

## REMAINS AS GUARANTORS FOR AUTHENTICITY? »RAPHAEL ANCAIANI« AND »BRACHIOSAURUS BRANCAI« AS STAR OBJECTS OF BERLIN'S MUSEUMS BETWEEN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES

In this article<sup>1</sup>, we discuss two rather different objects that are both particularly suited to posing the question of »authenticity«. The first is the *Adoration of the Magi* by Giovanni di Pietro, an Italian painting on canvas from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 1). The second is the reconstructed skeleton of *Brachiosaurus brancai* a dinosaur which lived about 150 million years ago in today's Tanzania (see further down fig. 5). What do this dinosaur skeleton and the Renaissance painting have in common? They are both objects from museums in Berlin, and they both physically and theoretically represent remains portraying an (imaginary) past. The two aspects of this (imaginary) past's »authentic« character are linked to the materiality of the objects on the one hand, and their attributed significance on the other. Reconstructing the material and cultural history of both objects allows an insight into the historicity of what was and is labelled as authentic and how this notion has been negotiated at different points in history. To compare the objects, we focus firstly on their preparation and restoration, secondly on their presentation in the museum context, and thirdly on their reception and the fame they enjoyed. In this way, we explore how authenticity was assigned to museum objects – and how the strategies of authentication and the very concept of authenticity changed over time.



**Fig. 1** Giovanni di Pietro (lo Spagna), *Adoration of the Magi* (1508/1509). – Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz. – (© Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Foto Jörg P. Anders).



**Fig. 2** Ferentillo (province of Terni/Italy), Monastery church of San Pietro in Valle. – (After Saponi 2004, 81).

### »RAPHAEL ANCAIANI«: AN IMAGINARY MASTERPIECE?

»I dedicated hours this morning – I know not how many, to a painting that has given me more delight than any I ever saw. [...] Apart, locked up in a room with some of the gold-grounded deformed productions of the Byzantine artists, stands, except one, the largest painting of Raphael's in the world; the subject is the Adoration of the Magi.« Thus wrote American writer Mary Shelley (1797-1851) about her gallery visit in 1842<sup>2</sup>. She was only one of many admirers of a painting that had been a star object of the Berlin Gemäldegalerie until the 1870s.

At the time of its acquisition for the Royal Museum in 1833, the painting was known as »pala Ancaiani« or »Raphael Ancaiani«. However, it is actually a work by Giovanni di Pietro, a painter active in Umbria, Italy in the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and of Spanish origin – therefore known as *Lo Spagna*<sup>3</sup>. The altarpiece was commissioned in 1508 by the abbot Eusebio Ancaiani for the Benedictine church of San Pietro in Valle near Spoleto (fig. 2)<sup>4</sup>. In 1733, the painting was substituted by a copy by Sebastiano Conca, a highly appreciated artist of his time<sup>5</sup>. The original was then restored and kept in the Ancaianis' house chapel in Spoleto. After having been brought to Rome in 1825 for another restoration and for sale, the painting crossed the Alps towards Berlin, 100 years after its removal from the abbey for which it had been painted.

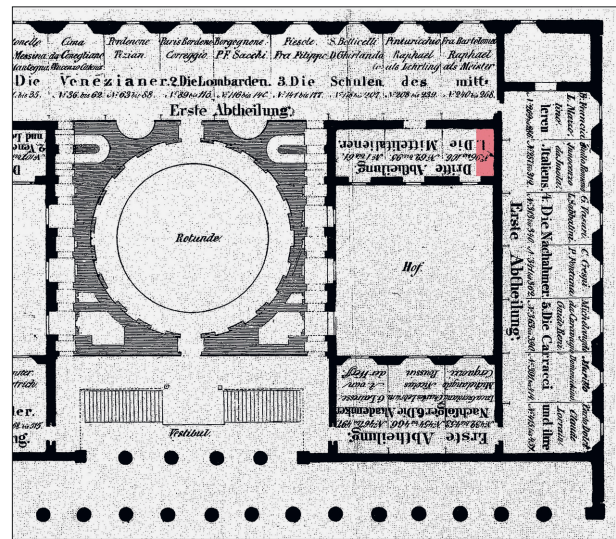
The public in Germany was aware of the history of the painting<sup>6</sup>. Information about its provenance was reported both in the press and in the museum catalogue<sup>7</sup>. Particular attention was paid to the various restorations in these publications, which made the claim that although the painting had been highly damaged by time and restored several times, it had not lost its original character<sup>8</sup>. To quote Mary Shelley again: »It is half destroyed – the outline of some of the figures only remains; no sacrilegious hand has ever touched to restore it, and in its ruin it is divine«<sup>9</sup>. We are perplexed: A divine painting, not *despite* but somehow *because* of its ruinous state?

