by Amy S. Smith and Sadie Pickup, 79-112. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Budin, Stephanie Lynn. "The Nude Female in the Southern Levant: A Mixing of Syro-Mesopotamian and Egyptian Iconographies." In *Cult and Ritual on the Levantine Coast and its Impact on the Eastern Mediterranean Realm*, edited by Anne-Marie Maila Afeiche, 315–335. Beyrouth: Ministère de la culture, 2015.

Burioni, Matteo. "Vasari's Rinascità: History, Anthropology or Art Criticism?" In *Renaissance? Perceptions of Continuity and Discontinuity in Europe, c. 1300– c. 1550,* edited by Alexander Lee et al., 115– 128. Leiden: Brill, Leiden 2010.

Burke, Jill. *The Italian Renaissance Nude*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2018.

Burnage, Sarah, et al., eds. *William Etty. Art & Controversy*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011.

Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. New York: Dent, 1964.

Busch, Günter, ed. *Gerhard Marcks: Das plastische Werk*. Frankfurt: Propyläen Verlag, 1977.

Busch, Virginia. *The Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento.* New York: Garland, 1976.

Bussels, Stijn. "Da'più scorretti abusata: The Venus de'Medici and its History of Sexual Responses." In *The Secret Lives of Artworks: Exploring the Boundaries Between Art and Life,* edited by Caroline Van Eck et al., 38-55. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014.

Bussels, Stijn. *The Animated Image: Roman Theory on Naturalism, Vividness and Divine Power*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012.

Cairns, Douglas L. "The Meaning of the Veil in Ancient Greek Culture." In *Women's Dress in the Ancient Greek World*, edited by Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, 73-93. London: Duckworth, 2002.

Calza, Raissa, et al., eds. *Antichità di Villa Doria Pamfilj*. Rome : De Luca,1977.

Camo, Pierre. *Aristide Maillol*. Paris: Nouvelle revue française, 1926.

Campbell, James W. P., and Amy Boyington. "The Problems of Meaning and Use of the Puer Mingens Motif in Fountain Design 1400–1700." *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 38 (2018): 247-267.

Canedy, Norman W. *The Roman Sketchbook of Girolamo da Carpi*. London: The Warburg Institute, 1976.

Canova, Antonio. *Scritti*, edited by Hugh Honour and Paolo Mariuz. Roma: Salerno, 2007.

Capecchi, Gabriella, et al., eds. *Palazzo Pitti: La reggia rivelata.* Florence: Giunti, 2003.

Caputo, Vincenzo. "Gli 'abusi' dei pittori e la 'norma' dei trattatisti: Giovanni Andrea Gilio e Gabriele Paleotti." *Studi rinascimentali* 6 (2008): 99-110.

Carden-Coyne, Anna. *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Carpenter, Rhys. *Greek Sculpture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Carroll, Maureen. "Exploring the Sanctuary of Venus and its Sacred Grove: Politics, Cult and Identity in Roman Pompeii." *Papers of the British School at Rome* 78 (2010): 63-106, 347-351.

Cartari, Vincenzo. *Imagines deorum, qui ab antiquis colebantur*. Lyon: Stephanus Michael, 1581.

Cartari, Vincenzo. *Le Imagini con la spositione de i Dei de gli antichi*. Venice : Francesco Marcolini, 1556.

Catterson, Lynn. "Finding, Fixing, and Faking in Ghiberti's Third Commentarii." In *Inganno –The Art of Deception: Imitation, Reception, and Deceit in Early Modern Art*, edited by Sharon Gregory and Sally Anne Hickson, 123-149. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.

Caus, Isaac de. *Hortus Penbrochianus. Le jardin de Vuilton*. London, c. 1640.

Caylus, Anne Claude Philippe comte de. *Tableaux tirés de l'Iliade, de l'Odysée d'Homère et de l'Énéide de Virgile. Avec des osservations générales sur ce costume*. Paris: Tilliard, 1757.

Ceci, Giuseppe. "Pizzofalcone, II." *Napoli nobilissima* 1 (1891) : 85-89.

Centanni, Monica. *Fantasmi dell'antico : La tradizione classica nel Rinascimento.* 1-2. Rimini: Guaraldi, 2017.

Chattopadhyay, Collette. "A Conversation with Jim Dine." *Sculpture* 30 (2011): 31-35.

Chechi, Alessandro. "The Return of Cultural Objects Removed in Times of Colonial Domination and International Law: The Case of the Venus of Cyrene." *Italian Yearbook of International Law* (2008):159-181.

Christian, Kathleen Wren. "Architecture and Antique Sculpture in Early Modern Rome." In *The Companions to the History of Architecture, Volume I, Renaissance and Baroque Architecture*, edited by Alina Payne et al., 1-31. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2017.

Christian, Kathleen Wren. *Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

Chytil, Karel. *Pražská Venušina fontána od B. Wurzelbauera*. Prague, 1902.

Cladel, Judith. *Maillol, sa vie, son oeuvre, ses idées*. Paris: B. Grasset, 1937.

Clarac, Frédéric comte de. *Sur la statue antique de Vénus Victrix découverte dans l'ile de Milo en 1820.* Paris: P. Didot, l'ainé, 1821.

Clark, Kenneth. *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form.* London: John Murray, 1956.

Clay, Jenny Strauss. *The Politics of Olympus: Form and Meaning in the Homeric Hymns*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Coffin, David R. *The English Garden: Meditation and Memorial*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Coffin, David R. "Venus in the Eighteenth-Century English Garden." *Garden History* 28, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 173-193.

Coffin, David R. "Venus in the Garden of Wilton House." *Notes in the History of Art* 20 (2001): 25-31.

Cole, Michael W. "Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name." *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 3 (2008): 337–360.

Coliva, Anna, and Fernando Mazzocca, eds. *Canova e la Venere Vincitrice*. Milan: Electa, 2007.

Coliva, Anna, et al., eds. *I Borghese e l'Antico*. Milan: Skira, 2011.

Coltman, Viccy. *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain since 1760*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Compton, Rebekah. "Omnia Vincit Amor: The Sovereignty of Love in Tuscan Poetry and Michelangelo's Venus and Cupid." *Mediaevalia* 33 (2012): 229-260.

Compton, Rebekah. *Venus and the Arts of Love in Renaissance Florence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Conforti, Claudia, et al., eds. *Vasari, gli Uffizi e il Duca*. Florence: Giunti, 2011.

Cook, Brian F. *The Townley Marbles.* London: British Museum Publications, 1985.

Corso, Antonio. "A Goddess of Cycladic Marble from Etruria." In *Paria Lithos. Parian quarries, marble and workshops of sculpture*, edited by Demetrius Umberto Schilardi, 559-566. Athens: Cyclades Institute of Archaeology, 2000.

Corso, Antonio. "The Theme of Bathing Aphrodites in Classical Greece: Birth of an Iconographic Pattern, Development, Success." *Orbis terrarum* 12 (2014): 57-64.

Corso, Antonio. *The Art of Praxiteles I. The Development of Praxiteles' Workshop and Its Cultural Tradition Until the Sculptor's Acme (364-1 BC).* Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2004.

Corso, Antonio. *The Art of Praxiteles II. The Mature Years*. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2007.

Courtois, Chantal. "La collection Béatrix de Candolle. Terre cuites en filiation." *Genava. Revue d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie* 54 (2006): 227-237.

Couzin, Robert. "Invented Traditions. Latin Terminology and the Writing of Art History." *Journal of Art Historiography* 19, (December 2018): 1-24.

Cowdry, Richard. *A Description of the Pictures, Statues, Busto's, Basso-relievo's, and Other Curiosities at the Earl of Pembroke's House at Wilton*. London: J. Robinson, 1751.

Creed, Cary. *The Marble Antiquities, The Right Honble. the Earl of Pembrokes, at Wilton.* London, 1731.

Cuzin, Jean-Pierre, et al., eds. *D'après l'antique*. Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000.

Cyrino, Monica S. *Aphrodite*. London: Routledge, 2010.

d'Ascoli, Eurialo. *Stanze d'Eurialo d'Ascoli sopra le statue di Laocoonte, di Venere, et d'Apollo*. Rome: Dorico, 1539.

Damascius. *The Philosophical History*. Edited by Polymnia Athanassiadi. Athens: Apamea, 1999.

Darby, Elisabeth S. "John Gibson, Queen Victoria, and the Idea of Sculptural Polychromy." *Art History* 4, no. 1 (March 1981): 37–53.

Davidson, Amanda A. *The Sculpture of William Turnbull*. London: Lund Humphries, 2005.

Davison, Claire Cullen. *Pheidias. The Sculptures and Ancient Sources*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2009.

De'Cavalieri, Giovanni Battista. *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae,* 1-2. Roma,1585.

De'Cavalieri, Giovanni Battista. *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae*, 3-4. Roma, 1594.

Degenhart, Bernhard, and Annegrit Schmitt. *Corpus der Italienischen Zeichnungen 1300-1450. Sud und Mittelitalien*. Berlin: Mann, 1968.

DeGrazia, Diane. *Prints and Related Drawings by the Carracci Family*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1979.

Del Monti, Claudia, ed. *Il tempio di Venere e Roma nella storia*. Milan: Electa, 2010.

De Mot, Jean. "L'Aphrodite d'Arenberg. " *Revue Archéologique* 2 (1903): 10-20.

Delivorrias, Angelos. "Die Kultstatue der Aphrodite von Daphni." *Antike Plastik* 8 (1968): 19-31.

Delivorrias, Angelos. "Das Original der sitzenden Aphrodite-Olympias." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 93 (1978): 1-23.

Delivorrias, Angelos, et. al. "Aphrodite." *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Zürich: Artemis, 1981–99), vol. 2 (1984): 2-151.

Delivorrias, Angelos. "Problèmes de conséquence méthodologique et d'ambiguïté iconographique." *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome, Antiquité* 103, no. 1 (1991) : 136-137.

Delivorrias, Angelos. "A New Aphrodite for John." In *Greek Offerings: Essays on Greek Art in Honour of John Boardman*, edited by Olga Palagia, 109-118. Oxford: Oxbow Monograph, Oxford 1997.

