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From Spolia to Collections in the Roman Renaissance

Summary

This paper considers the emergence of antiquity collections in renaissance Rome against the backdrop of medieval traditions of spoliation. It analyses in particular the contributions of Salvatore Settis and Kathleen Wren Christian to our understanding of the political and social functions of collections, and their relations to earlier forms of display. The paper also examines the connections between renaissance collections and wider concerns about the preservation of the ancient city, the display of Christian antiquities, and other collections elsewhere on the Italian peninsula.

Keywords: Renaissance; museum; collection; preservation; courtyard; garden; Christian antiquities.

Dieser Aufsatz behandelt die Entstehung von Antikensammlungen im Rom der Renaissancezeit vor dem Hintergrund der mittelalterlichen Tradition der Spolierung. Insbesondere wird untersucht, was Salvatore Settis und Kathleen Wren Christian zu unserem Verständnis der politischen und sozialen Funktion von Sammlungen und ihrer Beziehung zu früheren Präsentationsformen beigetragen haben. Der Aufsatz verbindet die Untersuchung der Renaissance-Sammlungen mit umfangreicheren Betrachtungen über die Bewahrung der Altstadt, die Präsentation christlicher Altertümer und anderer Sammlungen der italienischen Halbinsel.

Keywords: Renaissance; Museum; Sammlungen; Bewahrung; (Innen)hof; Garten; christliche Altertümer.

I Introduction

The century following Nicholas V's 1447 election to the papacy and the subsequent consolidation of papal power witnessed vast changes in attitudes to the material remains of antiquity. As a range of figures in Rome – from popes and sculptors to antiquities dealers and construction workers – tried to get hold of pagan relics, practices of excavation, protection, and representation shifted and evolved. The widespread emergence of antiquity collections is one of the best-documented of these phenomena. Various men took ancient objects – coins, inscriptions on stone and bronze, and sculptures of various types – and displayed them in their houses, palaces, and suburban villas. By the later sixteenth century, these collections had become a celebrated feature of the Roman landscape, recommended alongside Christian sites and ancient structures to tourists from the north.

How should we explain the emergence of these collections? For the most part, scholars have been more interested in the collections' status as forerunners of the modern museum than in the genesis of the collections themselves. Insofar as they have addressed the question, they have seen collections as a natural consequence of the renaissance veneration for classical antiquity, as a result of high renaissance artists' need to have classical models to imitate (this on the model of Lorenzo de' Medici's Florentine 'accademia' recounted by Vasari), or as a response to papal authority and initiative (in such a narrative the Capitoline antiquities that Pope Sixtus IV bestowed on the city of Rome in 1471, and the papal collection of the Belvedere installed by Julius II in the first decade of the sixteenth century figure prominently as models for others to follow).¹ These assumptions about collections tended to divorce them from practices of spoliare construction and medieval traditions of display at Rome.² In the last two decades or so, however, the gap separating scholarship on spolia and scholarship on collections has dissolved, thanks to the work of two scholars in particular, Salvatore Settis and Kathleen Wren Christian. In what follows I take their exemplary research and presentation of a wide body of material as the basis for my discussion, focusing on stone antiquities' display

1 For the first, see e.g. Weiss 1988. Vasari 1979, ii.858 comments as follows: "This [Lorenzo's] garden was in such wise filled with the best ancient statuary... And all these works, in addition to the magnificence and adornment that they conferred on that garden, were as a school or academy for the young painters and sculptors, as well as for all others who were studying the arts of design..." On the garden, see Elam 1992 and Pommier 2001. As well as not being necessarily applicable to what was happening in Rome, Vasari's picture of the garden is likely to have been shaped by his own later experience as an

artist and student of ancient sculpture. On the Capitoline donation, see Buddensieg 1983 and Christian 2010, 103–113, with previous bibliography; and for the Belvedere, Brummer 1970.

