

The Original Copy

Index

Introduction

This publication functions simultaneously as a research tool and as the final portfolio component of the PhD thesis. As a research tool, it is designed to continually write and re-write itself by integrating theoretical perspectives with reflections from both the researcher and students involved in the project. It operates as a reading list circulated prior to the workshops, as well as an active prompt within the workshops themselves, where carefully selected entries are used to foster engagement with objects and archival material and instigate conversations.

The publication's explicit polyvocality allows to combine historic and contemporary perspectives on questions of authenticity, reproduction and remediation, the researcher's own exploration of these questions, and viewpoints emerging from student voices. Student voices are essential contributions to the research, as they introduce new references and perspectives.

To express the inherent polyvocality of the research process, this publication adopts the form of an index, with entries referring to key research concepts arranged in alphabetical order. This non-authoritative and non-linear structure allows the reader to navigate the material according to their own interpretive logic – moving through affinities, dissonances, and unexpected connections between ideas.

The method of selecting and presenting citations and images in this publication is inspired by Walter Benjamin's unfinished Arcades Project. In this seminal work, Benjamin assembled a vast array of quotations from diverse historical sources to construct a multifaceted portrait of nineteenth-century Paris. As Susant Sontag notes, the strength of this approach lies in allowing the past to speak for itself 'with all its unresolvable complexity'. Similarly, this publication seeks to capture a complex network of historic and contemporary perspectives presented as raw material. By minimising interpretation, the aim is to preserve and celebrate processes of thinking and of critical enquiry important to the research.

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Afterimage

Avery F. Gordon and Clemens von Wedemeyer, 'Casting Memory', in *Clemens von Wedemeyer: The Cast*, ed. by Paolo Caffoni and Giulia Ferracci (Archive Books, 2013).

Images: Clemens von Wedemeyer, *Afterimage*, 2013. Video installation, 6 minutes



Afterimage – workshop

CLEMENS VON WEDEMEYER: Paolo Caffoni and I came across a large workshop run since the 1940s by the De Angelis family who built props and sculptures for films made at Cinecittà. The workshop doesn't look like a workshop but like a huge storage room – it's filled with big sculptures, many of which are copies of museum originals, mostly gods and religious figures. The statues were made as props for films. Normally, the props are destroyed after shooting, but these were saved. Seeing all the sculptures connected me to the films in which they were used and made me think about the materiality of memory of films and what material or objects or props activate these memories. The workshop seemed to be the real memory of Cinecittà. There are more figures in the workshop than people working in the studios today.

In the 1970s, there were many workshops like this at Cinecittà. They took photographs of the sets and they collected the props that were designed by them or by other designers and in this way made an archive of the history of Cinecittà. Look, here are the lamps Pier Paolo Pasolini used in *Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975). When I spoke with Mr. De Angelis, now in his 80s and said that with films today – or even with the Italian Neorealists who filmed on location and in the streets – such workshops are no longer necessary, he replied: 'If you want to make a film, you need a camera and if you have a camera you want an actor and then you want a sculpture in the background and so on.'

Two weeks after we made the digital scans for *Afterimage* the workshop was closed down on the grounds that it was structurally unsound and unsafe for habitation. Until a few months ago, the De Angelis family were not permitted to enter and they needed to get back inside. Given Mr. De Angelis's age and the uncertainty about whether Cinecittà will be sold off or turned into a hotel or a parking lot, the question of how the workshop will continue is unresolved. But I didn't want merely to film the melancholy and dusty atmosphere of the workshop. The idea of *Afterimage*

evolved from a sign that was posted in the workshop by Mr. De Angelis's father: 'Appreciate the material and the time.'

AVERY GORDON: In *Afterimage* the present confronts the past. You render the disappearance of an older mode of filmmaking with its emphasis on the materiality of the set and the props, and in the case of Cinecittà a film studio that has specialised in fictionalised historical films, with new technologies of film production. The ghostly figure that moves through the workshop rooms filled with body part moulds and resting statues moves, as you say, as if he or she were in a computer game. The ghost in this machine, however, has a will to create something out of the surplus of hands and heads and arms and legs resting or waiting in the workshop. You've said that this ghost is looking for something or perhaps looking for what I've called a 'something to be done,' as all ghosts are. What is the ghost looking for?

CvW: First of all, the point of view of the film is subjective. We move through the space so, it is us: we are the ghost. We don't know what we're looking for when we enter the workshop, but we are fascinated. We look at all these props and we wonder why we don't have a body, as everyone seems to have one. So, it's obvious that the ghost would like to have a body of its own, not just an eye. The hands and surplus sculpture parts are a way to start to build the body. The ghost is looking for a form because it is still invisible.

AG: I wonder what the statues and props say to each other in the night or standing around outside the workshop where they've been stranded? What would we hear if we could listen in? I think you are suggesting that we listen for the sounds, the images and the stories of the abandoned studio's mode of production: the work of the workshop, the work of the prop, the work of the workers, the work of the extras and all those extraneous persons and things who become the momentos of the history of cinema while at the same time are forgotten by those who profit from it or who see only technical or aesthetic or ideological things.

Link to the video: <https://vimeo.com/141175441>



Almost-same

Buskirk, Martha, and others, 'Interviews with Sherrie Levine, Louise Lawler, and Fred Wilson', *October*, 70 (1994), pp. 99-112, doi:10.2307/779055

Levine: I always make things that I want to look at. Objects that help me understand something or experience something that I didn't before. I choose things that I want to see – which I think is what most artists do. That's my motivation. I think: What would it be like to cast a Brancusi head in glass? What would that look like? How would I feel if there were six or twelve of them in a room together? What would that mean to me? What I'm interested in is the almost-same.

Buskirk: With respect to the almost-same, you seem to insist on the "almost" part with materials-going from porcelain to bronze, or going from bronze to glass, in the *Fountain* and in the *Newborn*. With the shift of materials you made the urinal into a sensuous, precious object.

Levine: I thought it would be challenging to work in a traditional sculpture material-something with an immediate aesthetic credibility. I was very surprised when I saw my first *Fountain*. When I made the decision to cast the urinal, I was thinking primarily about Duchamp, but the finished high polish bronze sculpture more readily evoked Brancusi and Arp.

Buskirk: It's striking how the material itself could create those associations.

Levine: I think the anthropomorphic form of the urinal also recalled those artists.

Aura

Anonymous student, MLitt Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art), 2024-25

I believe that the existence of these replicas holds great significance in itself. They are not merely reproductions of historical artifacts, but provide contemporary researchers and learners with more tangible and accessible means to engage with cultural heritage that might otherwise be distant or unreachable.

Walter Benjamin once proposed the concept of the “aura,” referring to the unique presence of an original work within a specific historical context. However, I would argue that we also need an *aura of our own*. This is a process of deconstructing the traditional aura while simultaneously reconstructing new cultural meanings. Through reproduction, reinterpretation, and creative engagement, we not only preserve tradition but also breathe new life into it.

This “new aura” is no longer confined to elite culture or locked behind museum glass. It belongs to more people — to learners, to observers, and to those who participate in reimagining and recreating. Replicas are not just copies; they are bridges between the past and the present, and vessels for memory, understanding, and imagination.

Kholeif, Omar, ‘Backstroke of the West. Thirteen Philosophies of a Time Traveler’, in Michael Rakowitz and Omar Kholeif, *Michael Rakowitz: Backstroke of the West*, MCA Monographs (Museum of Contemporary Art, 2017), pp. 11-12

I MAY THE ARROGANT NOT PREVAIL

We built something, then we knocked it down. We built it again for a worldly imagination, an imagination of affiliation. The Ishtar Gate was built before your eyes circa 575 before Christ, by Nebuchadnezzar II at the heart of ancient Babylon. You celebrated the New Year by processioning through its majestic blue-tiled arches and along the avenue *Aj-ibur-shapu*, which translates to “the invisible enemy should not exist” or “may the obdurate foe not be in good health.” Here begins the story, at the back of the arch’s wooden frame made visible – a facsimile of a facsimile. Excavated by a German archaeologist from 1899 to 1912, the gate was built up brick by brick in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, its missing pieces replaced with sullied stones, creolizing its bones. In the 1950s, a partial replica was built in Iraq for an imagined museum that was never to be born. Was this Iraqi King Faisal II’s dream? To resuscitate history? Three decades later, after Saddam Hussein, this same Ishtar Gate became a backdrop for many an American soldier’s photo op during the wars, just like the Orientalist backdrops of the old Middle Eastern photo studios, common in Amman, Beirut, Byblos, in present-day Lebanon, Istanbul, Cairo, and Alexandria, Egypt. In Baghdad, however, in front of the replica of a remade gate, there are no large-format cameras, maybe a Polaroid or digital camera, perhaps an old generation iPhone. You come to Chicago to see what you once laid eyes on before Christ. It is now made of detritus, recycled packaging from Middle Eastern food stores in Berlin. But this is not any detritus: this is our shared history, the cloth that binds us. Does this gate hold the aura of the original? Where do we derive or discern aura in the post-Benjamin age of the artwork’s technological reproductibility?