In fact, the paint had in part »almost completely dropped off«<sup>10</sup>, as a German critic wrote about the new acquisition. But as many writers pointed out, these damages reveal the artist's process in creating the work<sup>11</sup>. However, this was only one aspect of what Mary Shelley had in mind. As the quoted critic puts it, in the remaining parts – the faces of Mary and the angels in particular – »the noble spirit of the whole work spreads victoriously throughout the outward deterioration«, and »with longer observation, the whole picture turns decidedly to presence and life«<sup>12</sup>. The picture's quality was not diminished but only dimmed by its





**Fig. 3** Eduard Eichens after Giovanni di Pietro, *Adoration of the Magi* (1835/1836), Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz. – (Photo Markus Hilbich).



**Fig. 4** Situation of the painting in the Gemäldegalerie of the Königliches Museum in Berlin. – (After Waagen 1841, unpaginated insert).

damage – as though it were whispering with »amiable sweetness« – and it would be the »divine patience« of the beholder’s eyes, not his »active imagination«, that would recreate the lost image<sup>13</sup>. This imaginary recreation, which has to be undertaken by the spectator, explains why Mary Shelley spent hours in front of the painting. Being fragmentary, the object forces the observer’s eye to complete it, and this act turns the remains of canvas and colour into a perfect painting. The art historian Franz Kugler (1808-1858) expresses a combination of romanticism and historicism in this regard: »with a deeply melancholic sentiment, only with longer observation, the art lover recognises how those figures, those sweet, soulful heads turn out of the haze that covers the ensemble«<sup>14</sup>.

### **Authenticity in imagination, conservation, and reconstruction**

Not every visitor had enough fantasy or patience to perform an imaginary reconstruction, however. For this purpose, the museum officials provided »visual aids«. Because the picture’s authenticity and its value were connected to its presumed lack of restoration, retouching was not an option for the museum. Instead, the gallery restorer, Jakob Schlesinger, painted a copy of the whole painting. By 1841 it was completed and placed near to the original – »to supply a visualisation of its former constitution«<sup>15</sup>. No more details are known about this copy, which seems to have disappeared only a few years later<sup>16</sup>. In January 1835, the copper engraver Eduard Eichens presented his preparatory drawing modelled on the »pala Ancaiani«, as reported in a newspaper from Nuremberg<sup>17</sup>. The newspaper critic states that E. Eichens succeeded in recreating the work in his drawing – the artist embodied Raphael’s spirit, as the writer puts it<sup>18</sup>. F. Kugler approvingly argued that E. Eichens tenderly cleared the »haze« with his engraving, having set the confused into harmony, and reconstructed the lost with the the spirit of the original<sup>19</sup>. The engraving (fig. 3) was exhibited for the first time in 1836 and remained for several years the only reproduction of a work in the