Delivorrias, Angelos. "The Worship of Aphrodite in Athens and Attica. In *Worshiping Women. Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens,* edited by Nikos E. Kaltsas and Harvey

Alan Shapiro, 107-113. New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, 2008.

Demma, Maria Pia, and Giuseppina Favara, eds. *La Fontana Pretoria in Palermo: hic fons, cui similis nullus in orbe patet*. Palermo: Assessorato regionale dei beni culturali e ambientali e della pubblica istruzione, 2006.

Descharnes, Robert. *Dalí de Gala*. Lausanne: Edita, 1962.

Deschodt, Gaëlle. "Images et mariage, une question de méthode. Le geste d'anakalypsis." *Mondes anciens* 1 (2011). http://journals.openedition.org/mondesanciens/370

Deswarte-Rosa, Sylvie. "Francisco de Holanda et le Cortile di Belvedere." In *Il Cortile delle statue. Der Statuenhof des Belvedere im Vatikan*, edited by Matthias Winner et al., 389-410. Mainz: von Zabern, 1998.

Dickmann, Jens-Arne. "Lord Pembrokes design to form a School of Sculpture – Erwerb, Aufstellung and Fuktion von Antiken in Wilton House während des 17. und 18. Jhs." In *Antikensammlungen des europäischen Adels im 18. Jahrhundert als Ausdruck einer europäischen Identität*, edited by Dietrich Boschung and Henner Hesberg, 115-129. Mainz: von Zabern, 2000.

Diderot, Denis. *Salons,* 2 (Salon de 1765), edited by Jean Seznec and Jean Adhémar. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960.

Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Ouvrir Vénus: Nudité, rêve, cruauté*. Paris: Gallimard, 1999.

Diemer, Dorothea. *Hubert Gerhard und Carlo di Cesare del Palagio: Spätplastiker der Renaissance,* I – II. Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2004.

DiFuria, Arthur J. *Maarten van Heemskerck's Rome: Antiquity, Memory, and the Cult of Ruins.* Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Dontas, Giorgos. "Ein verkanntes Meisterwerk im Nationalmuseum von Athen. Der Marmorkopf Γ. 177 und Überlegungen zum Stil Eupharnors." In *Festschrift für Nikolaus Himmelmann,* edited by Hans-Ulrich Cain et al., 143-50. Mainz: von Zabern, 1989

Doppelmayr, Johann Gabriel. *Historische Nachricht Von den Nürnbergischen Mathematicis und Künstlern*. Nurnberg: P.C. Monath, 1730.

Downey, Glanville. "Constantine the Rhodian. His Life and Writings." In *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honour of A. M. Friend, Jr.*, edited by Kurt Weitzman, 214-221. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955.

Dressen, Angela. "From Dante to Landino: Botticelli's Calumny of Apelles and Its Sources." *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 59, no. 3 (2017) : 324-339.

Du Camp, Maxime. "Le salon de 1863." *La revue des deux mondes*, June 15, 1863, 886-918.

Du Choul, Guillaume. *Discorso della religione antica de Romani.* Lyon: Guillaume Rouille, 1559.

Du Choul, Guillaume. *Discours de la religion des anciens Romains*. Lyon: Guillaume Rouille, 1556.

Dubel, Sandrine. "Aphrodite se mirant au bouclier d'Arès. Transpositions homériques et jeux de matière l'epos hellénistique." In *Métamorphoses du regard ancien*, edited by Évelyne Prioux and Agnès Rouveret, 13-28. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, Nanterre, 2010.

Dunbabin, Katherine M. D. "Baiarum grata voluptas. Pleasures and Dangers of the Baths." *Papers of the British School in Rome* 57 (1989), 6-46.

Eastlake, Elizabeth. *Life of John Gibson, RA, Sculptor*. London: Longmans, 1870.

Eberlein, Gustav. "Die Lex Heinze von Standpunkt des bildenden Künstlers." In *Das Buch von der Lex Heinze ein Kulturdokument aus dem Anfange des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts,* edited by Otto Falckenberg, 32-33. Leipzig: Staackmann, 1900.

Ebert-Schifferer Sybille. "Giambolognas Venus und Satyr in Dresden: Ein durchdachtes Geschenk für einen Florenz-Bewunderer." In *Docta Manus. Studien zur italienischen Skulptur für Joachim Poeschke,* edited by Johannes Myssok and Jürgen Wiener, 301-312. Münster, Rhema, 2007.

Ebert-Schifferer, Sybille, ed. *Natur und Antike in der Renaissance*. Frankfurt: Liebighaus Museum, 1985.

Eckert, Martin. *Die Aphrodite der Seefahrer und ihre Heiligtümer am Mittelmeer*. Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2016.

Edwards, Charles M. "Aphrodite on a Ladder." *Hesperia* 53, no. 1 (January - March, 1984): 59-72.

Eichendorff, Joseph von. "Das Marmorbild." In *Frauentaschenbuch für das Jahr 1819*, edited by Caroline de la Motte-Fouqué, 555-595. Nurnberg: J. L. Schrag, 1818.

Eikelmann, Renate, ed. *Bella figura: Europäische Bronzekunst in Süddeutschland um 1600*. Munich: Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, 2015.

Einholz, Sibylle. *Peter Breuer (1856-1930): Ein Plastiker zwischen Tradition und Moderne*. PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin,1984.

El Lissitzky and Hans Arp. *Die Kunstismen. Les Ismes de l'art. The Isms of Art*. Zürich: Erlenbach Rentsch, 1925.

Elam, Caroline. "Lorenzo de'Medici Sculpture Garden." *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 36, no. 1-2 (1992): 41-84.

Elsner, Jaś. *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text*. Princeton NJ : Princeton University Press, 2007.

Éméric-David, Toussaint-Bernard. *Histoire de la sculpture antique.* Paris : Charpentier, 1853.

Estella, Margarita M. "La fuente de la Venus de Aranjuez, obra de Francisco Moschino." *Archivo Español de Arte* 58 (2007): 89-93.

Evelyn, John. *The diary of John Evelyn,* 1-6, edited by Esmond S. De Beer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Ewald, Björn Christian. "Minding the Gap. Issues of Cultural Translation in Graeco-Roman Art." In *Visual Histories of the Classical World. Essays in Honor of R. R. R. Smith,* edited by Catherine M. Draycott et al., , 233–254. Brepols, Turnhout, 2018.

Fabbricotti, Emanuela. "Ninfe dormienti : Tentativo di classificazione." *Studi Miscellanei. Seminario di archeologia e storia dell'arte greca e romana dell'Università di Roma* 22 (1976): 65-71.

Fabbricotti, E. "Ninfe dormienti: Addendum." *Quaderni dell'Istituto di archeologia e storia antica. Università di Chieti* 1, (July 1980): 37-41.

Fadinger, Volker. "Sulla als Imperator Felix und Epaphroditos (= Liebling der Aphrodite)." In *Widerstand - Anpassung – Integration: Die griechische Staatenwelt und Rom. Festschrift für Jürgen Deininger zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Norbert Ehrhardt and Linda-Marie Günther, 155-188. Stuttgart, Steiner, 2002

Faietti, Marzia. "A New Preparatory Drawing by Marcantonio Raimondi for his Kneeling Venus." *Print Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1989): 308-311.

Fantappiè, Irene. "Rewriting, Re-figuring: Pietro Aretino's Transformations of Classical Literature." In *Renaissance Rewritings*, edited by Helmut Pfeiffer et al., 45-70. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.

Farinella, Vincenzo. *Alfonso d'Este : Le immagini e il potere. Da Ercole de'Roberti a Michelangelo*. Milan: Officina Libraria, 2014.

Faroult, Guillaume, et al., eds. *L'Antiquité rêvée : Innovations et résistences au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Beaux-arts éditions, 2010.

Favaretto, Irene, et al., eds. *Museo archeologico nazionale Venezia*. Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2004.

Fendt, Tobias. *Monumenta sepulcrorum cum epigraphis ingenio et doctrina exellentium virorum*. Wroclaw: Kryspin Scharffenberg, 1574.

Ferrari, Giulia. "Agalmatofilia. L'amore per le statue nel mondo antico. L'Afrodite di Cnido e il caso di Pigmalione." *Psicoart* 3, no. 3 (2013): 1-17.

Ficheux, Gaëlle. "La chevelure d'Aphrodite et la magie amoureuse." In *L'expression des corps. Gestes, attitudes, regards dans l'iconographie antique*, edited by Lydie Bodiou et al., 182-194. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006.

Flecken, Maria Anna. *Die Geburt der modernen Venus: Antonio Canovas Paolina Bonaparte Borghese*. Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2015.

Flemberg, Johan. "The Transformations of the Armed Aphrodite." In *Greece and Gender*, edited by Brit Berggreen Bergen and Nanno Marinatos, 109- 122. Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1995.

Flemberg, Johan. *Venus Armata. Studien zur bewaffneten Aphrodite in der griechisch-römischen Kunst*. Stockholm: Paul Åström, 1991.

Florencourt, Wilhelm Ferdinand Chassot von. "Der gesteinigte Venus-Torso zu St. Matthias bei Trier." *Bonner Jahrbücher* 13 (1848): 128-140.

Foscolo, Ugo. *Epistolario 1812-1813*. Florence: Le Monnier, 1949.

Fowler, Robert L. *Early Greek Mythography.* 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001-2013.

Franzini, Girolamo. *Icones Statuarum Antiquarum Urbis Romae*. Roma,1596.

Frasca-Rath, Anna. *John Gibson & Antonio Canova: Rezeption, Transfer, Inszenierung*. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2018.

Freedman, Luba. *The Revival of the Olympian Gods in Renaissance Art*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003.

Frère, Henry. *Conversations de Maillol*. Geneva: Cailler, 1956.

Friedrich, Maria. "Aphrodite mit dem Eros-Knaben: Die sog. Aphrodite d'Este." In *Ansichtssache: Antike Skulpturengruppen im Raum*, edited by Jens-Arne Dickmann and Ralf von den Hoff, 89-93. Freiburg: Albrecht-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, 2017.

