Preface

Since 2002 the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies has been actively involved in the planning of the interdisciplinary project regarding the Lancelotti Collection of Antiquities. During its history of eight decades, the Swedish Institute in Rome has conducted archaeological research and large excavation projects in Italy. For the last twenty years, the institute has been engaged in problems regarding research and preservation of the cultural heritage. Furthermore, the institute has recently been actively promoting projects in the area of conservation, in developing new methods of conservation and tools with which to analyze the physical state of buildings and monuments. Another step in this direction is the promotion of the Lancelotti Collection. In doing this, it is our hope to contribute to the ongoing debate on how to preserve and develop our cultural environment.

Education has always been of prime importance in the activity of the Swedish Institute. It was therefore considered a matter of great interest to integrate university courses into the conservation part of this project. This was done in collaboration with Göteborg University (ICUG) which sent four students to participate in three field campaigns. One of the objects of this was to give the students the opportunity to gain practical experience and thus their work was guided by the conservators Silvia Gambardella and Alessandro Danesi, who were in charge of the conservation of the site.

Thanks to generous financial support from private foundations (see below in Introduction) the project directed by Agneta Freccero was able to begin in 2003. The all-embracing title Art, conservation and science leads us into the main objective of this research project. Its main aim is to investigate the possibilities of developing new lines of research, by integrating the academic disciplines, including classical archaeology, art history with the art and scientific methods of restoration in an international project with common scientific goals. A great challenge was to identify problems and pose questions of universal interest and then to formulate theories and methods in order to bridge the gap between disciplines and, through a joint research programme, create a platform for a dialogue.

The beautiful courtyard of the Palazzo Lancelotti ai Coronari was chosen as the object of study as it was considered a well-defined closed unit with many interesting features regarding the composition of the collection and the actual state of preservation of the sculptures. A guiding principle adopted by the project was to publish the work in progress on-line in order to reach a vaster audience than is possible with a traditionally printed edition and to thus speed up publication. This strategy fitted well with the general policy of the Swedish Institute, which, for this purpose, has created the on-line series called Projects and Seminars intended to be a forum for debate and communication by publishing conferences, preliminary reports and presentations of research in progress. The present publication focuses its attention on the West Wall and is the first volume in which all participants have contributed with separate articles.

No project and no work could have been accomplished without the kind permission of the owner of the palace, Principe Pietro Lancelotti, whom I thank for his generosity in opening his property to students and scholars. The archaeological authorities, then represented by Soprintendente Adriano La Regina, have in every way facilitated our work, for which I wish to express my gratitude. Marcello Barbanera and Agneta Freccero have together edited this volume, an ungratifying and time-consuming task, which requires sharp eyes and a critical mind. To them and all the collaborators in the project I would like to express my warmest thanks.

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