Königliches Museum in Berlin<sup>20</sup>. The permanent recreation of the painting was an integral part of its reception – in the eye and imagination of the visitor, simultaneously looking at the destroyed original and at the reproductions. Moreover, this recreated imaginary object »Raphael Ancaiani« could only exist together with the relic of the existing painting. This was a challenge for those who were sensitive and patient enough to see beyond the damage<sup>21</sup>. Even 20 years later, in 1857, a popular magazine gave its readers an insider's tip to visit »the small adjoining room [...] which will be opened on demand at any time to reveal a ruin of Raphael's paintbrush to the eyes« (fig. 4)<sup>22</sup>. A guidebook claims that »a silent devotion goes through the work«, pointing out that Mary and the angels already displayed »the specific Raphaelic grace«<sup>23</sup>. The painting was considered »one of the divine youth's [Raphael's] older pictures«<sup>24</sup>. The mystification of Raphael was probably the most powerful argument for the acquisition in 1833. Being an authentic relic of the young Raphael's paintbrush overruled – and even qualified – the ruinous state of the painting, which explains the enormous sums of money that went into paying for it<sup>25</sup>. Its likely presentation behind a glass pane – which would have had to be ordered from France due to its dimensions – turned the painting into a quasi-religious object in a reliquary. However, its value was not primarily devotional. The attribution to Spagna, presumed by several Italian specialists, had already been mentioned in the reviews of the Berlin acquisition and not even vigorously rejected: »I think«, claimed a critic in Schorn's *Kunstblatt*, »if it even were [made] by Spagna, it [the painting] would not any less represent a certain level of art that must have been passed in Raphael's education, too, and that must have expressed itself in his works in just the same way«<sup>26</sup>. This affirmation reveals a more abstract discourse on the renaissance of art in the 15<sup>th</sup> century which emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Raphael was then declared the artist who had reached absolute perfection<sup>27</sup>. The Ancaiani painting thus represented a crucial point of artistic development, if not to say evolution, and this was seen as its scientific value, as stressed by scholars like Carl Friedrich von Rumohr<sup>28</sup> and gallery directors like Gustav Friedrich Waagen<sup>29</sup> and, even decades later, the Louvre curator François-Anatole Gruyer<sup>30</sup>. As we have seen, authenticity is determined not only by the material substance and its exhibition, but also in the visitor's imaginary projected on to the object's performance. As Mary Shelley expressed it: »words can never show forth the beauty of which painting presents the living image to the eyes«<sup>31</sup>. And even after 1860, an English-speaking visitor noted briefly in his copy of the gallery catalogue: »not Raphaels [*sic*], [b] ut beautiful«<sup>32</sup>.



**Fig. 5** Single bones of *Brachiosaurus brancai* prepared and displayed in the main hall at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin around 1912, next to one of the museum preparators. – (© Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, Historische Bild- und Schriftgutsammlungen, Pal. Mus. B III 48, © BArch, Bild 102-15550, photo Georg Pahl).

## **BRACHIOSAURUS BRANCAI: STRATEGIES OF AUTHENTICATION**

For the second example of this paper, we shift focus away from museum objects in an art historical context and towards those in natural history one, namely fossil remains. Although their museum settings are different, the two provide an interesting comparison in terms of both the role of ruinous remains, and the role of reconstruction.

In 1906, several massive bones were discovered close to Tendaguru's Hill, in the backcountry of what was then German East Africa, today's Tanzania. Hearing the news, palaeontologist Wilhelm von





**Fig. 6** *Brachiosaurus brancai* at the center in the main hall at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin. – (© Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, photo Antje Dittmann/MfN).

Branca, director of the Geologisch-Paläontologisches Institut und Museum at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, set up a public funding campaign to finance further excavations in the area. Taking advantage of the German colonial enterprise, the museum unearthed and transported over 225 tons of fossils to Berlin between 1909 and 1913. Among this material was what eventually became the biggest mounted dinosaur in the world, and a star object of the museum: the skeletal reconstruction of *Brachiosaurus brancai*, which still stands today in the main hall of the museum (figs 5-6)<sup>33</sup>.

### **Exhibiting single bones: material remains as guarantors for authenticity**

While the Tendaguru expedition was still underway, the first prepared bones were already presented to the public in 1911 in the main hall of the museum (fig. 5). The presence of such monumental original dinosaurian fossils was a sensation for the museum. A particularly high degree of authenticity is ascribed to original fossils because they are very old, natural things. Since fossils are both bones and stones, they represent a combination of two materials that emphasised the authenticity of natural objects by associating them with the notion of the »original« and the »primordial«. Indeed, their materiality served to raise the scientific authority and the public popularity of the institution, particularly since up until that point, in terms of gigantic dinosaurs, the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin possessed only a plaster cast, a *Diplocodus carnegii*,