Friedrich, Maria. "Eine Kaiserin im Gewand der Aphrodite? Die Antonia Minor mit Kind." In *Ansichtssache: Antike Skulpturengruppen im Raum*, edited by Jens-Arne Dickmann and Ralf von den Hoff, 94-99. Freiburg: Albrecht-Ludwigs-Universität, 2017.

Frith, Wendy. “Sex, Gender and Politics: The Venus de Medici in the Eighteeenth Century Landscape Garden.” In *Sculpture and the Garden*, edited by Patrick Eyres and Fiona Russel, 71-84. London: Routledge, 2006.

Froning, Heide. “Überlegungen zur Aphrodite Urania des Phidias in Elis.” *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung* 120 (2005): 285-294.

Froning, Heide, and Nina Zimmermann-Elseify. *Die Terrakotten der antiken Stadt Elis.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010.

Fučíková, Eliška, et al., eds. *Rudolf II and Prague: The Court and the City.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1997.

Fulińska, Agnieszka. “Divae Potentes Cypri: Remarks on the Cult of the Ptolemaic Queens as Aphrodite.” *Eos* 99 (2012): 47-73.

Furtwängler, A. *Meisterwerke der griechischen Plastik: Kunstgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*. Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1893.

Furtwängler, A. *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture: A Series of Essays on the History of Art,* translated by Eugenie Sellers. London: E. W. Heinemann, 1895.

Fusco, Ugo. “The Sanctuary of Aphrodite and Ares (Paus. 2.25.1) in the Periurban Area of Argos and Temples with a Double Cella in Greece.” *Tekmeria* 13 (2016): 97-124.

Galand-Hallyn, Perrine. “Autour de la Vénus Amboise, 1530: Une refloraison du genre de l’ekphrasis.” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 61, no. 2 (1999), 345-374.

Gallo, Daniela. *Modèle ou mirroir? Winckelmann et la sculpture néoclassique*. Paris: Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2009.

Gansel, Amy Rebecca. “Images and Conceptions of Ideal Feminine Beauty in Neo-Assyrian Royal Contexts, c. 883-627 BC.” In *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, edited by Brian Brown et al., 391-420. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014.

Garcia Pérez, Noelia, ed. *Mary of Hungary, Renaissance Patron and Collector: Gender, Art and Culture.* Turnhout : Brepols, 2020.

Garzoni, Tomaso. *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni*. Venice: Somascho, 1585.

Gasparri, Carlo. “L’Afrodite seduta tipo Agrippina-Olympia: Sulla produzione di sculture in Atene nel V sec. a. C.” *Prospettiva* 100 (October 2000): 3-8.

Gasparri, Carlo, ed. *Le sculture Farnese, 1: Le sculture ideali*. Milan: Electa, 2009.

Geyer, Christian M. “Die Venus von Salvatore de Carlis für König Max I. Joseph.” *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst, Dritte Folge* 62, 2011 (2013): 261-271.

Ghey, Eleanor, and Ian Leins, eds. *A catalogue of the Roman Republican Coins in the British Museum, with Descriptions and Chronology Based on M. H. Crawford, Roman Republican Coinage (1974)*. London: The British Museum, 2010.

Ghiberti, Lorenzo. *I Commentari*, edited by Ottavio Morisani. Naples: Ricardo Ricciardi 1947.

Giannetti, Serafina. *La collezione delle statue antiche della villa d’Este a Tivoli: Storia d’une dispersione*. Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2019.

Giraldi, Giglio Gregorio. *De deis gentium varia et multiplex historia*. Basel: Joannes Oporinus,1548.

Girouard, Mark. “Ambrose Phillipps of Garendon.” *Architectural History* 8 (1965): 25-38.

Glori, Licinio. *Cleopatra “Venere esquilina.”* Rome: C. Bestetti, 1955.

Gobineau, Joseph-Arthur comte de. *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines,* 1. Paris: F. Didot frères, 1853.

Gori, Antonio Francesco. *Museum Florentinum*, vol. 3. Florence: Moucke, 1734.

Gosse, Edmund. *Father and Son*. Portsmouth NH: W. Heinemann, 1907.

Grammaccini, Norberto. *Mirabilia: Das Nachleben antiker Statuen vor der Renaissance*. Mainz : von Zabern, 1996.

Greenhalgh, Michael. *Donatello and his Sources*. London: Duckworth, 1982.

Gregory, Mina, ed. *In the Light of Apollo: Italian Renaissance and Greece*. Athens: The Hellenic Culture Organization, 2003.

Grimm, Günter. "Prosper Mérimées tödliche Frauen oder 'Die Venus von Ille' und ihr Vorbild aus Melos. Dietrich Felix von Bothmer zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet." *Antike Welt* 30 (1999): 577-586.

Grosshans, Rainald. *Maerten van Heemskerck: Die Gemälde*. Berlin: Horst Boettcher, 1980.

Guarini, Battista. *Poema divo Herculi Ferrariensium duci dicatum*. Modena: Rocociola, 1496.

Guilding, Ruth. *Marble Mania: Sculpture Galleries in England 1640-1840*. London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 2001.

Haesaerts, Paul. *Renoir, Sculptor*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947.

Hale, John Rigby. "Art and Audience: the Medici Venus, c. 1750–c. 1850." *Italian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1976): 45-48.

Hales, Shelley. "Aphrodite and Dionysus: Greek Role Models for Roman Homes?" *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes* 7 (2008): 235–255.

Hallett, Christopher H. *The Roman Nude: Heroic Portrait Statuary 200 B.C. – A.D. 300*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Hamiaux, Marianne. "Le type statuaire de la Vénus de Milo." *Revue archéologique* 63, no. 1 (2017): 65–84.

Hanfmann, George M. A. "An Early Classical Aphrodite." *American Journal of Archaeology* 66, no. 3 (July 1962): 281-284.

Harloe, Katherine. *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity: History and Aesthetics in the Age of Altertumswissenschaft*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Hartigan, K. V. *Muse on Madison Square*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002.

Haskell, Francis, and Nicholas Penny. *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of the Classical Sculpture 1500-1900*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1981.

Hatfield, Rab. "Botticelli's Mystic Nativity, Savonarola and the Millennium." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 58 (1995): 88–114.

Hatt, Michael. "Transparent Forms: Tinting, Whiteness and John Gibson's Venus." *Sculpture Journal* 23, no. 2 (2014): 185-196.

Havelock, Christine Mitchell. *The Aphrodite of Knidos and her Successors: A Historical Review of the Female Nude in Greek art*. Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

Haynes, Melissa."Framing a View of the Unviewable: Architecture, Aphrodite, and Erotic Looking in the Lucianic Erôtes." *Helios* 40 (2013): 71- 95.

Healy, Margaret. "Bronzino's London Allegory and the Art of Syphilis." *The Oxford Art Journal* 20, no. 1 (1997): 3-11.

Heckscher, William S. "Aphrodite as a Nun." *Phoenix* 7, no. 3 (Autumn 1953): 105-117.

Heenes, Volker. *Antike in Bildern: Illustrationen in antiquarischen Werken des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*. Stendal: Winckelmann-Gesellschaft, 2003.

Heikamp, Detlef, et al., eds. *Baccio Bandinelli: Scultore e maestro (1493-1560*). Florence: Giunti, 2014.

Heimpel, Wolfgang. "A Catalogue of Near Eastern Venus Deities." *Syro Mesopotamian Studies* 4, no. 3 (December 1982): 9–22.

Heine, Heinrich. *Neue Gedichten*. Hamburg, 1844.

Heleniak, Kathryn Moore. "Naked/Nude." In *Encyclopedia of Comparative Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, vol. 2, edited by Helene E. Roberts, 641–649. Chicago IL: Fitzboy Dearborne, 1998.

Herklotz, Ingo. "Der Campus lateranensis im Mittelalter." *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 22 (1985): 1-43.

Hersey, George L. *Falling in Love with Statues: Artificial Humans from Pygmalion to the Present*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Heyne, Christian Gottlob. *Sammlung Antiquarische Aufsätze,* 1-2. Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1778–1779.

Himmelmann, Nikolaus. *Ideale Nacktheit.* Wiesbaden: Springer, 1985.

Himmelmann, Nikolaus. *Antike Götter im Mittelalter*. Mainz: von Zabern, 1986.

Himmelmann, Nikolaus. *Ideale Nacktheit in der griechischen Kunst.* Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. 26. Ergänzungsheft. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990.

Hinz, Berthold. *Aphrodite: Geschichte einer abendländischen Passion*. Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1998.

Hittorff, J. I., and Zanth, L. *Architecture moderne de la Sicile, ou Recueil des plus beaux monumens religieux, et des édifices publics et particuliers les plus remarquables de la Sicile*. Paris: P. Renouard, 1835.

Hogarth, William. *The Analysis of Beauty. Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste*. London, 1753.

Hollanda, Francesco di. *Os desenhos das Antigualhas que vió Francisco d'Ollanda Pintor Portugués 1539-1540*. Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1940.

Hollander, Anne. *Seeing Through Clothes*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Hölscher, Fernande. "Gods and Statues – an Approach to Archaistic Images in Fifth Century BC." In *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome*, edited by Joannis Mylanopoulos, 105-120. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Hölscher, Tonio. "Nikolaus Himmelmann: Ideale Nacktheit in der griechischen Kunst." *Gnomon* 65 (1993): 519-528.

Hölscher, T. *Visual Power in Ancient Greece and Rome: Between Art and Social Reality*. Oakland CA: University of California Press, 2018.

Holt, Elizabeth Basye Gilmore. *A Documentary History of Art, 1: The Middle Ages and the Renaissance.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Holton John Russell: "Demetrios Poliorketes, Son of Poseidon and Aphrodite. Cosmic and Memorial Significance in the Athenian Ithyphalic Hymn." *Mnemosyne* 67, no. 3 (2014): 370-390.

Honour, Hugh. "Canova's Statues of Venus." *The Burlington Magazine* 114 (1972): 658-671.

Honour, Hugh. "Canova e la storia di due Veneri." In *Palazzo Pitti. La reggia rivelata*, edited by Gabriella Capecchi et al., 193-209. Firenze: Giunti, 2003.

Hurwit, Jeffrey M. "The Problem with Dexileos: Heroic and Other Nudities in Greek Art." *American Journal of Archaeology* 111, No. 1 (January 2007): 35-60.

