

## ANCIENT PLASTER CASTS AND MARBLE STATUE PRODUCTION

It is a well-established fact that the Romans both copied and created new statues based on ancient Greek statues in the thousands from the 2nd century BCE until the 3rd century CE. We also know that plaster casts played a significant role in the actual transmission of form, from where the originals were and to the place where the copies were made. But are we to imagine that plaster casts played a role or are we perhaps to conclude that they rather dominated the transmission of form? This question is intimately related to the whole production-aspect of marble sculpture as well as of the transportation of it. This talk aims at revisiting these important questions, first of all by way of a broad assessment of the written as well as material sources for ancient plaster casts, ancient sculpture production and its distribution. Much of what we would like to know about these aspects of ancient sculpture is bound to remain unknown, due to the nature of the sources. However, we may expand our understanding of ancient practises by looking at that of 18th–19th century European sculpture production. Such a supplementary method is valid in so far as the work-conditions and methods of neoclassicist sculptors were not dissimilar to those of their ancient colleagues.

Although interesting as well as important in themselves, these questions do not represent our ultimate goal. The technical aspects of ancient sculpture are tools with which we may better understand other major aspects of it, such as style and monetary value of sculptural artworks. Roman ideal sculpture, with its changing styles from late Republican to late Imperial times, operated within strict style-frames that were controlled and managed by the important agents surrounding it: commissioners, connoisseurs and not the least the sculptors. To understand the practical world of transmission of form is an important part of understanding the powers of tradition as well as those change in ancient Roman sculpture.

© Rune Frederiksen  
e-mail: [rufr@glyptoteket.dk](mailto:rufr@glyptoteket.dk)

This article should be cited like this: R. Frederiksen, Ancient Plaster Casts and Marble Statue Production, *Forum Archaeologiae* 98/III/2021 (<http://farch.net>).