donated to the museum in 1908 by the American millionaire Andrew Carnegie<sup>34</sup>. Germany did not possess fossil findings of such size. Thus, the finds of Tendaguru, excavated in a colonial setting, offered a new opportunity to collect masses of original fossils found on what was called »German« ground in East Africa in order to display them in the imperial capital. At stake here was the standing of the museum as well as of German palaeontology in international competition, especially with US museums<sup>35</sup>. The original and huge fossil finds of *Brachiosaurus brancai* in the German colony were repeatedly compared with the American plaster cast of *Diplodocus carnegii*<sup>36</sup> in order to highlight the former's superiority in terms of size and authenticity and thus in value, thereby outplaying American finds. The original fossils from Tendaguru promised to bestow on the Berlin museum a locational advantage, since it »would now attract the attention of palaeontologists from all over the world« and thus »become an equal to the great American museums«<sup>37</sup>. The way the first prepared bones were displayed hints at the way in which they were marked as spectacular originals and the way in which this staged authenticity was meant to prove and highlight the expeditions' outstanding success. The age and originality of the displayed Tendaguru bones was visible in their physical state and material substance: a porous, crackled surface hinting at the processes of fossilisation, especially compared to the smooth surface of plaster casts. These traces of age authenticated the fossils as material evidence of a past time, drawing systematic attention to the unmediated material connection that tied individual pieces of fossilised bones to a distant past<sup>38</sup>. In this materialistic understanding, authenticity appears as a dimension of »nature« with objective and immutable characteristics inherent in the material substance of objects. Drawing on these material qualities, the fossils functioned as markers of geological deep time, relating them to the history of the earth.

Additionally, Wilhelm von Branca added another layer to the materiality of the fossils, namely a narrative, when he spoke at a public fundraising dinner in 1911, at which the bones were first presented. In his talk, he said: »From these fossilised remains, rising like monoliths, millions of years look down on us. [...] Now they stand in front of us, the remains of giants. But in our mind's eye, the picture of the long-gone world rises«<sup>39</sup>. The material aesthetics of fragments are thus complemented by a rhetoric that brings the long-extinct animals and their world back to life in the viewer's eye. Drawing on their characteristic not only as stones, but also as bones, the fossils were thus marked as remains of extinct animals, relating them to the history of life on earth. This act of rhetorical resurrection of the fossil remains aimed at virtually assembling what was still fragmentary material. Adding to the display of original, but fragmentary, fossil material, a lifelike image was an effective and typical way of alimending the imagination – not least that of financial supporters of the expedition.

### **The mounted skeleton of *Brachiosaurus brancai* – a lifelike image as guarantor of authenticity**

While the display of authenticity was first achieved through the materiality and the size of single bones, another guarantor of authenticity was added when the complete skeletal reconstruction of *Brachiosaurus brancai* was presented to the public in the main hall of the museum in 1937 (fig. 7).

The display of individual bones required rhetoric and imagination to virtually assemble and reanimate the fragmentary material, but a lifelike image of the dinosaur materialised when individual bones were assembled into a complete reconstruction of the skeleton of *Brachiosaurus brancai*. Although the originality of the bones was still an important factor, and one which was constantly emphasised, an effect of authenticity now mainly relied on a lifelike image of the dinosaur<sup>40</sup>. This was achieved by literally making sense of





**Fig. 7** The completed mount of *Brachiosaurus brancai* in the main hall at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin in 1937. – (© Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, Historische Bild- und Schriftgutsammlungen, Pal. Mus. B III 150).

formerly unsorted fragments, giving them coherence and the posture and dynamism of a living animal. This way of »animalising« the bones linked the past and present.

Thus, there is a difference in the strategies of authentication depending on the object of display (in this case: single bones or fully mounted skeletons). Firstly, the material originality of single fossil bones, providing reliable access to deep time, served as a guarantor for their authenticity, complemented by a narrative of reanimation<sup>41</sup>. Later, the museum was able to add to the rhetoric a reanimation by the physical presentation of a lifelike, consistent image of an animal. The reconstruction of the whole skeleton in a lively pose was supposed to provide an image of prehistoric life, which in turn informed an experience of authenticity. The notion of the authentic was now mainly bound to an authentic reconstruction of prehistoric life, an authentic image in the eye of the visitor. In fact, authenticity now consisted *only* as an image, since the bones displayed did not belong to a single specimen but had been assembled from findings belonging to several dinosaurs of the same species, some even differing to some extent in size. Thus, there is no authenticity of *Brachiosaurus* in terms of being a »single« object.

## De- and reconstructing a dinosaur skeleton (2005-2007)

Compared to the mounts of non-extinct animals, what was so special about mounted dinosaur skeletons was the fact that they were not only spectacular exhibits, but also speculative ones: Their reconstruction rested on a fragmentary material and scientific conjecture<sup>42</sup>. Thus, every mount was an interpretation. The posture especially had the potential to produce conflicts, since it was a result of contested morpho-anatomical theories on what dinosaurs looked like and how they moved<sup>43</sup>.