Hussey, John. *John Gibson R. A.: The World of the Master Sculptor*. Birkenhead: Countyvise, 2012.

Huysecom-Haxhi, Stéphanie. "Aphrodite, Coming of Age and Marriage: Contextualisation and Reconsideration of the Nude Young Women Kneeling in a Shell." In *Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas*, edited by Giorgos Papantoniou et al., 259-271. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Janitschek, Hubert. "Ein Hofpoet Leo's X. über Künstler und Kunstwerke." *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 3 (1880): 52-60.

Jestaz, Bertrand. "Les premières copies d'antique." In *D'après l'antique*, edited by Jean Pierre Cuzin et al., 45-52. Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000,

Jockey, Philippe. *Le mythe de la Grèce blanche*. Paris: Belin, 2015.

Johansson, Göta, ed. *Aphrodite: The Making of a Goddess*. Lund: Palmkron, 2005.

Johns, Christopher M. S. *Antonio Canova and the Politics of Patronage in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Jonietz, Fabia. "The Semantics of Recycling: Cosimo Bartoli's Invenzioni for Giovan Battista Ricasoli." In *Cosimo Bartoli, 1503-1572*, edited by Francesco Paolo Fiore and Daniela Lamberini, 297-330. Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2011.

Junker, Klas, and Adrian Stähli, eds. *Original und Kopie: Formen und Konzepte der Nachahmung in der antiken Kunst*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2008.

Kaldellis, Anthony. *The Christian Parthenon: Classicism and Pilgrimage in Byzantine Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Kamien-Kazhdan, Adina. *Remaking the Readymade: Duchamp, Man Ray, and the Conundrum of the Replica*. London: Routledge, 2018.

Keach, W. William Keach. "Cupid Disarmed, or Venus Wounded? An Ovidian Source for Michelangelo and Bronzino." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41(1978): 327-331.

Kedrenos, Georgius. *Compendium historiarum,* 1, edited by Immanuel Bekker. Bonn: L. Weber, 1838.

Kelly, Jason M. "Riots, Revelries, and Rumor: Libertinism and Masculin Association in Enlightenment London." *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006): 759-795.

Kelly-Gabol, Joan. "Did Women Have a Renaissance? In: *Becoming Visible. Women in European History*, edited by Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, 174-201. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

Kennedy, James. *A New Description of the Pictures [...] and Other Curiosities at the Earl of Pembroke's House at Wilton*. Salisbury: E. Eaton, 1769.

Kirchner, Josef. *Die Darstellung des ersten Menschenpaares in der bildenden Kunst von der ältesten Zeit bis auf unsere Tage*. Stuttgart: Enke, 1903.

Koçak, Mustafa. *Aphrodite am Pfeiler: Studien zu aufgestützten/angelehnten weiblichen Figuren der griechischen Marmorplastik*. Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2013.

Kolb, Carolyn, and Melissa Beck. "The Sculptures on the Nymphaeum Hemicycle of the Villa Barbaro at Maser." *Artibus et Historiae* 18, no. 35 (1997): 15-33, 35-40.

Kondoleon, Christine, et al., eds. *Aphrodite and the Gods of Love*. Boston: MFA Publications, 2011.

Kossatz-Deichmann, Anneliese. “Paridis Iudicium.” *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Artemis, Zürich/Munich 1981–99), vol. 7 (1994): 176-188.

Kousser, Rachel Meredith. *Sensual Power: A Warrior Aphrodite in Greek and Roman Sculpture*. PhD diss, New York University, 2001.

Kousser, Rachel Meredith. “Creating the Past: The Venus de Milo and the Hellenistic Reception of Classical Greece.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 109, no. 2 (April 2005): 227-250.

Kousser, Rachel Meredith. “Mythological Group Portraits in Antonine Rome: The Performance of Myth.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 111, no. 4 (October 2007): 673-691.

Kousser, Rachel Meredith. *Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture. The Allure of the Classical*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008

Kousser, Rachel Meredith. “Augustan Aphrodite: The Allure of Greek Art in Roman Visual Culture.” In *Brill’s Companion to Aphrodite,* edited by Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup, 287-306. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Kousser, Rachel Meredith. *The Afterlives of Greek Sculpture: Interaction, Transformation, and Destruction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Kousser, Rachel Meredith. “Mutilating Goddesses: Aphrodite in Late Antique Aphrodisias.” In *Prähistorische und antike Göttinnen,* edited by Julia Katharina Koch et al., 147-162. Münster: Waxmann, 2020.

Kren, Thomas, et al., eds. *The Renaissance Nude*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2018.

Kristensen, Troels Myrup Kristensen. “Using and Abusing Images in Late Antiquity (and Beyond). Column Monuments as Topoi of Idolatry.” In *Using Images in Late Antiquity*, edited by Stine Birk et al., 268-282. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014.

Kristensen, Troels Myrup Kristensen. “Statues.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Archaeology*, edited by David K. Pettegrew et al., 333-350. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford 2019.

Krug, Antje. “Isis – Aphrodite – Astarte.” *Städel-Jahrbuch, N.F.* 19 (2004), 181-190.

Kunze, Christian. *Zum Greifen nah: Stilphänomene in der hellenistischen Skulptur und ihre inhaltliche Interpretation*. Munich: Biering & Brinkmann, 2002.

La Chau, Géraud de. *Dissertation sur les attributs de Vénus*. Paris: de Prault, 1776.

La Monica, Giuseppe, ed. *Pantheon ambiguo: La Fontana Pretoria di Palermo nell’analisi formale e nel commento di Antonio Veneziano e Francesco Baronio Manfredi*. Palermo: S.F. Flaccovio, 1987.

La Monica, Marcella. *La fontana pretoria di Palermo: Analisi stilistica e nuovo commento*. Palermo: Pitti Ed., 2006.

Laborde, Léon de: *Les comptes des Bâtiments du roi, 1528-1571, suivis de documents inédits sur les châteaux royaux et les beaux-arts au 16e siècle,* 2. Paris : Impr. Nationale, 1880.

Lacan, Ernest. “Études d’après nature : M. B. Braquehais.” *La Lumière* 37 (16. septembre) 1854: 147.

Lacroix, Léon. *Les reproductions de statues sur les monnaies grecques: La statuaire archaïque et classique. Nouvelle édition.* Liége : Presses universitaires de Liège, 1949.

Landino, Christophoro. *Comedia di Danthe Alighieri poeta divino: col’espositione di Christopho Landino.* Venezia, 1529.

Lang, Astrid. *Die frühneuzeitliche Architekturzeichnung als Medium intra- und interkultureller Kommunikation. Entwurfs- und Repräsentationskonventionen nördlich der Alpen und ihre Bedeutung für den Kulturtransfer um 1500 am Beispiel der Architekturzeichnungen von Hermann Vischer d. J.* Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2012.

Langlotz, Ernst. *Aphrodite in den Garten*. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1954.

Larcher, Pierre-Henri. *Mémoire sur la déesse Venus*. Paris, 1776.

Larsson, Lars Olof. "Zwischen Depression und Neugeburt: Johann Tobias Sergel und Bertel Thorvaldsen in Rom." In *L'Europa e l'Arte italiana*, edited by Max Seidel et al., 517-529. Venice: Marsilio, 2000.

Lautrémont, Comte de (Isidor Ducasse). *Les Chants de Maldoror*. Bruxelles, 1874.

Lavan, Luke, and Michael Mulryan. *The Archaeology of Late Antique Paganism*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Lavin, Marylin Aronberg. *Artists' Art in the Renaissance*. London: Pindar, 2009.

Lazzarini, Elena. *Nudo, arte e decoro: Oscillazioni estetiche negli scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*. Pisa: Pacini, 2010.

Lee, Mireille M. *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Lehmann, Ann-Sophie. "Das unsichtbare Geschlecht: Zu einem abwesenden Teil des weiblichen Körpers in der bildenden Kunst." In *Körperteile. Eine kulturelle Anatomie*, edited by Claudia Benthien and Christoph Wulf, 314-336. Reinbek near Hamburg: Rowohlts, 2001.

Lehmann, Doris H. "Tribolos Erbe: Giambolognas Fiorenza Anadyomene." In *Leibhafte Kunst. Statuen und kulturelle Identität*, edited by Dietrich Boschung and Christiane Vorster, 179-200. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015.

Leibundgut Wieland, Danielle. "Tonstatuen und -statuetten der paphischen Göttin aus dem Heiligtum der Aphrodite in Alt-Paphos auf Cypern." In *Figurines de terre cuite en Méditerranée grecque et romaine,* edited by Arthur Muller and Ergün Laflı, 589-603. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Éditions du Septentrion, 2015.

Leithe-Jasper, Manfred, and Francesca De Gramatica, eds. *Bagliori d'Antico. Bronzetti al Castello del Buonconsiglio*. Trento: Castello del Buonconsiglio, Monumenti e collezioni provinciali, 2013.

Leithe-Jasper, Manfred. "Venere dopo il bagno, prima e dopo la Venere Cesarini." In *Giambologna: Gli dei, gli eroi*, edited by Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Dimitrios Zikos, 189-191. Florence: Giunti, 2006.

Leithe-Jasper, Manfred. "Venus Este: Eine Marmorskulptur aus dem Umkreis des Guglielmo della Porta." *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 4-5 (2002-2003): 136-163.

Leoussi, Athena S. "From Civic to Ethnic Classicism. The Cult of the Greek Body in Late Nineteenth century French Society and Art." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 16, no. 3-4 (September – December 2009): 393-442.

Lessing, Lauren K., and Mary Schafer. "Unveiling Raphaelle Peale's Venus Rising from the Sea--a Deception." *Winterthur Portfolio* 43, no. 2-3 (Summer 2009): 229-259.

Linant de Bellefonds, Pascale, and Évelyne Prioux. *Voir les mythes: Poésie hellénistique et arts figurés*. Paris: Picard, 2017.

Lipinski, Lisa. *René Magritte and the Art of Thinking*. London: Routledge, 2019.

Livingstone, Marco. "Jim Dine et le mariage de Vénus." In *D'après l'antique*, edited by Jean-Pierre Cuzin et al., 468-476. Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000.