II THE INVISIBLE ENEMY SHOULD NOT EXIST

How do we attribute aura to the art object? You cast your eyes on each artifact in the National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad. A lion, a dagger, a vase, a headless man, heirlooms of an ancient time were unspooled from the dusty walls of the museum during the wars, the looting after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Do these specimens of history bear a characteristic that makes them worth stealing? Will they be funneled and "cared for" like the artifacts of the ancient Egyptians, now resting silently like relics, dead bodies in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, or indeed, the British Museum? Or will they dress the homes of the wealthy whose whimsical Orientalist fantasies these fragments fulfil? You see that these pieces are being reconstituted. Slowly, in the city of Chicago, they are again made of food packaging, this time from the United States, the nation that opened the floodgates to this act of theft. Each object is made to scale. You place your hand on them gently to attest their authenticity, but your hand is quickly slapped away by a security guard. These are the only remains of our history. Do they hold aura?

Authenticity

Benjamin, Walter, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (Schocken Books, 1986), pp. 220-221

The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical—and, of course, not only technical—reproducibility. Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original preserved all its authority; not so *vis a vis* technical reproduction. The reason is twofold. First, process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual reproduction. For example, in photography, process reproduction can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the lens, which is adjustable and chooses its angle at will. And photographic reproduction, with the aid of certain processes, such as enlargement or slow motion, can capture images which escape natural vision. Secondly, technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself.

Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.

One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced.

Authority

Anonymous student, MLitt Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art), 2024-25

[I was reflecting] on the ontology of replicas and the politics of representation. Thinking with the concept of the proxy, I began to see the plaster casts not merely as derivative objects, but as entities with their own epistemological weight, mediating between presence and absence, original and copy, memory and forgetting. They embody a kind of metaphysical paradox: simultaneously indexical and imaginative, fixed yet suggestive of movement and transformation.

The cast as proxy also raises questions about authority. Who? has the power to speak on behalf of whom or what, and how such authority is granted, revoked, or contested. These questions echo broader philosophical concerns about authenticity, mediation, and the construction of meaning. I was particularly drawn to the idea that replicas can unsettle museological hierarchies by shifting attention away from the "aura" of the original, toward relational, speculative, and future-facing forms of engagement. Could this resolve at least some of the concerns of the many tensions of repatriation? Could colonisers return their loot with a decent enough replica in its place?

[Could we rethink] of curatorial practice as a mode of philosophical inquiry? — one that can unsettle binaries like real/fake, past/present, and object/subject, opening space for new modes of storytelling and collective reflection.

Questions of authenticity and originality are important to me because they are not neutral or self-evident, they are constructed, contingent concepts that underpin systems of value, authorship, and power. Philosophically, they invite interrogation through metaphysics, aesthetics, and epistemology: What is the "real"? What constitutes an "original"? How is meaning anchored in the object, and to what extent is that meaning mediated by context, narrative, or institutional framing?

Drawing on thinkers like Walter Benjamin, I'm interested in how the "aura" of the original has historically been tied to ideas of uniqueness and authority, often in ways that reinforce elitist or colonial hierarchies. The replica, then, becomes not a lack or a failure, but a philosophical provocation, a disruption of the assumed link between authenticity and truth.

Authenticity also functions as a gatekeeping device, it decides what is worth preserving, displaying, or repatriating. This matters politically as much as philosophically. Who defines what is authentic? Whose histories and subjectivities are authorised or erased in that definition?

Rather than seeking a pure or original truth in objects, I'm drawn to the instability of meaning, to the idea that replicas, proxies, and even fakes can carry profound ontological and symbolic weight. They invite us to consider objects not as fixed in time or space, but as relational, dynamic, and entangled in broader questions of memory, cultural production, and ethical responsibility.

In this sense, the question is not whether authenticity matters, but how it is constructed, who it serves, and what alternatives we might imagine beyond it.

Groys, Boris, *Going Public*, E-Flux Journal (Sternberg Press, 2010), p. 151.

Opinion about what is identical and what is different, or about what is original and what is copy, is an act of belief, an effect of a sovereign decision that cannot be fully justified empirically or logically.

Composite biography

Francesca Zappia, *Replicas' composite biography*, 2024

Since the 1980s heritage studies have shifted their focus from material culture toward a more constructivist approach, emphasising the relational and social dimensions of heritage. Objects and sites are now considered in relation to their 'life history' – how they have been made, used, valued, transformed and preserved over time. These interconnected aspects shape what Igor Kopytoff (1986) has named the *cultural biography of things*.

This approach has proved particularly valuable in reassessing the significance of replicas. Foster and Jones (2020) argue that replicas possess a *composite biography* and therefore are 'extended objects' linked to the original and its legacy while also existing as autonomous artefacts with distinct histories. As such, replicas accumulate layers of meanings over time and space through the interactions of those who engage with them (Foster and Curtis 2016). From this perspective, replicas are not merely copies to be judged by their fidelity to the original but are authentic objects with agency of their own.

The *composite biography* of plaster casts has had a significant impact on the reassessment and reinterpretation of museum collections. This approach has enabled museums to uncover and share the histories behind the production of their plaster casts, the development of their collections, and the importance of preserving and redisplaying these casts for the transmission of heritage.

Copia

Latour, Bruno, and Adam Lowe, 'The Migration of the Aura, or How to Explore the Original through Its Facsimiles', in *Switching Codes: Thinking through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, ed. by Thomas Bartscherer and Roderick Coover (University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 275–98

To help shift the attention of the reader from the detection of the original to the quality of its reproduction, let us remember that the word "copy" need not be derogatory ; indeed, it comes from the same root as "copious," and thus designates a source of abundance. A copy, then, is simply a proof of fecundity. So much so that, to give a first shape to the abstract notion of the trajectory, we will call upon the antique emblem of the cornucopia, a twisted goat horn with a sharp end—the origin—and a wide mouth disgorging an endless flow of riches (all thanks to Zeus). This association should come as no surprise: to be original means necessarily to be the *origin* of a lineage. That which has no progeny, no heirs, is called, not original, but sterile, barren. Rather than ask, Is this isolated piece an original or a facsimile? we might, then, inquire, Is this segment in the trajectory of the work of art barren or fertile?

To say that a work of art grows in originality in proportion to the quality and abundance of its copies is nothing odd: this is true of the trajectory of any set of interpretations. If the songs of the *Iliad* had remained stuck in one little village of Asia Minor, Homer would not be considered a (collective) author of such great originality. It is *because*—and not in spite—of the thousands and thousands of repetitions and variations of the songs that, when considering any copy of the *Iliad*, we are moved so much by the *unlimited* fecundity of the original. We attribute to the author (although his very existence cannot be specified) the power of each of the successive reinterpretations by saying that "potentially" all of them "were already" there in the *Ur-text*—which we simultaneously know to be wrong (my reading could not possibly already have been there in ancient Greece) and perfectly right, since I willingly add my little extension to the "unlimited" fecundity of this collective phenomenon called "the" *Iliad*. If it is indeed unlimited, it is because I and others continue to push the limit. To penetrate the poem's "inherent" greatness, you need to bring with you all of the successive versions, adaptations, and accommodations. Nothing is more ordinary than this mechanism: Abraham is the father of a people "as numerous as the grains of sand" (and of three religions) only because he had a lineage. Before the birth of Isaac, he was a despised, barren old man. Such is the "awesome responsibility" of the reader, as Charles Péguy so eloquently said, because this process is entirely reversible: "If we stop interpreting, if we stop rehearsing, if we stop reproducing, the very existence of the original is at stake. It might stop having abundant copies and slowly disappear."

We have no difficulty raising questions about the quality of the entire trajectory when dealing with dance, music, theater—the *performing* arts. Why is it so difficult when faced with the reproduction of a painting, a piece of furniture, a building, or a sculpture?

Copy

Buskirk, Martha, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (MIT, 2003), p. 65.

The various ways in which contemporary artists have taken up and refashioned the readymade, however, also speak to the complex layering of reference and quotation that characterizes contemporary art. The designation of authorship gives a tenuous and riven unity to multiple references that can include other works of art as well as the means by which they are disseminated in reproduction, the contexts of their reception, and the much larger realm of nonart sources. The copy is therefore the basis for a conception of art-making in which artists incorporate increasingly subtle and layered references to the history of art as well as other sources without necessarily relying on their techniques or materials.

Groys, Boris, *Art Power* (the MIT press, 2008), p. 38.

The copying or repetition of well-known artworks brings the whole order of historical memory into disarray.

