THE STATUE HEADS

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Abstract

Roman portraits have often been re-carved, in Antiquity as well as in the Renaissance and in modern times. In many examples re-carving is a consequence of thorough renovation, as in the portraits presented in this text. This is proved by examination of style and techniques. The date of the re-working is often difficult to identify, and even more so the original date, as for example in the head on the female statue with *palla* in the Palazzo Lancellotti courtyard, patched together by 11 fragments. Except for the portrait on the Republican *togatus* to the right of the arch, and the modern head on the athlete to the left, the portraits at the west wall in the courtyard are restored to such an extent that they should not be regarded as antique. They have been renovated and altered several times, and although the changes of form may have started in late Antiquity, the most profound alterations were probably made in the Renaissance, when the antiquities in Rome abounded, and the sculpture program in Palazzo Lancellotti was established.*

Figs. 1-3. From left to right: The statues of Cicero, Sempronia and Cassius. Photos: M. Prusac

The heads of the statues at the west wall in the courtyard

Five of the six statues at the west wall in Palazzo Lancellotti have heads (fig. 1-5), and four of the heads have an ancient Roman core (fig. 1-4). Two of the heads are attached to the *togati*, one to the female statue with *palla* at the ground floor (fig. 1-3),¹ and two are on the athlete statues in the niches above (fig. 4-5).² The least re-worked portrait, except for the modern one on the athlete in the right window,³ is the single one made from the same block as the statue body (fig. 3).⁴ This is the only portrait in this group which can be given a certain date, based on the toga, which belongs in the mid-Augustan period, i.e. 13 BC-AD 5, see A. Freccero. One portrait is an object for discussion (fig. 1),⁵ while two of the heads are re-worked to such an extent that they can no longer be regarded as ancient (fig. 2 and 4).⁶

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¹ SAR no. 28-30.
² SAR no. 32-33.
³ SAR no. 33.
⁴ SAR no. 30.
⁵ SAR no. 28.
⁶ SAR no. 29, 32.
Re-carving of portraits as a phenomenon

When studying re-worked portraits in a collection such as the one in the Palazzo Lancellotti, it is important to keep in mind that a large amount of the sculptures included in Renaissance collections were thoroughly renovated, and that what we see today is more representative of the time of the renovation, than an expression of the original sculpture. Based on what we know of ancient styles and techniques, it is often possible to date secondary operations. If the original shape has not been altered too much, hypotheses for the original appearance of the sculpture can be raised, which again can indicate a date.

During the first and second century AD most of the re-carved portraits originally represented emperors culprited *damnatio memoriae*, saved from destruction by being changed into other representations. The portrait re-carving techniques developed, and were many and widespread from the middle of the third to the fifth century in particular. It is important to note that re-working, or re-carving of heads is not the same as renovation and restoration. To avoid terminological problems, it is important to have a clear definition, and my suggestion is as follows:

Re-used sculptures: sculptures moved from their original context, and sculptures with another function or message than they were originally given.

Re-carved/re-worked sculpture: can most easily be distinguished as they often have physical traces from the operation, or remnants from previous phases. The original form is always altered.

Restored sculptures: have been altered from the original form as a consequence of thorough conservation.

Renovated sculptures: have not been altered from the original form, but the surface has been polished, or treated in a way that in some cases is visible, but in other cases more uncertain.

At the time when the sculpture program in the cortile in Palazzo Lancellotti was established, artists and workshops in Rome were industriously attempting to obtain a uniformity of the sculptures restored, to the degree that restorations became Renaissance re-workings. Sometimes, as might be the case with, for example, the female, draped statue (*fig. 2*), and the athlete in the niche above her to the left (*fig. 4*), the original appearance of the sculptures was altered beyond recognition.

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8 Prusac forthcoming.
10 For a fuller explanation, see Prusac forthcoming; see also [http://www.aiac.org/Aiac_News/prusac.html](http://www.aiac.org/Aiac_News/prusac.html).
11 SAR no. 29.
12 SAR no. 32.
When a Roman portrait is uncovered in the soil or discovered as late Antique or Medieval filling-material, for example in a wall,\textsuperscript{13} it is not as difficult to study possible re-carving as when it is re-found in a Renaissance or modern setting. Some of the portraits included in Renaissance collections were altered according to their new function. In some cases, it can be difficult to distinguish ancient re-workings from Renaissance or modern alterations. The different periods have, however, different stylistic or technical expressions, that make it possible to at least raise hypotheses about the re-carving. The Renaissance artists or craftsmen were eagerly putting different sculpture parts together, as if mending the sculptures by adding missing links. A common feature among the statues treated here, which applies to the sculptures in Palazzo Lancellotti and other Renaissance palaces in general, is the industrious marble patchwork which indicates several phases of restoration. The patchwork is generally of a high quality, executed in a period when the Pope made first selections, and left the rest to the nobility and others who could afford. The market was large, and the artisans renovating the sculptures for sale developed high skills. It is important, however, to remember that this kind of craftsmanship had been known already in late Antiquity, and heads that obviously were not originally made for the statues they are attached to now, may just as well have been put there in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century AD,\textsuperscript{14} when there were antiquarian interests for earlier sculptures,\textsuperscript{15} and at the same time plenty available on the market.\textsuperscript{16}

The head of “M. Tullius Cicero”

Register: Freccero n. 1; SAR no. 1.
Material: white marble, various sorts.
Location: on the ground in front of the cortile’s W wall, SW corner.
Measures 0.26 m in height.
Provenance: unknown.
Bibliography: Matz, von Duhn 1881-1882 no. 1221.