Additionally, over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, palaeontological knowledge about the posture of the *Brachiosaurus* skeleton changed, marking the posture as outdated. In consequence, on the occasion of a renovation of the main hall of the museum from 2005 to 2007, during which all the dinosaurs had to be removed, the mounted skeleton was completely de- and reconstructed in order to »correct« the posture according to the latest palaeontological research<sup>44</sup>. In the former mount, the legs were placed beside the body with the tail lying on the floor, thereby transmitting a slow, reptile-like image of *Brachiosaurus*. After 2007, the legs were mounted under the body in a more dynamic pose, and the tail was lifted high above the ground. Thus, an »authentic« reconstruction is neither static nor timeless, but rather is subject to constant negotiation, examination, re-evaluation, and upkeep. The same can be said about the very notion of authenticity. The reworking of the very materiality of the object proceeded as a practice of presenting the most up-to-date version at the cost of preserving historicity. As we can see here, the museum privileged the idea of an updated and thereby scientifically re-approved, authenticated image of the dinosaur over preserving the original reconstruction as an authentic historic object.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the question of authenticity is linked as much to the materiality of museum objects as to their assigned significance and framing within the museum space. Both museums employed a patchwork of overlapping discursive, procedural, and material techniques to argue that their objects were »authentic« – original, truthful, accurate, and authoritative. What the dinosaur fossils (as objects of natural history) and the Renaissance painting (as art object) had in common was their more or less ruinous material state, which served as an argument for establishing origins and originality wherein the objects were staged as historic witnesses of past times. In the museum framework, they were presented in a way that aimed to create an aura of authenticity, secured by their original materiality. At the same time, in both cases these natural and artistic remains were prepared, reconstructed, and restored (and thereby »edited«), as well as presented in a multilayered framework which aimed to »transcend« the material substance of the objects and even reanimate the fragmentary material. Both museum objects changed during their – still ongoing – histories. The case of the now near-forgotten Ancaiani painting, having been in storage for almost a century, and the continuing but renewed display of *Brachiosaurus brancai* show how much conceptions of value and authenticity can change. Thus, the material transformations show that museum objects do not have an ahistorical, stable, essential core identity, but continuously undergo processes of authentication and revision. The histories of the objects therefore allow insight into the historical transformation of museum objects and into strategies for authentication and concepts of authenticity, which can be understood as the result of various cultural techniques.