Groys, Boris, *Going Public*, E-Flux Journal (Sternberg Press, 2010), pp. 66-67.

The topology of today's networks of communication, generation, translation, and distribution of images is extremely heterogeneous. The images are constantly transformed, rewritten, reedited, and reprogrammed as they circulate through these networks—and with each step they are visually altered. Their status as copies of copies becomes an everyday cultural convention, as was previously the case with the status of the original. Benjamin suggests that the new technology is capable of producing copies with increasing fidelity to the original, when in fact the opposite is the case. Contemporary technology thinks in generations—and to transmit information from one generation of hardware and software to the next is to transform it in a significant way. The metaphoric notion of "generation" as it is now used in the context of technology is particularly revealing. Where there are generations, there are also generational Oedipal conflicts. All of us know what it means to transmit a certain cultural heritage from one generation of students to another.

We are unable to stabilize a copy as a copy, as we are unable to stabilize an original as an original. There are no eternal copies as there are no eternal originals. Reproduction is as much infected by originality as originality is infected by reproduction. In circulating through various contexts, a copy becomes a series of different originals. Every change of context, every change of medium can be interpreted as a negation of the status of a copy as a copy—as an essential rupture, as a new start that opens a new future. In this sense, a copy is never really a copy; rather, a new original in a new context. Every copy is by itself a flaneur—experiencing time and again its own "profane illuminations" that turn it into an original. It loses old auras and gains new auras. It remains perhaps the same copy, but it becomes different originals. This also shows a postmodern project of reflecting on the repetitive, iterative, reproductive character of an image (inspired by Benjamin) to be as paradoxical as the modern project of recognizing the original and the new. This is

likewise why postmodern art tends to look very new, even if—or actually because—it is directed against the very notion of the new. Our decision to recognize a certain image as either an original or a copy is dependent on the context—on the scene in which this decision is taken. This decision is always a contemporary decision—one that belongs not to the past and not to the future, but to the present. And this decision is also always a sovereign decision—in fact, the installation is a space for such a decision where “here and now” emerges and profane illumination of the masses takes place.

Schwartz, Hillel, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (Zone Books, 1996), pp. 185-186.

[T]wo hybrid modes of copying would come to dominate officework: 1) copying as one went along, s/t/r/o/k/e/-/b/y/-/s/t/r/o/k/e, mechanically, with parallel pens or, by 1880, with typewriter keys striking through layers of carbon paper; 2) copying an ENTIRETY after the fact, chemically, fullsheet by fullsheet.

Choices between the two modes were choices between two philosophies of copying. Copying s/t/r/o/k/e/-/b/y/-/s/t/r/o/k/e as one went along approximated the actions that produced the original, except that what had been the scribe's task was now done by visibly conjoint twins. Copying an ENTIRETY all-at-once scarcely resembled the original process; one arrived at the result not step-by-step but through a fluid, seamless, and invisible act of twinning. [...]

Elegant writing was one of the Enlightenment's signs of Reason, of thought made clear and public, step by logical step, s/t/r/o/k/e/-/b/y/-/s/t/r/o/k/e. Techniques for copying letters and drawings in their ENTIRETY fell in with Romantic visions of the union of body&soul through visual art or (nightingale) song. Lithography, stereotyping, and photography would be oriented not toward reenacting the original process (painting on a second canvas, or engraving, or resetting type in facsimile), but toward appropriating complete images, all at once, through molds or chemical resists. [...]

S/t/r/o/k/e/-/b/y/-/s/t/r/o/k/e reenactment implied subordination, an unequal collaboration between leader and follower, originator and copyist. The taking of an ENTIRETY implied appropriation. These divergent modes of copying became gender-specific in the late 1800s. Hired by the Patent Office in 1854, American women copied documents at home as piecework; when they and then European women entered the office workforce, they entered as copy clerks, as s/t/r/o/k/e/-/b/y/-/s/t/r/o/k/e transcribers (up to 108,000 words per month), as stenographers, as “typewriters” — wo/man and machine called by the same name.

Not that men abandoned copying. Rather, they held to the prerogative of copying ENTIRETIES, copying→as→appropriation, taking instant charge of a whole. As in the new practice of franchising, the licensing of reproductions of the entire format of a business, e.g., the Bryant Business Schools, which across America instructed females in shorthand, typing, and the operation of office machines while preparing male students for accounting, finance, and merchandising. In 1890s print shops, union men fought to keep women from operating linotype machines which cast type a full line at a time; a master printer might hire a woman but would restrict her, testified one man, to “straight composition [setting character by character], to make as much as possible an automaton of her.”

The more zealously men defended their prerogative of copying ENTIRETIES, the more they devalued s/t/r/o/k/e/-/b/y/-/s/t/r/o/k/e reenactment as "merely mechanical."

Disappearance

Craig Owens, Giulio Paolini, 1987, in Christov-Bakargiev, Carolyn, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements* (Phaidon, 1999), p. 261.

Giulio Paolini's art invariably stages a (double) disappearance – of both the art object itself, which has been reduced to the status of a fragment or trace, as well as the subject who can claim the object as his, as one of the modes of vision, his thought [...] The disappearance of the object: What we encounter, in Paolini's installations, is never the thing itself, but a stand-in or replacement for it (the lost object, the object of desire); hence, the plaster casts of antique statuary out of which so many of his works are composed, or the wall of drawings which often double either the objects exhibited in the gallery space or the space itself. The disappearance of the subject: in Paolini, the 'dematerialization of art', its removal from the circuits of appropriation and consumption, entails a dispossession – the death of the artist. (I am referring, of course, to Roland Barthes' famous 1968 post-mortem 'The Death of the Author', in which Barthes argues that the author cannot – or can no longer – claim to be the unique source of the meaning and/or value of the work of art.)

Distribution

Soulellis, Paul, 'The Distributed Monument', *Rhizome*, 2016

The Distributed Monument

Can the internet resurrect the dead? The lost art object—be it speculative, missing, or destroyed like a statue smashed by ISIS—now circulates as JPGs, PDFs, and YouTube videos. Untethered from physical matter, these files work to extend life.

It's an illusion of sorts; things seem to continue on once they're multiplied, dispersed and made visible on the network. In the absence of an original, copies of texts and images swarm around and form the missing thing as an imaginary concept in itself. These digital representations might conjure the lost object in archaeological terms, acquiring location, weight, and presence, but they resist fixity. The Buddhas of Bamiyan, which stood northwest of Kabul, Afghanistan for 1,500 years until they were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001, are simultaneously gone and forever present. Images of the monumental statues before (and after) their destruction were copied endlessly into art history's collective memory, first in print, and now as bits moving in and out of search engines and digital archives as the real thing.

Drawn-copies

Blackshaw, Gemma, 'In Time the Likeness Will Become Apparent': Rebecca Fortnum's Feminist Copies', in *A Mind Weighted with Unpublished Matter*, ed. by Rebecca Fortnum and Andrew Hunt, Slimvolume, 14 (Slimvolume, 2020), pp. 6-7

Fortnum describes her drawings from photocopies of her photographs of original sculptures and casts in museums as 'drawn-copies'. They are not duplicates of these reproductions, despite the immensity of their technical precision. She is interested in the striving for imitation, as opposed to the realising of imitation, in the lip-biting, brow-furrowing effort to know the sculpted work of art from the inside-out by devoting time to the outside-in [...]. Her drawn-copies might be theorised through Carol Mavor's analysis of Clementia, Viscountess Hawarden's Victorian photographs of her corseted and buttoned adolescent daughters standing by mirrors, doubled, as 're-duplications'. Pondering different usages of the word 'duplicate', Mavor fixes upon a dictionary definition of the verb 'to reduplicate' as to make or perform again, which gives to the process what she describes as a '(re)performative character'. Such a concept of re-duplication creates the space for difference, for subtle deviations, for the expression of another form of artistry and authorship through the human as opposed to machine-led repeating of a process and this brings us close to Fortnum's method. Re-making a duplicate through the drawing of a photograph of an original or a cast, to produce a copy-which-is-not-a-copy of a copy, she is concerned with the often unexpected results of such a process. How might the attempt to imitate constitute a creative practice in and of itself? What other, singular 'likeness' might emerge through the diligent, dilettantish task of copying? And how might these likenesses, completed many, many decades after the originating sculptures, engage with what it means to be female and creative, to live and work both in and with the legacy of 'amateur' women artists' thwarted ambitions? Such questions also engage with Rebecca Schneider's concept of re-enactment and 'the warp and draw of one time in another time': Schneider is, she writes 'invested [...] in the curious inadequacies of the copy, and *what inadequacy gets right* about our faulty steps backward, and forward, and to the side'.

Facsimile

Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, 'The Migration of the Aura, or How to Explore the Original through Its Facsimiles', in *Switching Codes: Thinking through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, ed. by Thomas Bartscherer and Roderick Coover (University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 275–98.