Lo Presti, Leonardo M. *Nuova, ed esatta descrizione del celeberrimo fonte esistente nella piazza del Palazzo senatorio*. Palermo: Antonio Epiro, 1737.

Lomazzo, Giovanni Paolo. *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura.* Milan: Paolo Gottardo Pontio, 1585.

Long, Jane C. "The Survival and Reception of the Classical Nude: Venus in the Middle Ages." In *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art*, edited by Sherry Lindquist, 47-64. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.

Louÿs, Pierre. *Aphrodite: mœurs antiques*. Paris: L. Borel, 1896.

Luciano, Eleonora. *Antico: The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes*. Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2011.

Lullies, Reinhard. *Die kauernde Venus*. Munich: Filser-Verlag, 1954.

Luppe, Wolfgang. "Eine mythologische Erzählung in Hexametern (P.Oxy. LXXVII 5104)." *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 58, no. 1 (2012): 5-7.

Maaz, Bernhard. "Das Alte am Neuen und das Neue im Alten: Die Erwerbungen zeitgenössischer Skulpturen durch König Wilhelm I. von Württemberg als Spiegel individueller Interessen und zeittypischer Tendenzen gegen Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts." *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft* 67 (2013): 128-129

MacDougall, Elisabeth B. *Fountains, Statues, and Flowers. Studies in Italian Gardens of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington 1994.

Machaira, Vasiliki. *Les groupes statuaires d'Aphrodite et d'Éros*. Athens: Université nationale et capodistriaque, Faculté de Philosophie, 1993.

Machaira, Vasiliki. "Multifaceted Aphrodite: Cult and Iconography in Athens. Several Years After." In *Festschrift für Heide Froning. Studies in Honour of Heide Froning*, edited by Taner Korkut and Britta Özen-Kleine, 241-254. Istanbul: E Yayınları, 2018.

Mackenzie, Midge, ed. *Shoulder to Shoulder: A Documentary*. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.

Magister, Sara. "Censimento delle collezioni di antichità a Roma, 1471-1503." *Xenia antiqua* 8 (1999): 129-204.

Magister, Sara. "Censimento delle collezioni di antichità a Roma. 1471-1503. Addenda." *Xenia antiqua* 10 (2001) : 113-154.

Magritte, René. *Manifestes et autres écrits*. Bruxelles: Les Lèvres nues, 1972.

Mai, Ekkehard, ed. *Faszination Venus: Bilder einer Göttin von Cranach bis Cabanel*. Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 2000.

Mallen, Enrique. *Pablo Picasso: Aphrodite Period 1924-1936*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2020.

Mancilla, Cristian. *Artistic and Literary Representations of the Judgement of Paris in Antiquity*. PhD diss, Australian National University, 2015.
http://hdl.handle.net/1885/14130

Manetti, Antonio. *Vita di Filippo Brunelleschi*, edited by Carlachiara Perrone. Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1992.

Manfredi, Francesco Baronio. *De Maiestate Panormitana libri IV,* 1. Palermo : A. de Isola, 1630.

Manfredi, Francesco Baronio. *Antonii Vinitiani Siculi [...] Epigrammata quasi omnia, inscriptiones, fontiumquè descriptiones, et triumphales arcus*. Palermo: A. de Isola, 1646.

Mangia, Paola. *Canova: Artists and Collectors, a Passion for Antiquity*. Rome: De Luca, 2009.

Mango, Cyril. "Antique Statuary and Byzantine Beholder." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 55-73.

Marani, Enrico, and Wijnand F. R. M. Koch. *The Pelvis: Structure, Gender and Society*. Berlin: Springer, 2014.

Mariacher, Giovanni. "Scultura e decorazione plastica esterna della Loggia e dell'Odeo Cornaro." In *Alvise Cornaro e il suo tempo*, edited by Lionello Puppi, 80-85. Padova: Comune di Padova, 1980.

Marino, Giambattista. *L'Adone*. Turin: Compagnia della Concordia, 1623.

Markham Schulz, Anne. *The History of Venetian Renaissance Sculpture, ca. 1400-1530*. London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2017.

Martelli, Nicollò. *Primo libro di lettere*. Florence, 1546.

Martin, S. Rebecca. "Revisiting the Slipper Slapper and Other Sculpture Dedications in the Clubhouse of the Poseidoniasts of Beirut." *Journal of Greek Archaeology* 2 (2017): 253-282.

Martines, Lauro. *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Martinez, Jean-Luc, and Alain Pasquier, eds. *Praxitèle*. Paris : Musée du Louvre, 2007.

Martini, Arturo. *La scultura lingua morta e altri scritti*, edited by Mario De Micheli. Milan: Jaca Book, 1982.

Marvin, Miranda. *The Language of the Muses: The Dialogue Between Roman and Greek Sculpture*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008.

Massonnaud, Dominique. *Courbet scandale. Mythes de la rupture et Modernité*. Paris: Harmattan, 2003.

Matthews-Grieco, Sara F., ed. *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2010.

Mattingly, Harold, Carol Humphrey Vivian Sutherland, and Robert Andrew Glendinning Carson, eds. *The Roman imperial coinage, vol. 4: Pertinax - Uranius Antonius.* Spink, London 1986.

Mau, August. *Pompeii, its Life and Art*. New York, Macmillan 1902.

Maureen Burke, Suzanne. "The Martyrdom of the Franciscans by Ambrogio Lorenzetti." *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 65 (2002): 460-492.

Mazzochi, Jacopo, ed. *Epigrammata antiquae Urbis*. Rome: Jacopo Mazochi, 1521.

Mazzoni, Stefano, and Ovidio Guaita. *Il teatro di Sabbioneta.* Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1985.

McCorquodale, Amanda. "Jillian Mayer: Artist Chews Off Her Own Arms For Art." *Huffpost*, Nov 30, 2011. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/jillian-mayer-artist-chews-off-arms_n_1121366

McDonald, Helen. *Erotic Ambiguities. The Female Nude in Art*. London: Routledge, 2000.

McDonnell, Myles. "The Introduction of Athletic Nudity. Thukydides, Plato, and the Vases." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111 (1991): 182-193.

Melve, Leidulf. "The Revolt of the Medievalists: Directions in Recent Research on the Twelfth-century Renaissance." *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006), 231-252.

Mentzel, Jan-David. "Taufe im Sündenbad: Sebald Behams 'Jungbrunnen' von 1531." In *Konvention und Subversion in der Druckgrafik der Beham-Brüder*, edited by Jürgen Müller and Thomas Schauerte, 98-114. Emsdetten: Imorde, 2011.

Mérimée, Prosper. *Colomba. La Vénus d'Ille. Les âmes du purgatoire*. Paris: Magen et Comon, 1841.

Merriam, Carol U. *Love and Propaganda: Augustan Venus and the Latin Love Elegists*. Brussels: Éditions Latomus, 2006.

Michaelides, Demetrios. "A Decorated Mirror from Nea Paphos." In *Engendering Aphrodite*: *Women and Society in Ancient Cyprus*, edited by Diane Bolger and Nancy Serwint, 351-363. Boston MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2002.

Michon, Étienne. "La réplique de la Vénus d'Arles du Musée du Louvre. *Revue Archéologique*, 1 (1903): 39-43.

Mielke, Ursula, et al. *The New Hollstein: German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, 1400-1700, 2. Albrecht and Erhard Altdorfer*. Rotterdam: Sound & Vision Interactive, 1997.

Miglio, Massimo. "Roma dopo Avignone: La rinascità politica dell'antico." In *Memoria del antico nell'arte italiana, 1. L'uso dei classici*, edited by Salvatore Settis, 74-111. Turin: Einaudi, 1984.

Migne, Jacques-Paul, ed. *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca* 46. Paris: Garnier, 1866.

Mikocki, Tomasz. *Sub specie deae. Les impératrices et princesses romaines asimilées à des déesse. Étude iconologique*. Revue des Etudes anciennes Suppl. 14. Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1995.

Mirandola, Ottavio. *Illustrium poetarum flores*. Antwerp: Jan van der Loe, 1549.

Mirandola, Pico della, *De Venere et Cupidine expellendis*. Rome: Iacobus Mazochius, 1513.

Miroglio, Francesco. "Marcel Duchamp and Salvador Dalí: The Eroticism Between Sculptures and Ready-made." *Avant-garde Studies* 3, (Spring – Summer 2018): 1-22.

Mols, Stephanus. "From Phidias to Constantine: The Portrait Historié in Classical Antiquity." In *Example or Alter Ego? Aspects of the Portrait Historié in Western Aart from Antiquity to the Present*, edited by Volker Manuth et al., 19-65. Turnhout: Brepols, 2016.

Mols, Stephanus. "La cosiddetta Dea Barberini smascherata." In *Atti del X Congress Internazionale dell'AIPMA* (Association International pour la Peinture Murale Antique), Napoli 17–21 Settembre 2007, edited by Irene Bragantini, 347–353. Naples: Università degli Studi di Napoli, 2010.

Montel, Sophie. "The Architectural Setting of the Knidian Aphrodite." In *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, edited by Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup, 251-268. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Moorey, Peter Roger Stuart. *Idols of the People: Miniature Images of Clay in the Ancient Near East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Morales, Helen. "Fantasising Phryne: The Psychology and Ethics of Ekphrasis." *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 57 (2011): 71–104.

Moreno, Paolo, and Antonietta Viacava. *I marmi antichi della Galleria Borghese: La collezione archeologica di Camillo e Francesco Borghese*. Rome: De Luca, 2003.

Morét, Stefan. *Der italienische Figurenbrunnen des Cinquecento*. Oberhausen: Athena, 2003.

Moretti, Giuseppe. "Ostia." *Notizie degli scavi di antichità* 17 (1920) : 41-66.

Morineau, Camille. *Niki de Saint Phalle*. Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2014.

Mozzati, Tommaso. “Il tempio di Cnido. Il nudo e il suo linguaggio nell’età di Giambologna.” In *Giambologna. Gli dei, gli eroi,* edited by Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Dimitrios Zikos, 67-87. Florence: Giunti, 2006.

Mulryan, John. “Venus, Cupid and the Italian mythographers.” *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 23, (1974): 31-41.