Fig. 6-8. The head of Cicero; front, left, right. Photos: M. Prusac.

The portrait shows a rather young man with a slender, triangular face and two deep wrinkles in the brow, leaving a serious expression, indicating that the original portrait was of an older man (Fig. 6-8).\textsuperscript{17} The neck is broken both horizontally and vertically, and irregularly attached to the body. On the left side there is a circular hole under the chin. At the right on the back of the head the fracture is higher up, leaving the lower part of the hair below the joint. The chin and the nose are made of other

\textsuperscript{13} As for instance the *cosmets*, see Lattanzi 1968, 53-54 pl. 20a-b.
\textsuperscript{14} Blanck 1969 in general.
\textsuperscript{15} Bergmann 1997, 71-72; Brinkerhoff 1970; Elsner 1998, 109; Curran 1994; Ensoli 1997, 576-589; Aurea Roma 2000, 280; Hannestad 1994, 110, 117-119; Marvin 1983. Antiquarian interests did also exist earlier, and many sculptures excavated in places like Pompeii and Oplontis were not found in their original positions, see Dwyer 1982, 44-45 no. 12 pl. 12 fig. 43a-b; Bartman 1991, 72. See also for example Cic. *Ad Atticum* V 1.26; Plut. *Anton.* 60; Paus. I 2.4, 17.3, 18.3. The examples abound.
\textsuperscript{16} For example Brandenburg 1987, 235-246; Curran 1994, 51; Manderschied 1981, 20, 73-76.
\textsuperscript{17} A portrait in the Vatican Museum, the Lateran, dated to Caesar’s time has the same triangular shape of the head and the deep wrinkle in the brow above the nose, see Giuliano 1957, 6-7 no. 7a pl. 4.
marble types than the rest of the head. The hair is shortcut and receding. The mouth has deep corners, and the large eyes lie 2.2 cm deep under the broad forehead. The right ear is higher and further to the back than the left one, emphasising the fact that the face has been turned slightly to the right during re-carving, maybe due to the volume of the original head. This is also visible from above (fig. 9). The portrait’s right ear measures 7 cm and is 1 cm. shorter than the left, and it has a double earlobe (figs. 10-11). The lower part is most probably a remnant from the original head, as is often the case with re-carved ancient portraits. The ears were difficult to adjust to the new shape of the head. The remarkable depth of the eyes is most likely also a consequence of the re-carving method. The inner corners of the eyes are wider than what would be considered normal; another feature that might have been caused by the re-carving. The nose seems to have been prolonged as the eyes were cut deeper and wider, and moved upwards. The deep and unnatural wrinkle in the forehead might also be regarded as a consequence of the re-carving, as well as the unnaturally high forehead (fig. 12). The wrinkle, together with the slender, slightly triangular shape of the head, and the execution of the hair-locks at the back of the head, may indicate a Republican original, whereas the bean-shaped pupils indicate a late antique dating of the re-carving.19


18 See Agneta Freccero’s contribution in this publication.
19 For the dating of pupils, see for example Kleiner 1992, 238.
The head of “Sempronia”, the female statue with *palla*

Register: Freccero n. 2; SAR no. 29.
Material: white marble.
Location: on the ground in front of the cortile’s W wall, S of the portal.
Measures 0.27 m in height including the *palla*.
Provenance: unknown.
Unpublished.

Figs. 13, 14. The head of Sempronia; front and right profile. *Photos*: M. Prusac.
Figs. 15, 16. The head of Sempronia; left profile and right side, seen from below. *Photos*: M. Prusac.

The idealised head on the draped, female figure “Sempronia” is made by 11 fragments, and the extraordinarily long and thick neck is a complicated piece of marble patchwork (*figs. 13-16*). Several features indicate that it is not presented in its original version. The head, which might just as well derive from another context than from the statue to which it is fixed, fits well on the statue, suggesting that at least one part of it belonged to the body from the very beginning. This part is most probably the front part of the veil, continuing down the left temple and to the right side of the neck. The face, together with the right frontal part of the hair, is made by a separate piece, and the surface has been renovated more than once. Roman female portraits were normally less individual than male images, and they were easily altered by re-carving of the hair-style only. As female portraits were idealised, and as the later renovations of the surface may have evened out more individual features, this head might originally have been a portrait, *i.e.* representing a person.