Something even stranger happened to her, some time later, in the Salle de *la Joconde* in Le Louvre. To finally get at this cult icon of the Da Vinci code, hundreds of thousands of visitors have to enter through two doors that are separated by a huge framed painting, Veronese's *Nozze di Cana*, a rather dark giant of a piece that directly faces the tiny *Mona Lisa*, barely visible through her thick anti-fanatic glass. Now the visitor is really stunned. In the Hollywood machinery of the miraculous wedding, she no longer recognizes the *fac simile* that she had the good fortune of seeing at the end of 2007 when she was invited by the Fondazione Cini to the island of San Giorgio, in Venice. There it was, she remembers vividly, a painting on canvas, so thick and deep that you could still see the brush marks of Veronese and feel the sharp cuts that Napoleon's orderlies had to make in order to tear the painting from the wall, strip by strip, before rolling it like a carpet and sending it as a war booty to Paris in 1797 — a cultural rape very much in the mind of all Venetians, up to this day. But there, in Palladio's refectory, the painting (yes, it was a painting even though it was produced through the intermediary of digital techniques) had an altogether different meaning: it was mounted at a different height, one that makes sense in a dining room; it was delicately lit by the natural light of huge East and West windows so that at about 5pm on a summer afternoon the light in the room exactly coincides with the light in the painting; it had, of course, no frame; and, more importantly, Palladio's architecture merged with admirable continuity within Veronese's painted architecture giving this refectory of the Benedictine monks such a trompe l'oeil depth of vision that you could not stop yourself from walking slowly back and forth and up and down the room to enter deeper and deeper into the mystery of the miracle.

But here, in the Mona Lisa room, even though every part of the painting looked just the same (as far as she could remember), the meaning of the painting she had seen in Venice seemed entirely lost. Why does it have such a huge gilt frame? Why are there doors on both sides? Why is it hanging so low, making a mockery of the Venetian balcony on which the guests were crowding? The bride and groom, squashed into the left hand corner, seemed peripheral here, while in Venice, they were of great importance, articulating a scene of sexual intrigue that felt like a still from a film. In Paris, the composition made less sense. Why this ugly zenithal light? Why this air conditioned room with its dung brown polished plaster walls? In Venice, there was no air-conditioning; the painting was allowed to breathe by itself as if Veronese had just left it to dry. And, anyway, the visitors could not move around the painting to ponder those questions without bumping into others momentarily glued (queued) to the Joconde turning their backs to the Veronese.

A terrible cognitive dissonance. And yet there was no doubt that this one, in Paris, was the original; no substitution had occurred, no cheating of any sort – with all its restoration Veronese would certainly be surprised to see the painting looking as it does, but that's different from cheating. [...] Is it possible that the Venice version, although it clearly states that it is a facsimile, is actually *more original* than the Paris original, she wonders? She now remembers that on the phone with a French art historian friend, she had been castigated for spending so much time in San Giorgio with the copy of the *Nozze*: "Why waste your time with a fake Veronese, when there are so many true ones in Venice?!" her friend had said, to which she had replied, without realizing

what she was saying: "But come here *to see it for yourself*, no description can replace seeing this original... oops, I mean, is this not the very definition of 'aura'?...". Without question, for her, the aura of the original had *migrated* from Le Louvre to San Giorgio: the best proof was that you had to come to the original and see it.

Forgery

Han, Byung-Chul, *Shanzhai: Deconstruction in Chinese*, trans. by Philippa Hurd, *Untimely Meditations Ser*, v. 8 (MIT Press, 2017), pp. 16-23

It was of no small importance for a painter's career in China to get a forgery of an Old Master into the collection of a well-known connoisseur. He who succeeds in such a forgery of a master's work gains great recognition, as it provides proof of his ability. For the connoisseur who authenticated his forgery, the forger is equal to the master. Even Chang Dai-chien, one of the best known Chinese painters of the twentieth century, got his breakthrough when a famous collector exchanged an original by an Old Master for his forgery. As far as connoisseurship is concerned, there is no essential difference between forgers and connoisseurs. A competition develops between them, even a "duel of connoisseurship," over the question of who has more intimate knowledge of the master's art. If a forger borrows a painting from a collector, and when returning hands over a copy unnoticed instead of the original, this is not considered a deception but an act of fairness. In this case the rules of the game say that everyone should own the painting they deserve. It is not the purchase but the connoisseurship alone that determines the lawfulness of the possession. This is an extraordinary practice from ancient China that would put an end to today's art speculation.

In Orson Welle's movie *F for Fake*, Elmyr de Hory says this while forging a work by Matisse in front of the camera: "Many of these drawings are very weak. Matisse's lines were never as sure as mine. He was hesitant when he made a drawing. He added to it a little more and a little more. It wasn't as flowing, it wasn't as sure as mine. I had to hesitate to make it more Matisse-like." Elmyr is deliberately painting badly so that his forgery looks more like an original. In this way he turns the conventional relationship between master and forger on its head: the forger paints better than the master. However, we could also say that a Matisse copy by Elmyr could possibly be more original than the original, if Elmyr's skills enabled him to approximate Matisse's intention better than Matisse himself.

Fuzhi

Han, Byung-Chul, *Shanzhai: Deconstruction in Chinese*, trans. by Philippa Hurd, *Untimely Meditations Ser*, v. 8 (MIT Press, 2017), pp. 60-61.

The Chinese has two different concepts of a copy. *Fangzhipin* are imitations where the difference with the original is obvious. These are small models or copies that can be purchased in a museum shop, for example. The second concept for a copy is *fuzhipin*. They are exact reproductions of the original, which, for the Chinese, are of equal value to the original. It has absolutely no negative connotations. The discrepancy with regard to the understanding of what a copy is has often led to misunderstandings and arguments between China and the Western museums. The Chinese often send copies abroad instead of originals, in the firm belief that they are not essentially different from the originals. The rejection that then comes from the Western museums is perceived by the Chinese as an insult.

In spite of globalization, the Far East still seems to be the source of a great deal of surprise and confusion, which could release deconstructive energies. The Far Eastern notion of identity is also very confusing to the Western observer. For the Japanese, the famous Ise shrine, the supreme sanctuary in Shinto Japan to which millions of Japanese make pilgrimage every year, is 1,300 years old. But in reality this temple complex is completely rebuilt from scratch every twenty years. This religious practice is so alien to Western art historians that after heated debates UNESCO removed this Shinto temple from the list of World Heritage sites. For the experts at UNESCO the shrine is twenty years old at most. In this case, which is the original and which the copy? This is a total inversion of the relationship between original and copy. Or the difference between original and copy, there appears a difference between old and new. We could even say that the copy is more original than the original, or the copy is closer to the original than the original, for the older the building becomes the further it is from its original state. A reproduction would restore it, as it were, to its "original state," especially since it is not linked to a particular artist.

Ideal

Jones, Owen, *An Apology for the Colouring of the Greek Court in the Crystal Palace*. Crystal Palace Library and Bradbury & Evans, 1854, pp. 27-28

The idea of the Greeks having painted their statues is so repugnant to all our modern prejudgments, that the mind is slow in familiarising itself with the fact, even when indisputable evidence is brought forward. The Greeks were artists of such exquisite taste, and of principles so severe, that to accuse them of having *painted statues*, is to accuse them of committing what in our day is regarded as pure "barbarism." The Greeks did not aim at reality, but at ideality; and the painting of statues is thought to be only an attempt to imitate reality.

Nevertheless, however startling, the fact remains: the Greeks *did* paint their statues. Living eyes have seen the paint. Living testimony supports the testimony of ancient writers, and all that will be necessary in these pages is to furnish some of the principal points of evidence.

In the first place, the reader must get out of all sculpture galleries, erase from his mind all preconceptions derived from antique remains and modern practices. Having done so, let him reflect on the historical development of sculpture, and he will see this idea of painted figures falling in its true place.

Sculpture of course began in Greece, as elsewhere, with idols. It is the custom of all barbarous nations to colour their idols. The Egyptians, as we know beyond all doubt, not only coloured, but dressed theirs. So did the Greeks. It may be a question, whether the Greeks borrowed their art from the Egyptians, improving it, as they did everything else. Let scholars decide that question. This, however, is certain, that in either case the Egyptian practice would obtain—

1st. If the Greeks borrowed from the Egyptians, they would borrow the painting and dressing.

2nd. If they did not borrow—if their art was indigenous—then it would come under the universal law of barbarian art; and painting would, at any rate in the earlier epochs, have been employed. (We know that both, painting and dressing were employed in all epochs.)

This being so, and the custom being universal, unless the change from painted to unpainted statues had been very gradual, insensibly so, the man who first produced a marble statue without any" addition would have been celebrated as an innovator. No such, celebrity is known.