Mylonopoulos, Joannis, ed. *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Nadar (G. F. Tournachon). *Nadar jury au Salon de 1853. Album comique de 60 à 80 dessins coloriés*. Paris: J. Bry aîné, 1853.

Nasrallah, Laura Salah. *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second–Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Nead, Lynda. *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Neer, Richard. *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Neppi, Lionello. *Palazzo Spada*. Rome: Editalia, 1975.

Néret, Gilles. *Salvador Dali, 1904-1989*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996.

Nesselrath, Arnold. “L’antico vissuto: La stufetta del cardinal Bibbiena.” In *Pietro Bembo e l’invenzione del Rinascimento*, edited by Guido Beltramini et al., 284-291. Venice: Marsilio, 2013.

Nesselrath, Arnold. “The Venus Belvedere: An Episode in Restoration.” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 205-214.

Neumann, Jaromír. *Obrazárna Pražského hradu*. Prague: Academia, 1966.

Neumer-Pfau, Wiltrud. *Studien zur Ikonographie und gesellschaftlichen Funktion hellenistischer Aphrodite-Statuen*. Bonn: R. Habelt, 1982.

Neumer–Pfau. “Die nackte Liebesgöttin: Aphroditestatuen als Verkörperung des Weiblichkeitsideals in der griechisch–hellenistischen Welt.” In *Approaches to Iconology*, edited by Werner Muensterberger, 205–234. Leiden: Brill, 1985–1986.

Neville, Kristoffer J. “Frederik II’s Gothic Neptune for Kronborg.” In *Sculpture and the Nordic Region*, edited by Sara Ayres and Elettra Carbone, 12-23. London: Routledge, 2017.

Ortolani, Giorgio. *Il padiglione di Afrodite Cnidia a Villa Adriana. Progetto e significato.* Rome: Librerie Dedalo, 1998.

Osborne, Robin. “Men Without Clothes: Heroic Nakedness and Greek Art. *Gender & History* 9, no. 3 (November 1997): 504–528.

Osborne, Robin. *The Transformation of Athens: Painted Pottery and the Creation of Classical Greece*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Pala, Elisabetta. “Aphrodite on the Akropolis: Evidence from Attic Pottery,” in *Brill’s Companion to Aphrodite*, edited by Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup, 195–216. Leiden: Brill 2010.

Paleotti, Gabriele. *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre et profane diuiso in cinque libri*. Alessandro Benacci, Bologna 1582.

Palgrave, Francis Turner. *A Handbook to the Fine Art Collections in the International Exhibition*. London: Macmillan, 1862.

Panofsky, Erwin. *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, translated by J. J. S. Peake. Second edition. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1960.

Papantoniou Giorgos. "Hellenising the Cypriot Goddess. Reading the Amathousian Terracotta Figurines." In *From Pella to Gandhara. Hybridisation and Identity in the Art and Architecture of the Hellenistic East*, edited by Anna Kouremenos et al., 35-48. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2011.

Pappot, Arie, and Lisa Wiersma. "Jacques Jonghelinck: Bronze Sculptor of the Low Countries in the Sixteenth Century." *Sculpture Journal* 26, no. 1 (2017): 69-82.

Parker, Robert. *On Greek Religion*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Parlasca, Klaus. "Aphrodite Kallipygos: Ihre kunstarchäologische Stellung und Aspekte ihrer Rezeption." In *Zentren und Wirkungsräume der Antikerezeption*, edited by Kathrin Schade et al., 223-236. Münster: Scriptorium, 2007.

Pastor, Ludwig von. *A History of the Popes, from the Close of the Middle Ages.* St. Louis MO: Herder, 1891-1929.

Paul, Stéphanie. *Cultes et sanctuaires de l'île de Cos*. Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2013.

Pavanello, Giuseppe, ed. *Canova e l'antico*. Milan: Electa, 2019.

Peacham, Henry. *The Compleat Gentleman*. London: Francis Constable, 1634.

Penni, Giovan Giacomo. *Croniche delle magnifiche et honorate Pompe fatte in Roma per la creatione et incoronatione di Papa Leone X.* Rome: Marcello Silber, 1513.

Pérez d'Ors, Pablo. "A Lutheran Idyll: Lucas Cranach the Elder's Cupid Complaining to Venus." *Renaissance Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007), 85-98.

Perlman, Julia Branna. "Looking at Venus and Ganymede Anew: Problems and Paradoxes in the Relations Among Neoplatonic Writing and Renaissance Art." In *Antiquity and its Interpreters*, edited by Alina Payne et al., 110–125. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000,

Peschel, Patricia. *Der Stuttgarter Hofbildhauer Johann Ludwig von Hofer*. Stuttgart: Hohenheim Verlag, 2009.

Picard, Pascale, ed. *Rodin: La lumière de l'antique*. Paris: Gallimard, 2013.

Pickup, Sadie. "Venus in the Mirror: Roman Matrons in the Guise of a Goddess, the Reception for the Aphrodite of Cnidus." *Visual Past* 2 (2015): 137-154.

Pickup, Sadie. "A Slip and a Slap: Aphrodite and her Footwear." In *Shoes, Slippers, and Sandals. Feet and Footwear in Classical Antiquity*, edited by Sadie Pickup and Sally Waite, 229-246. London: Routledge, 2018.

Pictorius, Georg. *Theologia mythologica*. Antwerp: Michel Hillenius, 1532.

Pierguidi, Stefano. "Baccio Bandinelli, Carlo V e una nuova ipotesi sulla Venere bronzea del Prado." *Boletín del Museo del Prado* 30 (2012): 34-49, 138-148.

Pirenne-Delforge, Vinciane. "Épithètes cultuelles et interprétation philosophique: À propos d'Aphrodite Ourania et Pandèmos à Athènes." *L'Antiquité Classique* 57 (1988): 142–157.

Pirenne-Delforge, Vinciane. *L'Aphrodite grecque: Contribution à l'étude de ses cultes et de sa personalité dans le panthéon archaïque et classique*. Kernos supplément, 4. Liège: Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique, 1994.

Pironti, Gabriella. "'Ce muthus n'est pas de moi, je le tiens de ma mère.' Cosmogonies grecques et savoir partagé." In *La mythologie de l'Antiquité à la Modernité. Appropriation – Adaptation – Détournement*, edited by Corinne Bonnet et al., 45-57. Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009.

Pironti, Gabriella. "Les dieux grecs entre polyvalence et spécificité. L'example d'Aphrodite." *Europe* 87, no. 964-965 (August-Septembre 2009): 289-304.

Pironti, Gabriella. "Du voile à la voile: réflexions sur l'Aphrodite en voyage et ses parures." In *De la théâtralité du corps aux corps des dieux dans l'Antiquité*, edited by Valérie Huet and Florence Gherchanoc, 91-106. Brest: Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, 2014.

Platt, Verity. "Evasive Epiphanies in Ekphrastic Epigram." *Ramus* 31 (2002), 33-50.

Platt, Verity. *Facing the Gods. Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Platt, Verity. "Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi." *Res. Anthropology and Aesthetics* 61-62 (2012): 213-227.

Podro, Michael. *The Critical Historians of Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

Poliziano, Angelo. *Stanze per la giostra di Giuliano de'Medici*. Florence: Bartolomeo de'Libri, 1494.

Pollet, Christophe. *Les Gravures d'Etienne Delaune, 1518-1583*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2001.

Pollini, John. "The Dart Aphrodite: A New Replica of the Arles Aphrodite Type the Cult Image of Venus Victrix in Pompey's Theater at Rome, and Venusian Ideology and Politics in the Late Republic-Early Principate." *Latomus* 55 no. 4 (Octobre – December 1996) : 757-785.

Pommier, Édouard. "Diabolisation, tolérance, glorification? La Renaissance et la sculpture antique." *Études littéraires* 32 (2000): 55–70.

Portús Pérez, Javier. "Displaying the Nude in Spain, 1550-1834: The Sala Reservada." In *Splendor, Myth, and Vision. Nudes from the Prado*, edited by Thomas J. Loughman et al., 50-66. Williamstown MA: Clark Art Institute, 2016,

Potts, Alex. *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Prater, Andreas. *Venus at her Mirror: Velázquez and the Art of Nude Painting.* Munich: Prestel, 2002.

Preger, Theodor, ed. *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanum,* I-II. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1901-1907.

Prettejohn, Elisabeth. *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture: Greek Sculpture and Modern Art from Winckelmann to Picasso*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2012.

Pullan, Wendy. "Regeneration and the Legacy of Venus: Towards an Interpretation of Memory at Early Christian Golgotha," in *Memory & Oblivion,* edited by Wessel Reinink and Jeroen Stumpel, 595-601. Dordrecht: Springer, 1999.

Quatremère de Quincy, Antoine Chrysostome. *Sur la statue antique de Vénus, découverte dans l'Ile de Milo en 1820*. Paris : Debure frères, 1821.

Quatremère de Quincy, Antoine Chrysostome. *Canova et ses ouvrages*. Paris: A. Le Clere et cie, 1834.

Ramage, Nancy, and Andrew Ramage. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Roman Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Rasmussen, Jörg. "Kleinplastik unter Dürers Namen: Das New Yorker Rückenakt-Relief." *Städel-Jahrbuch* 9 (1983), 131–144.

Redford, Bruce. *Dilettanti: The Antic and the Antique in Eighteenth-Century England*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008.

Reeves, Nicholas. "The Birth of Venus? " In *Joyful in Thebes: Egyptological Studies in Honor of Betsy M. Brian*, edited by Richard Jasnow and Kathlyn M. Cooney, 373-386. Atlanta GA: Lockwood Press, 2015.

Reinach, Salomon. *L'album de Pierre Jacques, sculpteur de Reims, dessiné à Rome de 1572 à 1577*, I-II. Paris: Leroux, 1902.

Reinach, Salomon. "Quatre statues figurées sur la colonne Trajane." *Revue archéologique* 5, (1905): 393-403.

Resco, Pablo Aparicio. "La statua di culto di Venus Genetrix nel Forum Iulium di Roma." *Bollettino della Società Friulana di Archeologia* 17, no. 1 (Feruary 2013): 1-17.