## Notes

- 1) Part of this research was made possible by the collaborative research project »Dinosaurier in Berlin. *Brachiosaurus brancai* – eine politische, wissenschaftliche und populäre Ikone«, funded by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung.
- 2) Shelley 1844, 221-222. – Cf. Savoy/Sissis 2013, 47-51.
- 3) von Stockhausen 2000, 48-50. 72. 83-84. 205. 322-323.
- 4) Saponi 2004, 57 (doc. 3). 80-81.
- 5) Cf. Nenci 1998.
- 6) Waagen 1834, 129-131. 137. 139-140. – Anonymous 1834, 197.
- 7) Waagen 1841, 350.
- 8) Anonymous 1834, 197-198.
- 9) Shelley 1844, 221.
- 10) Anonymous 1834, 198: »[...] die Farbe [...] fast ganz abgefallen ist [...]«.
- 11) Passavant 1839, 17. – Anonymous 1834, 198.
- 12) Anonymous 1834, 198: »[...] der edle Geist des Ganzen siegreich durch die äußere Zerstörung hindurchwirkt und [...] bei dauernder Betrachtung das ganze Bild entschieden gegenwärtig und lebendig wird.«
- 13) Anonymous 1834, 198: »Das Bild [...] spricht nur mittelbarer und leiser mit einer liebenswürdigen Sanftmuth an die Phantasie und stellt sich in ihr [...] in dem ruhig anmuthigen Charakter, dessen Ausdruck nur dem Grade, nicht der Qualität nach beeinträchtigt ist, [...] wieder her [...]. Man glaubt keineswegs durch thätige Imagination das Gedämpfte aufgefrischt zu haben; man schreibt es der himmlischen Geduld dieser Augen selbst zu, daß sie doch verweilen, doch so sprechend hervortreten.«
- 14) Kugler 1853, 504: »[...] und mit einem tief wehmüthigen Gefühle sieht der Kunstfreund erst bei längerer Betrachtung sich in diese Gestalten, diese holden, gemüthvollen Köpfe aus dem Nebel, der das Ganze bedeckt, entwickeln.«
- 15) Waagen 1841, 351: »[...] eine Anschauung von dessen [des Originals] ursprünglicher Beschaffenheit gewährt«.
- 16) It is not mentioned in the subsequent edition of the register of paintings in the museum: Waagen 1845, 47-48; cf. von Stockhausen 2000, 84. 120; Stehr 2012, 147.
- 17) Anonymous 1835, 8: »[...] jetzt eines der schätzbarsten Kleinode des K. Museums«.
- 18) Anonymous 1835, 8: »[...] welcher sich so ganz in den Geist Raphaels einzudenken vermochte«.
- 19) Kugler 1853, 504: »[...] hier musste erst der Nebel, der die Gestalten einhüllte, verschwinden, musste das Verworrene in Harmonie gesetzt, das Fehlende im Geiste des Originals wiederhergestellt werden.«
- 20) Cf. von Stockhausen 2000, 205.
- 21) Cf. von Stockhausen 2000, 50. 66.
- 22) Anonymous 1857, 684.
- 23) Dönhoff 1850, 20: »Eine stille Andacht geht durch das Werk; Maria und die Engel haben schon die eigenthümliche Raphaelische Anmuth«.
- 24) Anonymous 1834, 197: »[...] eines der älteren Bilder des göttlichen Jünglings«.
- 25) Cf. von Stockhausen 2000, 83-84.
- 26) Anonymous 1834, 203: »Mich dünkt, wenn es sogar von Spagna wäre, so würde es nicht minder die Darstellung einer Kunststufe geben, die auf Raphaels Bildungsweg unzweifelhaft gelegen, und bei ihm auf gleiche Weise sich ausgesprochen haben muß.«
- 27) Cf. Schmäzle 2012, in particular 107-109; Kratz-Kessemeier/Meyer/Savoy 2010, 26-35; Skwirbli 2017, 418-428.
- 28) von Rumohr 1831, 33: »Abweichung von der Art des Pietro Perugino, Rückkehr oder Hinneigung zu jener, wie ich annehme, älteren Förmlichkeit des Raphael glaube ich in verschiedenen anderen Gemälden zu entdecken, welche zum Theil unstreitig etwas jünger sind, als obige. Das älteste vielleicht jenes reiche anmuthsvolle, al guazzo auf feines Leinwand gemalte Bild der Anbetung der Könige, sonst in der Kappelle des Hauses Ancagani zu Spoleto, jetzt im Handel.«
- 29) Waagen 1834, 131-132. 137-139.
- 30) Gruyer 1869, 169-170.
- 31) Shelley 1844, 222.
- 32) Handwritten comment in the copy preserved at Harvard University of: Waagen 1860, 47.
- 33) When found, the sauropod dinosaur was named as an African species of *Brachiosaurus* (*Brachiosaurus brancai*). In 2009, it was reclassified as belonging to the genus of *Giraffatitan*. Since the object in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin is still widely known by the name of *Brachiosaurus*, the author will use that name. – The history of the Tendaguru expedition has been described by Maier 2003; Colbert 1968; Schwarz-Wings 2010; Remes et al. 2011.
- 34) Cf. Nieuwland 2010; 2012; Rea 2001.
- 35) Cf. Tamborini 2016.
- 36) See for example Anonymus 1910, 8; Anonymus 1912, n. p.; Hennig 1910, 122.
- 37) von Hanseman n. d.: »Wenn wir nun diese Originalien dem Berliner Museum einverleiben, [...] so wird das hiesige Museum in gleicher Weise eine Anziehung auf die Paläontologen der ganzen Welt ausüben [...] Durch diese Objekte [...] erhält es mit einemmal einen Weltruf und stellt sich ebenbürtig an die Seite der grossen amerikanischen Museen.«
- 38) See Rieppel 2012.
- 39) von Branca 1911, 273: »Von diesen versteinerten Gebeinen, die sich gleich Monolithen hier erheben, blicken Jahrmillionen auf uns nieder: Gebeine, zum Teil von so ungeheuerlicher Größe, daß man bisher nie Ähnliches von einem landbewohnenden Tiere geschaut hat. [...] Jetzt stehen sie hier vor uns, die Reste der Giganten. Vor unserem geistigen Auge aber steigt empor das Bild von jener längst verschwundenen Lebewelt.«
- 40) Indeed, while reports and articles continued to stress the originality of the bones, the mounted skeleton was in fact a hybrid object, including materials like plaster, iron, and preservatives. See Janensch 1938.