Indexicality

Didi-Huberman, Georges, *La Ressemblance Par Contact: Archéologie, Anachronisme et Modernité de l'empreinte*, Paradoxe (Éditions de Minuit, 2008), pp. 18, 52-55. Translated from French by Francesca Zappia.

Is the process of imprinting a *contact with the origin* or a *loss of the origin*? Does it manifest the authenticity of a presence (as a process of contact), or on the contrary, the loss of uniqueness brought about by its possibility of reproduction? Does it produce the unique or the disseminated? The auratic or the serial? The resembling or the dissimilar? Identity or the unidentifiable? Decision or chance? Desire or mourning? Form or formlessness? The same or the altered? The familiar or the strange? Contact or distance? ... I would say that the imprint is the 'dialectical image', the conflagration of all this: something that tells us both *contact* (the foot sinking into the sand) and *loss* (the absence of the foot in its imprint); something that tells us both the contact of loss and the loss of contact. And it is in light of such a conflagration that the imprint compels us to rethink certain models of temporality whose use – often unexamined – has come to rigidify so intensely what must be called the 'current situation' of the aesthetic debate.

Long before being the result of a skilled mimetic ability on the part of the 'figurative' artist, resemblance is first and foremost an anthropological paradigm: it raises a question of transmission – *inscribed in the human itself*, so to speak, where sexual reproduction and genealogical institution converge. To resemble is, first of all, to resemble one's parents, and the symbolic organisation of a society must continually invent a law that can express this visual relationship, this deeply meaningful inheritance. In such a context, certain objects are in turn instituted to reify the transmission of resemblance: these are images. It becomes easy to understand why the process of imprinting, beneath or beyond the well-worn mirror metaphors – which generally overlook the dimension of contact –, is particularly apt to serve such a purpose.

For the imprint physically – and not just optically – conveys the resemblance of the thing or the being 'imprinted'. The analogy with sexual reproduction becomes clear, since the process involves a close embrace by pressure, even penetration, of the substrate by the object that comes to imprint itself there; and because the result is not evanescent, as in the case of the mirror, but is literally 'born' as a body produced by the operation of imprinting. One could say that, unlike figurative *imitation* – which hierarchises and chastely separates the optical 'copy' from its 'model' – *reproduction* by imprint makes the resulting 'copy' a fleshy, tactile child, not a diminished reflection of its 'model', but rather of its *parental form*. When that form is convex – even phallic, as is often the case – we have the stereotype of the *seal*, whose oldest examples, from the Middle East, date back to the fourth millennium BCE.

If that form is concave, then we must speak of a *matrix*. The matrix signifies the place where resemblance is formed – where it coagulates. In it, the Once-upon-a-time of the ancestors is preserved, and the Now of the child being born emerges. Within it, the institution of images finds a model – a fantasy – of natural formation, of embryogenesis. This model is at once physiological, technical, and mythical: it continuously shapes what the imprint can connote, as a paradigm, within the realm of discourse. Above all, it teaches us – here comes the first surprise – what the word 'form' actually means. What is *a form*? To avoid trembling too much before the philosophical weight of this suddenly posed question, let us answer playfully, using the possibilities of the French language: a *forme* is a *fourme*. That is to say, a *cheese* [*fromage*] – a *form-age*, if you will.

It is a mistake to reduce the notion of form to something purely metaphysical, a Platonic idea denoting the dominance of *logos* over the material world...

Artisans – cheesemakers with their *fourmes*, but also cobblers with their shoe lasts, hatters with their top hats [*hauts-de-forme*], butchers with their head cheeses [*fromages de tête*], not to mention confectioners, pastry chefs, card makers, and printers – all have their own definition of form, one that is more technical and, perhaps, more rigorous: for them, form is a *pattern*, a *mould*, a *matrix*. Something we might spontaneously call a *negative form*, the *counter-form* of the desired result. Or, more precisely, that which is capable of *giving shape* to something else, for example, a malleable substance that comes to be imprinted within it, through cold pressing, baking, or coagulation. Language, as often happens, tends to slip from the process to the result, from the point of departure (the mould, or negative form) to the point of arrival (the casting, or positive form). But we must not separate these terms from one another, or else the whole system becomes unintelligible. Now, the imprint is precisely this system: *form* and *counter-form* united in a single operative mechanism of morphogenesis.

It is no coincidence that the Mediterranean Antiquity elevated the mysterious, yet artisanally mastered, process of milk *curdling* – that is, cheese-making – as a model of embryogenesis, but also as an image of the creation of the world, and even of the relationship between soul and body. Nor is it a coincidence that this model has persisted over the long term, from Aristotle and Galen (*On the Generation of Animals*, the book *On Semen*) to Clement of Alexandria, from the Byzantines to Hildegard of Bingen, and from Albert the Great to the popular beliefs of the modern era. In all these cases, it is a particular mode of imprinting that, between forms and counter-forms, secretly governs the transmission of resemblances: it thus ensures the genealogical link, since it offers the technical means to *give form to absence*, to transmit its seal from those who have *passed*, or better, passed away – the ancestors – to those beings *yet to come*: the embryos forming in a matrix shaped in the image of their ancestors. In every case, the imprint turns absence into a kind of *potential form*.

Kopienkritik

Laric, Oliver, *Kopienkritik*, Skulpturhalle Basel, 2011. Exhibition views.



Perry, Ellen, *The Aesthetics of Emulation in Visual Arts of Ancient Rome* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 78-79.

Some of the practices of *Kopienkritik* were already in place long before the end of the nineteenth century. These included the identification of certain Roman sculptures as replicas of Greek originals and the tendency to associate ancient sculpture with literary testimonia. *Kopienkritik* in the fullest sense, however, was not possible before photography became a tool of archaeological investigation. By the 1880s, a circle of German scholars led by Henrich Brunn was engaged in the laborious task of amassing a collection of photographs to facilitate the study of ancient sculpture. It is not difficult to see why this sort of collection is a prerequisite for the widespread practice of *Kopienkritik*, which requires comparing the minutiae of a large number of geographically separated works. Photographs, unlike the plaster casts that filled museums at the time, were portable, easily stored images that allowed scholars to study multiple replicas of a single type with unprecedented ease.

Brunn's pioneering work in photography was accompanied by a comprehensive philological training, which suggested to him the possibility of approaching Roman replicas in a manner analogous to textual criticism. He argued that just as the goal of textual criticism was the reconstruction of an archetype from which all existing manuscripts had descended, the goal of *Kopienkritik* should be the reconstruction of lost Greek originals on the basis of existing sculptural copies. The crucial question to be asked by the practitioners of *Kopienkritik*, therefore, was which of the surviving copies could provide the most accurate representation of a specific lost masterpiece and in what respect they did so. The point was to separate relatively accurate copies from allegedly inaccurate ones through the formal analysis of as many examples of a sculptural type as were available.

Material

Susan Taylor, 'Interview with Giulio Paolini', 1984, in Christov-Bakargiev, Carolyn, *Arte Povera, Themes and Movements* (Phaidon, 1999), p. 259

Taylor: What significance do the materials have that you use in your work? For example, the broken plaster and torn photographs?

Paolini: The plaster cast and the photograph are equivalent for me because they represent two techniques which reproduce models of images. Even though they are different materials, they have the same function - to produce a simulacrum. A photograph and a plaster cast tend to give an absolute illusion of another thing, but I have always been careful to reveal the material itself. In other words, the photograph is a skin, an intangible diaphragm which provides you with this miracle of the representation of something. However, it is also a piece of paper. Similarly, a plaster cast can reproduce something which is in Greece. Yet plaster is also a material you can touch and therefore when it breaks it is revealed for what it is. It becomes an image not of what it recounts but of what truly is.

Original

Groys, Boris, *Art Power* (the MIT press, 2008), pp. 62-63.

Benjamin's new interpretation of the distinction between original and copy thus opens up the possibility not only of making a copy out of an original but also of making an original out of a copy. Indeed, when the distinction between original and copy is merely a topological, contextual one, then it not only becomes possible to remove an original from its site and deterritorialize it, but also to reterritorialize the copy. Benjamin himself calls attention to this possibility when he writes about the figure of profane illumination and refers to the forms of life that can lead to such a profane illumination: "The reader, the thinker, the loiterer, the flâneur, are types of illuminati just as much as the opium eater, the dreamer, the ecstatic." One is struck by the fact that these figures of profane illumination are also figures of motion—especially the flâneur. The flâneur does not demand of things that they come to him; he goes to things. In this sense, the flâneur does not destroy the auras of things; he respects them. Or rather, only through him does the aura emerge again. The figure of profane illumination is the reversal of the "loss of aura" that comes from siting the copy in a topology of undetermined circulation through the modern mass media. Now, however, it is clear that the installation can also be counted among the figures of profane illumination, because it transforms the viewer into a flâneur.

