

Replicas in Roman Art: Redeeming the Copy?

It used to be assumed that Roman artists routinely copied earlier masterpieces of classical and Hellenistic art. In the absence of those lost originals, many of which were bronze sculptures or perishable panel-paintings, the presumed Roman copies became a fundamental source for the history of Greek art. For instance, Roman copies remain the principal sources for some of the most celebrated Greek sculptures attested in ancient literature, including Myron's *Discus-Thrower*, Polykleitos's *Spear-Bearer*, and Praxiteles' *Aphrodite of Knidos*. Since the nineteenth century such works have been subjected to 'Kopienkritik' (copy-criticism) in an attempt to understand better the forms of the missing originals.

However, in the last thirty years or so there has been a radical reassessment of the phenomenon of Roman copies, to the extent that a more sceptical, revisionist view has become almost a new orthodoxy on the subject. It has become clear that the Romans who used 'copies' were not always -- indeed not normally -- motivated by the desire to reproduce famous works; the artists did not copy mechanically and their work was more creative and less concerned with accuracy than had been believed; replication in art was motivated by a range of factors besides mere art-appreciation, including notions of domestic decorum, religious sensibilities, and the practicalities of artists' workshops. Moreover, the previous identifications of copies, including those of the *Doryphoros* itself, have been seriously challenged.

These important developments are the background for the workshop, but our aim is to move beyond the revisionist view of Roman copies by recognizing that copying did indeed occur extensively in Roman art, often with a surprising degree of consistency and fidelity to models. Such replication is a mark of imperial portraiture, for example, but it demonstrably also involved the detailed reproduction of sculptures and works in other media which ultimately originated in Greek models of previous centuries. That phenomenon is all the more significant and intriguing given the lessons of the revisionist research in recent years and it demands to be re-examined through an open-minded synthesis of old and new knowledge and approaches.

This workshop therefore aims to put replication back on the agenda for research on Graeco-Roman art, addressing such questions as: should there be a new *Kopienkritik* for the 21st century? What is the relationship between replicas in portraiture and 'ideal-sculpture'? Why did the accurate replication of details matter in an artistic tradition dominated by freehand carving and painting? What geographical and chronological patterns can be detected in the production of copies? And what role did religion have in motivating replicas?