- 41) Though it has to be taken into account that Wilhelm von Branca addressed only a small audience. On the other hand, in 1912, visitors of the museum might have read about the Tendaguru expedition in the press, whose reports often also included a description of the life of the dinosaurs.
- 42) Cf. Rieppel 2012.
- 43) For the museum, it was then all the more important to base the reconstruction of what was to be claimed an »authentic posture« on an authorised scholarly interpretation; here we can see how closely authenticity was related to authority.
- 44) Cf. Remes et al. 2011.

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## Zusammenfassung / Summary

### Überreste als Authentizitätsgaranten? »Raphael Ancaiani« und »*Brachiosaurus brancai*« als Starobjekte der Berliner Museen zwischen dem 19. und 21. Jahrhundert

Das ehemalige Altarbild *Die Anbetung der Könige* von Giovanni di Pietro und das rekonstruierte Dinosaurierskelett des *Brachiosaurus brancai* im Berliner Museum für Naturkunde sind dadurch besondere Objekte, dass sie eine imaginierte Vergangenheit darstellen, die mit ihrer Materialität und zugeschriebenen Bedeutung zusammenhängt. In beiden Fällen machte die Aufbereitung, Präsentation und Rezeption die »Authentizität« der Objekte aus. Nachdem das italienische Renaissance-Gemälde nach Berlin überführt wurde, wurde es im 19. Jahrhundert als zerstörtes, aber originales Werk Raffael angesehen. Es wurde in seinem damaligen Zustand als getreue Spur des hochverehrten und verklärten Künstlers ausgestellt, wobei ein das Original begleitender Kupferstich die Visualisierung unterstützen sollte. Durch diese doppelte Abstraktionsebene wurden die BesucherInnen dazu gebracht, das Werk geistig aktiv zu rekonstruieren. Bevor die Rekonstruktion des Gesamtskeletts des *Brachiosaurus brancai* in die Wege geleitet wurde, wurden die Dinosaurierüberreste, die in der ehemaligen Kolonie Deutsch-Ostafrika gefunden wurden, zunächst als einzelne Knochen ausgestellt. Die Fragmente wurden als materielle Spuren der Erdgeschichte inszeniert, wohingegen bei der Skelettrekonstruktion des ganzen Dinosauriers ein möglichst lebensnahes und damit authentisches Bild hinzutrat. Dadurch wurde ein materialbasiertes Authentizitätskonzept mit einem bildbasierten kombiniert. In beiden Fällen sollte die künstliche Reanimation des Materials eine Aura der Authentizität erzeugen, indem die Objekte zu Zeugen einer Geschichte verwandelt wurden, die aktiv von Experten und Kuratoren konstruiert wurde.

### Remains as Guarantors for Authenticity? »Raphael Ancaiani« and »*Brachiosaurus brancai*« as Star Objects of Berlin's Museums between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

The former altarpiece *Adoration of the Magi* by Giovanni di Pietro and the reconstructed dinosaur skeleton of *Brachiosaurus brancai* at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin are exceptional objects for their representation of an (imaginary) past linked to their materiality and their attributed significance. In both cases, the objects' preparation, presentation and reception constituted their »authenticity«. The Italian Renaissance painting was transferred to Berlin, where it was considered a ruined yet original work by Raphael in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was exhibited in its actual state as a faithful trace of the highly adored and glorified artist, accompanied by an outline engraving. This double abstraction forced visitors to actively reconstruct the work in their minds. From the dinosaur remains, found in the former colony German East Africa, initially single bones were presented in their fragmentary state, until a reconstruction of a whole skeleton was mounted in the museum. While the fragments were staged as material traces of the earth's history, the skeletal reconstruction stressed an »authentic image« of the animal, thus adding to the material-based concept of authenticity an image-based one. Thus, in both cases, artificial reanimation of the material was to create an aura of authenticity, transforming the objects into witnesses of a history that was actively constructed by experts and curators.