Art documentation, which by definition consists of images and texts that are reproducible, acquires through the installation an aura of the original, the living, the historical. In the installation the documentation gains a site—the here and now of a historical event. Because the distinction between original and copy is entirely a topological and situational one, all of the documents placed in the installation become originals. If reproduction makes copies out of originals, installation makes originals out of copies.

Photography

Batchen, Geoffrey, 'An Almost Unlimited Variety: Photography and Sculpture in the Nineteenth Century', in Roxana Marcoci and Tobia Bezzola, *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today* (Museum of Modern Art: 2010), pp. 20-24.

A striking aspect of photography's early history is the fact that so many of the first photographers made images of statues and other sculptures. The reasons seem obvious: such specimens were widely available, especially among the social classes from which most of these photographers came. They were immobile, uncomplaining, and easily lit, allowing the photographer to maintain a pronounced chiaroscuro while using a technology that still required long exposure times—too long to easily allow human portraiture. Then there was the question of color: nineteenth-century photographs were monochromatic, but pictures of white plaster casts could transcend this handicap by remaining entirely accurate renditions of their subjects. For those with artistic aspirations, photographing statuary immediately placed these strange new kinds of images into an established tradition, the still life. And images of statues allowed photography's pioneers to make an undeniable case for the medium's usefulness as a way of accurately documenting the appearance of existing artworks. In short, photographs of statues were convenient and persuasive demonstrations of photography in general.

If we stop at this purely instrumental reading of such pictures, however, we may neglect their many other possible meanings. Static and predictable in appearance yet capable of being creatively arranged in front of a camera, statues gave nineteenth-century photographers license to explore the creative capacities of their medium, especially its ability to manipulate space and time. At the same time, the depiction of specimens of sculpture helped to locate photography within an existing economy of copies and reproductions, establishing the pattern of repetition and difference that has modulated the photographic experience ever since. [...]

In each picture we get what seems to be a celebration of copying itself, of the ability to own copies, and of the act of copying those copies; these still lifes are therefore paeans to art as potential property. They are about collecting and display—but a casual, haphazard form of display that treats its objects more like loot or cheap commodities than like revered works of art. The pictures thereby enact the political sensibility of the upper middle class, but also refer to the museum, that class's newly activated temple of artistic consumption. No wonder, then, that museums quickly became favored sites for photography, not only as sources of commissions for reproductions of famous sculptures but also as exemplary settings for the viewing of art of all kinds. [...]

If the flow of mechanical copies of statues was a visible manifestation of the flow of capital in general, photographs showed that flow to be truly international in character. Both Talbot and Bayard, for example, made images of reduced copies of the same statue, the Laocoon, as did Daguerre and Segulier of the statuette of Jupiter, Daguerre and Bayard of a portrait bust of the French architect and designer Charles Percier, and Hubert and Bayard of the Venus de Milo. For historian Michel Frizot, mass-produced copies of sculptures had become part of a kind of visual vocabulary common to the educated classes of Europe. But they are mobilized in another way too, in the sense that we see these objects being moved around by the photographers themselves, reappearing in different configurations and in different settings (outdoors, in the studio, in the home, amongst garden implements, as props in portraits, etc.). This physical mobility suggests an equally mobile set of meanings for the still lifes that contain them.

Bezzola, Tobia, 'From Sculpture in Photography to Photography as Plastic Art', in *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today*, ed. by Roxana Marcoci and Geoffrey Batchen (Museum of Modern Art : 2010), p. 29

[A]s early as the late nineteenth century, photography's reflection of sculpture began to influence the work of some sculptors in their studios. "Photographisms"—aesthetic perceptions generated by the photographic world view—began to appear in the sculpture of the time, manifesting in reflections on the relationship between the sculptural and the pictorial, experiments with details and fragments, a preoccupation with the snapshot, an enhanced realism, a flowering of the *tableau vivant*, and experiments with repetitions and seriality—developments that would offer ample material for a study of their own. Surely not by coincidence, it was also in the 1890s that art theory first began to explore the relationship between photography and sculpture. The only earlier literature on the topic consisted of technical instructions, but in 1896, frustrated by the photographs of classical and Renaissance sculpture available to him for research and teaching, Heinrich Wölfflin set out to address the issue of "how one should photograph sculptures," publishing a short text on the fundamental theoretical problems of transferring three-dimensional sculpture to light-sensitized paper.

What is astonishing about Wölfflin's essay is that, to justify a normative position on how classical—by which he means pre-Baroque—sculpture must be photographed, he advocates a monofocal conception of sculpture. (As an aside, one may note that the German word he uses in his essay's title—*aufnehmen*—includes both the concept of taking photographs and, more generally, receiving, absorbing, or taking in.) What does this mean? Acting as an advocate of the "good tradition" and the "educated eye," Wölfflin contends that a classical sculpture is to be viewed from one and only one main angle, "which corresponds to the conception of the artist." He accordingly argues against attempts by "artisan photography" to place its "machine" at some original, deliberately chosen, "painterly" angle to the work. In modern times, Wölfflin recognizes, the eye "wanders around in an undisciplined fashion" when looking at sculpture, becoming engaged in an endless polyfocal quest—but for this he blames sculpture itself: the sculptural sense has "lost its way in our contemporary era," having abandoned the classical path with Michelangelo in an attempt to achieve a "multisided painterly composition." Wölfflin opposes the view, dominant in the art practice and theory of his time, that sculpture can only be made accessible through a polyfocal sequence of perspectives.

For Baudelaire, this inability of sculpture to present a single valid face was precisely the source of its basic inferiority to painting. A form of art in which a chance illumination, or a randomly chosen view, could open up a more interesting perspective than the one intended by the artist—this Baudelaire saw as a degradation of the artistic ideal. "All the sculptor's efforts to set up a single viewpoint are in vain; as the observer moves around the figure, he may choose a hundred different viewpoints, none of them the right one; and, humiliatingly for the artist, it often happens that an accident of light, the effect of a lamp, may uncover a different beauty from the one he was imagining." In this description of the distortion and arbitrariness implicit in the perception of sculpture, Baudelaire may well have been thinking about interpretative photography of classical sculpture. Wölfflin, however, drew a different conclusion: for him, polyfocal polysemy was not a basic quality of the sculptural but a failing on the part of the viewer, the result of an uneducated, ahistorical, anachronistic way of seeing. Wölfflin's ideal classical sculpture, by contrast, can be resolved into line, surface, and contour—in other words, into two-dimensionality. "The great artistic work," he writes, "consisted precisely in arraying the entire sculptural *content on a single*

plane, collecting and presenting what in nature must be grasped through successive individual perceptions in a way that can be perceived simply and easily in one go" (my italics). Turned around, this interpretation opens the door for two-dimensional photography to enter the realm of the three-dimensional.

Preservation

Han, Byung-Chul, *Shanzhai: Deconstruction in Chinese*, trans. by Philippa Hurd, *Untimely Meditations Ser*, v. 8 (MIT Press, 2017), pp. 62-63.

In the West, when monuments are restored, old traces are often particularly highlighted. Original elements are treated like relics. The Far East is not familiar with this cult of the original. It has developed a completely different technique of preservation that might be more effective than conservation or restoration. This takes place through continual reproduction. This technique completely abolishes the difference between original and replica. We might also say that originals preserve themselves through copies. Nature provides the model. The organism also renews itself through continual cell replacement. After a certain period of time the organism is a replica of itself. The old cells are simply replaced by new cell material. In this case, the question of an original does not arise. The old dies off and is replaced by the new. Identity and renewal are not mutually exclusive. In a culture where continual reproduction represents a technique for conservation and preservation, replicas are anything but mere copies.

Proxy

Mitchell, Dane, 'The Museum of Without', ArtAsiaPacific, 2022

In July, an article was published in *The New York Times* titled *The Robot Guerrilla Campaign to Recreate the Elgin Marbles*. The text outlines a project of the Institute of Digital Archaeology, a University of Oxford-based research group. Using photogrammetry software on multiple iPhones and iPads, the researchers have clandestinely scanned some of the Elgin Marbles (from here on I'll call these the Parthenon Marbles) at the British Museum. Their sole motivation is to replicate these classical Greek sculptures so that the originals may be returned to Greece, leaving the British Museum with life-size facsimiles to be consumed by its audience. Drawing on the group's data, replica Parthenon Marbles are being carved by a technological hand.

The article was illustrated with photos by Francesca Jones, showing the process behind the creation of these replicas. Seeing these images opened for me the revolving doors to an alter-museum. Not only do these replicas prehensively in-fill the space left by the originals' potential return to Greece (don't hold your breath), they suggested to me the possibility of imagining *The Museum of Without*.

The Museum of Without is one without objects, artifacts, and artworks; it is a museum of proxies and gaps—an unhinged museum that presents itself to us in a full state of absent-hood, held together by its hermeneutical framing practices alone, which display the techniques of enclosure. It actively asks: what might a museum without artifacts be? What might a collection of losses hold and what might hold it?