Richardson, George. *Ædes Pembrochianæ: A New Account and Description of […] Antiquities and Curiosities in Wilton-House*. Salisbury: Wilton &c., 1784.

Richter, Gisela M. A. *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans*. London: Phaidon Press, 1966.

Richter, Gisela M. A. *Engraved Gems of the Greeks and Etruscans*. London: Phaidon, 1968.

Richter, Mandy. *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus: Ihr Nachleben zwischen Aktualisierung und Neumodellierung von 1500 bis 1570*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2016.

Ridgway, Brunilde S. "The Aphrodite of Arles." *American Journal of Archaeology* 80, no. 2 (Spring 1976): 147-154.

Ridgway, Brunilde S. "Some Personal Thoughts on the Knidia." In *Macellum. Culinaria archaeologica. Robert Fleischer zum 60. Geburtstag von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern*, edited by Nicole Birkle et al., 249–257. Mainz: Nicole Birkle, 2001.

Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologia*, edited by Sonia Maffei. Turin: S. G. Einaudi, 2012.

Romeo Ilaria. "Sull'Afrodite nei giardini di Alcamene." *Xenia Antiqua* 2 (1993): 31-44.

Roscoe, Guglielmo. *Vita e pontifico di Leone X,* vol. V. Milan: Sonzogno, 1817.

Rosenzweig, Rachel. *Worshipping Aphrodite: Art and Cult in Classical Athens*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

Rossi, Toto Bergamo, and Daniele Ferrara. *Domus Grimani, 1594-2019: The Collection of Classical Sculptures*. Venice: Marsilio, 2019.

Rudigier, Alexander, and Blanca Truyols. *Giambologna: Court Sculptor to Ferdinando I*. London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2019.

Rudigier Alexander. "Les bronzes envoyés de Florence à Saint-Germain-en-Laye, la Vénus de 1597 et les dernières oeuvres de Jean Bologne." *Bulletin Monumental* 174 (2016): 287-356.

Ruskin, John. *The Eagle's Nest.* Chicago: Belford & Clarke, 1872.

Sacher-Masoch, Leopold von. *Das Vermächtniß Kains. Erster Theil. Die Liebe. Zweiter Band.* Stuttgart: Cotta, 1870.

Şahin, Mustafa. "Terrakotten aus Knidos: Erste Ergebnisse. Die Kulte auf den Rundtempelterrasse." *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 55 (2005): 65–93.

Salmon, Dimitri. *La Vénus de Milo: Un mythe*. Paris: Gallimard, 2000.

Salvadori, Monica, and Monica Baggio. "Lo svelamento di Marte e Venere, tra repertorio iconograffico e narrazione ovidiana." *Eidola. International Journal of Classical Art History* 8 (2011), 79-96.

Sammern, Romana, and Julia Saviello, eds. *Schönheit – der Körper als Kunstprodukt. Kommentierte Quellentexte von Cicero bis Goya*. Berlin: Reimer, 2019.

Sanchez, Pierre, and Xavier Seydoux, eds. *Les catalogues des salons,* 1. Paris: Echelle de Jacob, 1999.

Sande, Siri. "The Ludovisi Throne, the Boston Throne and the Warren Cup: Retrospective Works or Forgeries?" *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 29, no. 15 N.S. (2017): 23-51.

Saradi-Mendelovici, Helen. "The Antiquities in Constructing Byzantine Identity: Literary Tradition versus Aesthetic Appreciation." *Hortus Artium Medievalium, International Research Center for Late Antiquity and Middle Ages* (Zagreb) 16 (2011): 209-227.

Saunier, Charles. *The Salons of 1908*. Paris: Goupil & Cie, 1908.

Savatier, Thierry. *Origine du monde: Histoire d'un tableau de Gustave Courbet*. Paris: Bartillat, 2006.

Saxl, Fritz. "Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Ziel." *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* (1921-1922): 1-10.

Scarfe, Norman, ed. *Innocent Espionage: The La Rochefoucauld Brothers' Tour of England in 1785*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995.

Schaus, Gerald P. "The Beginning of Greek Polychrome Painting." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 108 (1988), 107-117

Schmidt, Evamaria. "Venus." *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Artemis, Zürich/Munich 1981–99), vol. 8 (1997): 192–230.

Schmitt, Angerit. "Römische Antikensammlungen im Spiegel eines Musterbuches der Renaissance." *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 21 (1970): 99-128.

Schmitt, Cathrin. *Aphrodite in Unteritalien und auf Sizilien: Untersuchungen zu ihren Kulten und Heiligtümern.* Heidelberg: Verlag Archäologie und Geschichte, 2016.

Schmitt, Cathrin: "Die Göttin auf dem Berg Eryx. Astarte – Aphrodite – Venus." In *Phönizische, griechische und römische Gottheiten im historischen Wandel*, edited by Linda-Marie Günther and Bärbel Morstadt, 109-136. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015.

Schnell, Werner. *Der Torso als Problem der modernen Kunst.* Berlin: Mann, 1980.

Schoch, Karen. *Die doppelte Aphrodite – alt und neu bei griechischen Kultbildern.* Göttingen: Universitätverlag, 2009.

Scholten, Frits, and Emile van Binnebeke. *Willem van Tetrode (c. 1525-1580). Guglielmo Fiammingo scultore.* Zwolle: Waanders, 2003.

Scholten, Frits. *Willem van Tetrode, Sculptor*. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2003.

Schreiber, Earl G. "Venus in the Medieval Mythographic Tradition." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 74 (1975), 519-535.

Schreurs, Anna. *Antikenbild und Kunstanschauungen des Pirro Ligorio (1513-1583). Atlas,* 3. Cologne: König, 2000.

Schultze, Jürgen, ed. *Prag um 1600 - Kunst und Kultur am Hofe Rudolfs II.* Freren: Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen, 1988.

Schwarz, Arturo. *Man Ray, 60 anni di libertà. Man Ray, 60 ans de libertés. Man Ray, 60 Years of Liberties*. Paris: E. Losfeld, 1971.

Schwinn, Christa. *Die Bedeutung des Torso vom Belvedere für Theorie und Praxis der bildenden Kunst vom 16. Jahrhundert bis Winckelmann*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1973.

Scribner III, Charles. "Daniel Hopfer's Venus and Amor. Some Iconographic Observations." *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 35 (1976), 14-21.

Seaman, Kristen Elisabeth. *An Aphrodite of Knidos and Its Copies*. Berkeley: University of California, 2009.

Seaman, Kristen Elisabeth. "Retrieving the Original Aphrodite of Knidos." *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Rendiconti Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche Ser.* 9, 15 (2004), 531–594.

Seifert, Martina, ed. *Aphrodite: Herrin des Krieges, Go̍ttin der Liebe*. Mainz: von Zabern, 2009.

Seiler, Peter. "Schönheit und Scham, sinnliches Temperament und moralische Temperantia: Überlegungen zu einigen Antikenadaptionen in der spätmittelalterlichen Bildhauerei Italiens." *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 70, no. 4 (2007): 473-512.

Settis, Salvatore. "Rinascimento e dacedenza, una simmetria necessaria." *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 56 (2014): 139-151.

Settis, Salvatore. *ΧΕΛΩΝΗ: Saggio sull'Afrodite Urania di Fidia*. Studi di lettere, storia e filosofia, 30. Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, 1966.

Ševčenko, Nancy P. *The Life of St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art*. Bari: Centro Studi Bizantini, 1983.

Sframeli, Maria. *The Myth of Venus*. Milan: Arthemisia, 2003.

Shaw, Jennifer L. "The Figure of Venus: Rhetoric of the Ideal from Cabanel to Claude Cahun." In *Venus as Muse. From Lucretius to Michel Serres*, edited by Hanjo Berressem et al., 57-72. Leiden, Brill, 2015.

Sicca, Cinzia Maria. "Lord Burlington at Chiswick: Architecture and Landscape." *Garden History* 10, no. 1 (Spring, 1982): 36-69.

Simeoni, Gabriele. *Illustratione de gli epitaffi et medaglie antiche*. Lyon: J. de Tournes, 1558.

Simon, Erika. *Die Götter der Römer.* Munich: Hirmer, 1990.

Simon, Erika. "Venus als Grossmutter." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts. Römische Abteilung* 105 (1998): 305-314.

Sluijter, Eric Jan. "The Nude, the Artist and the Model: The Case of Rembrandt." In *The Nude and the Norm in the Early Modern Low Countries*, edited by Karolien De Clippel et al., 1-34. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011.

Smith, Amy C., and Sadie Pickup, eds. *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Smith, Alison. *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.

Smith, Derek R. "New Evidence for the Identification of Aphrodite on Staters of Corinth." *The Numismatic Chronicle* 165 (2005): 41-43

Smith, Jeffrey Chipps. *German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance, c. 1520–1580: Art in an Age of Uncertainty*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Smith, Roland R. R., and Bryan Ward-Perkins, eds. *The Last Statues of Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Smith, Roland R. R. *Hellenistic Sculpture.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