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20 This was underlined by conservator Nils Klahr, who identified a two-component glue used for patching the 11 fragments of the head together, which was first in use after WWII, and intensively from the 1970s and onwards. Traces of earlier attaching materials were not identified, and there is no clear answer as to when the patchwork was done for the first time.

21 See Agneta Freccero’s contribution in this publication.

The head of “C. Cassius”

Register: Freccero, n. 3; SAR n. 30.
Material: white marble, various sorts.
Location: on the ground in front of the cortile’s W wall, N of portal.
Measures 0.23 m in height.
Provenance: unknown.
Bibliography: Matz, von Duhn 1881-1882 no. 1222.

Figs. 17, 18. The head of Cassius; front and right profile. Photos: M. Prusac.
Figs. 19, 20. The head of Cassius, left side seen from behind, and ¾ profile, left side. Photos: M. Prusac.

This head represents a male with an almost round face (figs. 17-20). The statue is monolithic, leaving no doubt about the common origin of the head and the body. The face is broad, and the nose is made of another marble type and attached later. The chin is also a later addition, made of the same marble as a couple of inserted pieces in the statue body. There are traces of restorations on the surface, around the ears in particular. At what time the restorations were made is uncertain, but the most probable suggestion would be at the time when the sculpture program in the Lancellotti palace was arranged. The hair surrounding the left ear is elaborately executed, with sickle-shaped, incised hair-locks obliquely set around the ear, while the hair around the right ear is more impressionistically carved. The neck is thick, raising questions about volume-reduction of the head, but this may rather be caused by restorations, as is probably also the case with irregularities such as the protruding bump above the left temple. The style of the head indicates a Republican date, but the toga places the statue in the mid-Augustan period.23

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23 See Agneta Freccero’s contribution in this publication.
The head on the athlete in the southern window

Register: Freccero n. 5; SAR n. 32.
Material: white marble.
Location: middle level of the cortile’s W wall, in the S window.
Measures 0.26 m in height.
Provenance: unknown.
Bibliography: Matz, von Duhn 1881-1882 no. 1014.

Parts of the face of this athlete’s head: the nose, the chin and the cheeks, are separate pieces of marble, inserted, and covered with a thin layer of plaster mixed with marble dust (fig. 25-29). The back part of the head is removed, and the face has been re-worked in recent times. Only a wrinkle at the root of the nose, the corners of the mouth which are deep and far away from each other, and deep drill-holes in the beard and hair, may be remnants of the original face. The head is still over life-size in its present state, indicating a larger than natural sized head before volume-reduction.

The head on athlete in the northern window

Register: Freccero n. 6; SAR no. 33.
Material: white marble, various sorts.
Location: middle level of the cortile’s W wall, in the N window.
Measures 0.29 m in height.
Provenance: unknown.

The head on this athlete-statue was probably made during the Renaissance (fig. 30-33), or later. It has no known parallels in ancient sculpture there are no traces from ancient tools, and no stylistic features indicating an ancient date. The lines are sharp and not damaged by time. There are no remnants from a previous portrait, nor stylistic discrepancy, or asymmetry.25

24 See the contribution of Danesi, Gambardella in this publication for technical description.
25 There is no reason to suspect that Cardinal Lancellotti believed this head to be a Roman original. It is not in category with the many falsifications, which mostly seem to have been at the market later, at the beginning of the 19th century; see for example Perrone Mercanti 1999, 19-37.
Concluding remarks
The portrait of “M. Tullius Cicero” is the only monument here that may bear traces of having been re-carved in late Antiquity, although it is difficult to prove. In portraits this much altered through time, only hypotheses can be presented. Bean-shaped eye-pupils in a portrait otherwise more likely to date in the Republican period, however, indicate that it was altered already in Antiquity. “Sempronia” may have been in different contexts representing different Roman women, but this can only be speculations. The idealised facial features, patched together and glued in modern times, do not give any indication. “C. Cassius” has been strongly renovated on the surface, most probably in the Renaissance, to such an extent that the left ear has been altered. The head of the athlete in the southern window is heavily renovated, and only the core and perhaps some parts of the hair from the original, ancient head remain. The head on the athlete in the northern window should be regarded as modern.  

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26 Renaissance and modern re-carvings or re-workings do not reduce the value of the sculptures. On the contrary; they are historical evidence, bearing traces from different periods. In a collection such as the one in the Lancellotti Palace, ancient sculptures demonstrate not only the Lancellotti family’s classical interests, but also the taste of their time, and more importantly, their strong desire for the acquisition of ancient originals, also when badly preserved. Some examples, like the head of the athlete in the southern window, demonstrate to what extremes the collectors would let the renovators go to be able to exhibit ancient originals as “complete”. It expresses the pride and the prestige symbolised by ancient sculpture, more than the aesthetic values of the Renaissance.
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