Francesca Zappia, *Of replicas as proxies*, 2025

Literally, a proxy is the authority given to a person to act for someone else. As a proxy, a replica stands in for an original object or even for another replica, while also embodying and communicating the cultural, political, and historical context in which it was created. Beyond this, the replica as proxy can evoke mythologies, dreams, or symbolic meanings – for instance, the recurring motif of the statue that comes to life – thus opening up speculative and imaginative possibilities.

Recently, replicas have been used in museology as both proxies for fragile or immovable originals and as tools to broaden access to art for local audiences. The exhibition *Michelangelo Imperfect* at the Statens Museum for Kunst (SMK) in Copenhagen, for example, made extensive use of SMK's plaster cast collection alongside new facsimiles created by the Factum Foundation (Madrid) with a combination of digital and craft techniques. As facsimiles are increasingly used in exhibitions and displays, this also opens the question of their importance for the future of repatriated objects.

Real

Francesca Zappia, *Objects of augmented reality*, 2025.

In July 2025, the Factum Foundation announced, via its newsletter, the creation of a new facsimile for the Victoria and Albert Museum. This reproduction replicates Michelangelo's small wax figure *A Prisoner* – a preparatory model for the unfinished marble of the *Young Prisoner* in the Accademia, Florence, conceived for the tomb of Pope Julius II. The facsimile was developed as a means of balancing conservation imperatives with public accessibility.

The original model is displayed in the Medieval and Renaissance galleries at the V&A South Kensington. These galleries are not climate controlled, and as such, for preservation, every summer works in wax – including Michelangelo's model – must be removed from display to prevent melting. In previous years, a photograph and notice substituted the object's physical presence. However, in 2025, the wax figure was replaced with a newly fabricated facsimile.

This facsimile was created through a multi-stage process: a 3D digital model was produced, from which a 3D print was made. This print then served as the basis for a mould, which enabled the casting of the replica in wax. The final object was hand-painted to match the visual appearance of the original. It is important to note that the wax used by Factum Foundation was formulated to melt at a higher temperature, improving the object's adaptability to varying display conditions.

This hybrid production – combining digital technologies with traditional craftsmanship – and the use of enhanced materials raise compelling questions about the ontological status of the resulting object. If a facsimile is defined as an 'exact copy', can this new version of Michelangelo's figure still be considered one? The object was not hand-modelled; it underwent a series of digital and manual processes. Furthermore, the material itself has been improved – it is 'wax++', a wax that outperforms the original's.

We may be witnessing the emergence of a new class of objects – *objects of augmented reality* resulting from human-machine collaboration, which reimagine the very idea of a facsimile and the material properties that were once associated with it.

Ship of Theseus

Plutarch, 'Life of Theseus', in *The Parallel Lives*, Loeb Classical Library edition (Vol. I), 1914

The ship wherein Theseus...returned [from Crete] had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus [died c. 280 bce], for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question as to things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.

Speculation

Liana Ernstz, MLitt Curatorial Practice student, 2024-25

Flowers, Trees, Vines & Branches

While walking through a, more like a forest, park early one morning, I looked up at the way the light was glinting in through the trees. The sunlight on the brilliant green made me think of being younger. Like when I was sixteen and I felt like I was in a Sofia Coppola film, a little muted, emotional, but resolved. Unlike when I was sixteen, I looked up and saw a motif. Maybe it was all the textile patterns I saw that week during the Post Graduate Symposium, or maybe it was just a well-placed leaf, with five perfectly extended green leaflets, angled right above my head, haloed by the light. In the weirdest of ways, the idea that all those patterns, all those motifs of tamed florals, wild vines and fruited trees, were all... well... real... overwhelmed me. They were not just made up by human imagination. I love flowers, my apartment is full of cut and living plants, but it has always been their unruliness that attracts me. But looking up that morning, it was suddenly their exquisite pattern that made so much sense to me. Now, I, too, would want my home adorned with their mastery.

So, while my knee-jerk reaction was to collect all of the brilliant old photographs of Greek and Roman statues and create a strange ledge of history.

I paused at the floral reliefs.

I placed the God of Revelry, wildness and vine in the centre, small but central, in part to invite his goodwill, in other parts to create a physical representation of the human lost within nature. While we try to garden, to replicate the brilliance and beauty of nature is one that we can only admire, never quite understand.

It was also a joy for me to pick floral and natural motifs from facsimiles of older works. The echoing of this wonder I had looking up this weekend, my sixteen-year-old self had in her own way, and the steps of history that take us to the original work, whether it be 17th-century France, or 300 BCE. It felt appropriate to create a resonance between humans, across time, our lasting fascination, and that steady, entangled history of the natural.

It's interesting, but the idea that these are 'merely' facsimiles doesn't really bother me; I hardly thought about it, actually. I think, maybe because the theme, floral motifs, is itself just a facsimile of flowers, leaves and trees. That, in the grand scheme of it all, it's all just a replica. It's hard not to think about Benjamin, or Warburg, who I think would both argue that the photograph, or the copy, has its own magic and merit. Originality isn't itself real, you know? It's also hard not to just revel in the aesthetic beauty of these works, or images of these works, or images of the photographs of these works. Their third-degree presentations are themselves interesting. The

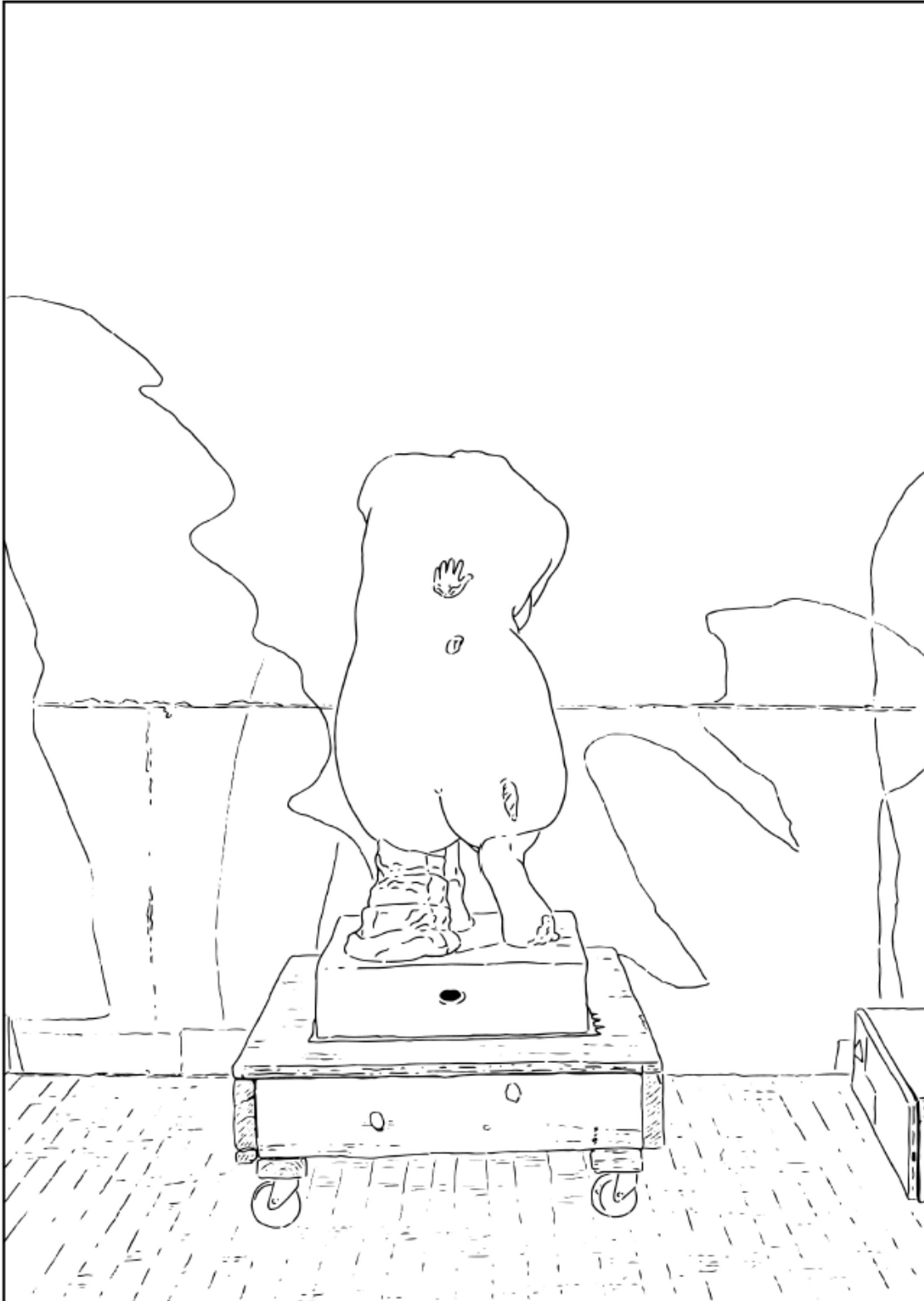
photograph of the Bacchus statue attracted me because of its aesthetic sepia photograph. The pages from the books, a fascinating way of displaying things. That, in the context of all that, the fact that the images are fourth degree away from their original spaces pushes the fantasy even further. So, the 'truth' of these works being plaster casts, or copies, doesn't affect the 'truth' of a digital exhibition; all of it would have been a copy.