Smolett, Tobias. *Travels Through France and Italy,* 2. Dublin: Robert Johnston, 1766.
Sokolowski, Franciszek. *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*. Paris: De Boccard, 1969.
Soldini, Francesco Maria. *Il reale giardino di Boboli nella sua pianta e nelle sue statue*. Firenze, 1789.
Speidel, Michael. "Venus Victrix – Roman and Oriental." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2, 17, 4 (1984): 2225-2238.
Spivey, Nigel. *Understanding Greek sculpture: Ancient Meanings, Modern Readings*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1996.
Squire, M. J., et al., eds.*The Classical Now*. Elephant Publishing, London 2018.
Squire, Michael. "Reception: The Legacy of Greek Sculpture." In *Handbook of Greek Sculpture*, edited by Olga Palagia, 725–767. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.
Staples, Ariadne. *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins: Sex and Category in Roman Religion.* London: Routledge, 1998.
Steineberg, Leo. *The Metaphors of Love and Birth in Michelangelo's Pietàs*. New York: Basic Books, 1970.
Steiner, Deborah. *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
Steinhart, Matthias. "Zwei 'Becher des Nestor' und der Zauber der Aphrodite." *Würzburger Jahrbücher* 36 (2012): 7-38.
Stewart, Andrew. *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
Stewart, Andrew. *Art, Desire and the Body in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
Stewart, Andrew. "The Persian and Carthaginian Invasions of 480 B.C.E. and the Beginning of the Classical Style." *American Journal of Archaeology* 112, no. 3-4 (July – October, 2008): 377–412, 581-615.
Stewart, Andrew. *Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
Stewart, Andrew. "A Tale of Seven Nudes: The Capitoline and Medici Aphrodites, Four Nymphs at Elean Herakleia, and an Aphrodite at Megalopolis." *Antichthon* 44 (2010): 12-32.
Stewart, Andrew. "Hellenistic Freestanding Sculpture from the Athenian Agora, 1. Aphrodite." *Hesperia* 81 (2012): 267–342.
Stewart, Andrew. *Art in the Hellenistic World: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
Stewart, Andrew. "Two Notes on Greeks Bearing Arms. The Hoplites of the Chigi Jug and Gelon's Armed Aphrodite." In *Medien der Geschichte. Antikes Griechenland und Rom*, edited by Ortwin et al., 227-243. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
Stewart, Peter. *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
Stirling, Lea M. "Collections, Canons, and Context in Late Antiquity: The Afterlife of Greek Masterpieces in Late Antiquity." In *Using Images in Late Antiquity*, edited by Stine Brink et al., 96-114. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014.
Stirling, Lea M. *The Learned Collector: Mythological Statuettes and Classical Taste in Late Antique Gaul*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

Stirling, Lea M. "Patrons, Viewers, and Statues in Late Antique Baths." In *Patrons and Viewers in Late Antiquity*, edited by Stine Birk and Birte Poulsen, 67-81. Aarhus: University Press, 2012.

Stonard, John-Paul. "Kenneth Clark's 'The Nude. A Study of Ideal Art, 1956,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 152, no. 1286 (May 2010): 317-321.

Strong, Roy. *The Artist & the Garden*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

Strozzi, Beatrice Paolozzi, and Dimitrios Zikos, eds. *Giambologna: Gli dei, gli eroi*. Florence: Giunti, 2006.

Sturm, Robert. *Kauernde Aphrodite: Die Bedeutung des Bildmotivs in der antiken und postantiken Kunst*. Hamburg: Dr. Josef Kovac, 2015.

Sugimoto, David T., ed. *Transformation of a Goddess: Ishtar, Astarte, Aphrodite*. Fribourg: Academic Press, 2014.

Sutton, Robert F. "The Invention of the Female Nude: Zeuxis, Vase-Painting, and the Kneeling Bather." In *Athenian Potters and Painters,* II, edited by John H. Oakley and Olga Palagia, 270-279. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009.

Sylvester, David. *Magritte*, mit einer Einführung von Michel Draguet. Cologne: Parkland Verlag, 2009.

Symes, Michael. "Flintwork, Freedom and Fantasy: The Landscape at West Wycombe Park." *Buckinghamshire Garden History* 33 (2005): 1-30.

Tchikine, Anatole. *Francesco Camiliani and the Florentine Garden of Don Luigi de Toledo: A Study of Fountain Production and Consumption in the Third Quarter of the 16th Century, 1-2*. PhD diss., Trinity College, Dublin 2002.

Tchikine, Anatole. "The 'Candelabrum' Fountain Reconsidered." *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 29 (2009): 257-269.

Templin, Christina. *Medialer Schmutz: Eine Skandalgeschichte des Nackten und Sexuellen im Deutschen Kaiserreich, 1890-1914*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016.

Terrier Aliferis, Laurence. *L'imitation de l'antiquité dans l'art médiéval (1180-1230)*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2016.

Tervarent, Guy de. *Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane: Dictionnaire d'un langage perdu, 1450-1600*. Geneva: Droz, 1997.

Thauvette, Chantelle. "Defining Early Modern Pornography: The Case of Venus and Adonis." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 12 (2012): 26-48.

Thomas, Ben. "The Academy of Baccio Bandinelli." *Print Quarterly* Vol. 22, No. 1, (March 2005): 3-14.

Thomas, Edmund. "The Cult Statues of the Pantheon." *Journal of Roman Studies* 107 (2017): 146–212.

Thomassin, Philippe. *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae liber primus*. Rome, 1610.

Thorel-Cailleteau, Sylvie. "Aphrodite wagnérienne ou la leçon de classicisme." *Revue de littérature comparée* 309 (2004): 37-54.

Tollebeek, Jo. "'Renaissance' and 'fossilization:' Michelet, Burckhardt, and Huizinga," *Renaissance Studies* 15 (2001): 354-366.

Traversali, Gustavo: *La statuaria ellenistica del Museo Archeologico di Venezia*. Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1986.

Turner, James Grantham. *Eros Visible: Art, Sexuality, and Antiquity in Renaissance Italy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

Türr, Karina. *Farbe und Naturalismus in der Skulptur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts: Sculpturae vitam insufflat pictura*. Mainz: von Zabern, 1994.

Vasari, Giorgio. *Le vite de'più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed archittettori, Firenze 1568*, edited by Gaetano Milanesi, 1-9. Florence: Sansoni, 1878-1885.

Vellekoop, Marije, et al. *Vincent Van Gogh Drawings, 3. Antwerp and Paris, 1885-1888*. London: Lund Humphries, 2001.

Velten, Robert. *Keusche Madonna – verführerische Venus: Die Frauen in Eichendorffs Marmorbild*. Münster: Universität Münster, 2012.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre. *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Vout, Caroline. *Classical Art: A Life History from Antiquity to the Present*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Wajeman, Lise. "Fictions comiques ou théories sérieuses? Les réincarnations de l'Aphrodite de Cnide au XVIe siècle dans quelques récits et traités." In *Le mythe de l'art antique*, edited by Emmanuelle Hénin and Valérie Naas, 365-376. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018.

Waldman, Louis A. *Baccio Bandinelli and Art at the Medici Court: A Corpus of Early Modern Sources.* Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2004.

Walker, Susan. "Cleopatra in Pompeii?" *Papers of the British School at Rome* 76 (2008): 35-46.

Wallenstein, Jenny. "Interactive Aphrodite: Greek Responses to the Idea of Aphrodite as Ancestress of the Romans." In *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, edited by Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup, 269-284. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Waller, Susan. *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris, 1830-1870*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Walpole, Horace. *Memoirs of the Reign of King George,* 3,1, edited by Derek Jarrett. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

Walters, Margaret. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Warburg, Aby. *Sandro Botticellis Geburt der Venus und Frühling*. Hamburg: L. Voss, 1893.

Wardle, Marianne Eileen. *Naked and Unashamed: A Study of the Aphrodite Anadyomene in the Graeco-Roman World*. PhD diss. Durham NC: Duke University, 2010.

Warren, Jeremy. *Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture in the Ashmolean Museum,* 1. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum Publications, 2014.

Warren, Richard. *Sex, Symbolists and the Greek Body*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.

Weber, Ingrid S. "Venus Kallipygos, der Weibliche Rückenacht nach Dürer." *Städel-Jahrbuch* 9 (1983): 145–150.

Weber, Martha. "Die Kultbilder der Aphrodite Urania der zweiten Hälfte des 5. Jhs. v. Chr. in Athen: Attika und das Bürgerrechtsgesetz von 451/0 v. Chr." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung* 121 (2006): 165–223.

Wedepohl, Claudia. "Why Botticelli? Aby Warburg's Search for a New Approach to Quattrocento Italian Art." In *Botticelli Past and Present*, edited by Ana Debenedetti and Caroline Elam, 183-202. London: UCL Press, 2019.

Weinrauch, Hans R. *Europäische Bronzestatuetten 15.-18. Jahrhundert*. Braunschweig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1967.

Welz, Karl. "Die Tauben der Aphrodite." *Gazette numismatique suisse* 9, no. 34 (July1959) : 33-37.

West, Jeffrey. "A Taste for the Antique? Henry of Blois and the Arts." In *Anglo-Norman Studies XXX: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2007*, edited by Chris P. Lewis, 213-230. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008,

Wiegartz, Veronika. *Antike Bildwerke im Urteil mittelalterlichen Zeitgenossen*. Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2004.

Wilkes, John. *A Select Collection of the Most Interesting Letters on the Government, Liberty, and Constitution of England, 2*. London: J. Almon, 1763.

Wilkes, John. "Curious Description of West Wycombe Church etc." In *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit. Being a Collection of Several Curious Pieces, in Verse and Prose*, edited by Earl of Chesterfield et al., 42-46. London, 1768,

Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und der Bildhauerkunst*. Dresden: Walther, 1756.

Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums,* edited by Adolf H. Borbein et al. Mainz: Von Zabern, 2002.

Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *Kleine Schriften*, edited by Walter Rehm. Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1968.

Wrede, Henning. *Der Antikengarten der del Bufalo bei der Fontana Trevi*. Trierer Winckelmannsprogramme, 4. Mainz: von Zabern, 1982.

Zanker, Paul. *Eine Kunst für die Sinne: Zur Bilderwelt des Dionysos und Aphrodite*. Berlin: Wagenbach, 1998.

Zanker, Paul. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988.

Zimmer, Kathrin Barbara. *Im Zeichen der Schönheit: Form, Funktion und Stellenwert klassischer Skulpturen im Hellenismus am Beispiel der Göttin Aphrodite*. Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2014.

Zipolo, Lilian. "Botticelli's Primavera. A lesson for the Bride." *Woman's Art Journal* 12, no. 2 (Autumn, 1991 - Winter, 1992): 24-28.

The goal of this book has been to explore the statues of Venus. Over the centuries, they have come closer to or farther away from what real women look like. From antiquity until the 21st century, sculptors have oscillated between the ideal (and therefore insipid) beauty characterizing the goddess and the seductive shapes of the body of a living woman, which for various reasons could never fully prevail. In antiquity, this was prevented by the fact that the statue depicted a goddess; in post-ancient Europe, it was primarily due to the taboo of depicting female nudity. Venus could have been depicted as a naked woman with all the racy details, but the viewer would hardly take such a depiction seriously. The artist could have eliminated attractive references to the female body from her portrayal, but how would the viewer be expected to believe that she represents Venus, the mother of Amor?