Tracing

Louise Lawler, *Hand on Her Back*, 1997/98

Louise Lawler, *Hand on Her Back (Traced)*, 1997/98



Uncanny

Blackwell, Gemma, 'In Time the Likeness Will Become Apparent': Rebecca Fortnum's Feminist Copies', in *A Mind Weighted with Unpublished Matter*, ed. by Rebecca Fortnum and Andrew Hunt, Slimvolume, 14 (Slimvolume, 2020), p. 12

Something strange happens through the process of re-sizing and re-drawing. Copies are never, and can never, be originals; the closer they come, the more uncanny they appear, and this unnerving sense of the familiar becoming unfamiliar, of a disquieting 'other' emerging through the re-presentation of a face, is the atmosphere Fortnum seeks to create. She is interested in the discomforting nature of comparative visual analysis, of the affects (emotive, cognitive) of the shifting of the eyes between the original and the copy, the copy and the copy of the copy, back and forth from image to image. Often displaying different drawn versions of the same original alongside each other in her exhibitions and publications, Fortnum asks that we look carefully, even forensically, noticing the details and the deviations, that we settle within the feeling of being unsettled, unsure of exactly what or who we are looking at.

Violence

Morehshin Allahyari, '[Physical Tactics for Digital Colonialism](#)', *Medium*, 26 September 2019.

Since 2015, I have sat at and through countless lectures and panels in relationship to reconstruction of historical sites and artifacts. This is also a time in which there is a sudden trend of using photo-grammy, 3D printing and 3D scanning by institutions and companies as tools for preservation and reconstruction. It's also the time that ISIS goes from its rise to low. I have listened to technologists, archaeologists, historians, politicians all from the Western countries talking about the shock that they experienced watching the video of the destruction of artifacts by ISIS. And through these years, I have not once come across anyone addressing or condemning the destruction and violence committed by the very countries they come from. The kind of violence that has "shocked" them and has inspired them to do something. While other kinds of violence stays invisible, hidden in their binary simplistic readings of these events. Or it is cautiously untold.

ISIS takes pride in destruction. They are bold, direct. In their showcase of destruction, violence is presented as an eventful crisis; an explosive sudden kind of violence. You see it and it immediately shocks you. While for example the U.S. military hides, deletes, un-archives its violence and war crimes from public; or justifies it as a work that needs to happen for the safety of its people. Along side of this, those having access to platforms choose to participate in this kind of invisible violence. Them and those speaking about ISIS violence remove themselves from that picture pointing fingers at what's obvious. For example, after ISIS destruction of Palmyra's 1,800-year-old Arch, a project launched in London and then in NY as the result of major collaborations between the UK-based Institute for Digital Archaeology, UNESCO, and Dubai's Museum of the Future. In a video documentation of its ceremony, as a white fabric gets pulled down to unveil the reconstructed site of Palmyra, Boris Johnson, the former mayor of London, stands there to tell the audience: "No one should have the power to delete such monuments from our historical record. This is an arch of triumph and in many ways a triumph of technology and determination. We're here in a spirit of defiance, defiance of the barbarians who destroyed the original as they have destroyed so many other relics in Syria and the Middle East."

People in audience applaud. Then they take turns to take selfies with the new Palmyra and they perhaps go back to their safe homes never thinking back at what it was that was wrong with that image; How ISIS formed in first place as a result of U.S. and Europe invasion of the Middle-East. This violence that sits side by side to that so-called "barbarian" violence, the one that is equally real and destructive, is once again deferred, delayed. Has gone invisible. Pushed into some background, into some corner in some political maneuver of the bad and the good.

So the violence I am talking about here, is not just about how these figures remove themselves from a cycle they had been part of for centuries, but also a kind of Violence that is about Reclaiming.

ISIS reclaims the object through destruction, through creating absence. The western governments and tech companies reclaim it after destruction, through a new kind of presence; and we fail to see the violence of that presence in the way we see the violence of the absence. [...]

I want to begin by talking about Violent care. A concept I first came across in an article by Thom Van Dooren called *A Day with Crows : Rarity, Nativity and the Violent-Care of Conservation*, in

which Dooren shares his story about a day spent at the Keauhou Bird Conservation Center in Hawaii, observing staff taking care of a captive population of critically endangered Hawaiian crows. Over the course of the day some animals were cared for (especially endangered birds), while others were trapped and killed as part of the conservation management of the larger property (i.e. feral pigs). He uses this story to explore the frameworks and the associated regimes of 'violent-care' that structure "how living beings are valued or sacrificed within contemporary conservation practices".

These kind of decisions about the value of lives and cultures in Syria are made in central London; and so a replica of Palmyra's arch in Trafalgar Square becomes a symptom of violent care: the unique and precious object that is rescued when so much is deemed disposable. For any Western institution to focus on the reconstruction of the rare and special while other Western institutions have wrought the destruction of the everyday, is violent care.

Zhen Ji

Han, Byung-Chul, *Shanzhai: Deconstruction in Chinese*, trans. by Philippa Hurd, *Untimely Meditations Ser*, v. 8 (MIT Press, 2017), pp. 10-13.

In classical Chinese the original is called *zhen ji*. Literally this means the “authentic trace”. This is a particular trace, as it does not follow a teleological path. And there is no *promise* inherent in it. It is associated neither with anything enigmatic nor kerygmatic. Moreover, it does not condense into a clear, monomorphic *presence*. Rather, it deconstructs the idea of any such original that embodies an unmistakable, immutable, centered presence and identity. Processually and differentially give the trace a deconstructive, centrifugal force. The trace does not tolerate any completed, centered work of art that might possess a final form and avoid any change. Its *difference to itself* does not allow the artwork to come to a standstill whereby it could achieve its final shape. Thus the trace always lets the artwork *differ from itself*. The Chinese notion of the original as trace (*ji*) contains the structure of the Freudian “memory-trace” that is subject to continual rearrangement and transcription. The Chinese idea of the original is determined not by a unique act of creation, but by unending process, not by definitive identity but by constant change. Indeed, change does not take place within the *soul* of an artistic subjectivity. The trace effaces the artistic subjectivity, replacing it with a process that allows no essential positing.

The Far East is not familiar with such pre-deconstructive factors as original, origin, or identity. Rather, Far Eastern thought *begins with* deconstruction. Being as a fundamental concept of Western thought is something that resembles only itself, and that tolerates no reproduction outside itself. Plato's banishment of mimesis is a direct result of this conception of Being. According to Plato the beautiful or the good is something immutable that resembles only itself. It is monomorphic (*monoeides*). Thus it allows no variation. In every reproduction, this notion of Being sees something demonic that destroys original identity and purity. The notion of the original is outlined in the Platonic Idea. A *lack of Being* is inherent in every image. By contrast, the basic figure in Chinese thought is not the monomorphic, unique *Being* but the multiform, multilayered *process*.

A Chinese masterpiece never remains the same in itself. The more it is admired, the more its appearance changes. It is regularly overwritten by connoisseurs and collectors. They inscribe themselves into the work by means of inscriptions and seals. In this way inscriptions are layered up upon the work like memory-traces in the psychic apparatus. The work itself is subject to continual change and permanent transcription. It is not *static*. Rather, it is *fluid*. The *trace* makes it fluid. The trace is opposed to *presence*. The work empties itself out to become a generative, communicative locus of inscriptions. The more famous a work is, the more inscriptions it has. It presents itself as a palimpsest.

Not just individual works but an artist's entire oeuvre is subject to transformation as well. The oeuvre changes constantly. It shrinks and grows. New pictures suddenly turn up to fill it, and pictures that were once ascribed to a master's oeuvre disappear. For example, the oeuvre of the famous master Dong Yuan looks different in the Ming dynasty from how it looked during the Song dynasty, with even forgeries or replicas defining a master's image. A temporal inversion occurs. The subsequent or retrospective defines the origin. Thus the inversion deconstructs it. The oeuvre is a large lacuna or construction site that is always filling up with new contents and new pictures. We might also say: *the greater a master, the emptier is oeuvre*. He is a signifier without

identity, who is always being loaded with new significance. The origin turns out to be a *retrospective construction*.