2 Most scholarship on spolia at Rome focuses on late antiquity and the medieval period; exceptions that look at the sixteenth century tend to focus on ecclesiastical architecture: see especially Satzinger 1996; Bosman 2004, and the contributions of Bernhard Fritsch, Hermann Schlimme, and Christine Pappe in this volume.

as a means to understand the ways in which renaissance collections relate to previous spoliation practices.³ I will look at the emergence of collections in Rome and changes in their appearance, focusing particularly on the collections of private citizens (this will offer some context for the Capitoline and papal collections and give a better sense of the extent of the collecting phenomenon – Sara Magister has identified at least 165 separate Roman antiquity collectors between 1471 and 1503).⁴ I will then consider how we might build on the pictures on the relation of spolia to collections that Settis and Christian present, by looking at other aspects of the emergence of collections in Rome, including the relation of collecting to wider concerns about the preservation of the ancient city, the collection and display of antiquities in Christian contexts, and practices of collecting and display elsewhere on the Italian peninsula.

2 Collections as reuse

In a programmatic article of 1993, *Des ruines au musée: La destinée de la sculpture classique*, Salvatore Settis proclaimed that the “collection est une nouvelle forme de réemploi.”⁵ Traditionally, scholars had been most interested in sixteenth-century collections as repositories for individual archaeological finds, and they focused on the fate of those pieces rather than examining the position of individual pieces in relation to the whole.⁶ Settis, though, showed that the collection should be connected to spoliate construction; it is a new type of reuse only because it places antiquities in specially-designed display spaces that demonstrate the distance between the present and the classical past, whereas previously the display of antiquities within new structures had laid claim to a link with the authority of antiquity.⁷ The shift from one mode to another was not simple, however. As Settis went on to argue in a subsequent essay,

... the process by which ancient sculptures changed their status in the transition from ruins to collections ... was both much slower than we usually think and much more dramatic, prompted less by aesthetic admiration than by political expediency. The artistic value of ancient sculpture became an important factor

3 In addition to Settis and Christian, see the very useful overviews of Franzoni 1984 and Franzoni 2001 on changes in the spaces used to show antiquities. The three-volume collection *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte Italiana*, edited by Settis 1984–1986, inaugurated much of the current work reconsidering the places and display of antiquities.

4 See Magister 1998 and Magister 2001 for an invaluable catalog. Cavallaro 2007 includes a number of important studies.

5 Settis 1993, 1369; see also Settis 2001, 32–33.

6 E.g. Hülsen 1917. The mass of material in Lanciani's *Storia degli scavi* (Lanciani 1989–2002) can be interpreted in various contexts, though Lanciani's primary concern was the history of excavation in Rome.

7 Settis 2001, building on the model of Settis 1986.

only after connotations of prestige were added to it through its purposeful reuse in a number of contexts whose significance was usually determined by power rather than by taste.⁸

The process of displacement therefore served initially to enhance the political status and standing of the new owner; collections should be seen in their political and cultural roles. Building on Settis, we can see that the sense of distance from the past did not emerge in a straightforward way; in order to enhance their status, renaissance figures often used spoliative construction to stress their links with, rather than their removal from, the classical past.⁹

In a number of precise studies of individual Roman collections, and now in a book, Kathleen Wren Christian has confirmed Settis's basic picture, while adding important detail and nuance to it. Christian directly identifies the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as the "transitional period" in the "shift in the status of antique images ... from building materials to collectable art objects."¹⁰ Very broadly speaking, she shows how collectors in this period expanded the range of objects that they collected, from coins to inscriptions to figural sculpture. Their backgrounds changed, too: ecclesiastical dignitaries gradually replaced indigenous Romans. Like Settis, Christian emphasizes the contingency and variety of this process. Collectors used antiquities to enhance their prestige in a variety of ways: as a means to demonstrate their magnificence, their liberality, and eventually their appreciation of beauty; but also to show their commitment to the development of the city; to emphasize their connections with antiquity, and therefore their established presence in Rome; and more specifically, as a means of connecting themselves with a pre-imperial (and so pre-papal) republican past, reminding viewers of their potential political power. Thus for Christian, a collection could be "an active agent of cultural change," and more concretely a means for ambitious figures in Rome to promote themselves and establish roots.¹¹ Both Settis and Christian show that late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century collectors explored a variety of sites for the "purposeful reuse" of their "art objects"; including the street façades of their residences, but also the semi-public courtyards of their palaces, private studies and libraries, and, eventually, purpose-built sites, including pleasure gardens whose major function was to highlight antiquities. As we shall see, in comparison with the medieval period, we are well-informed about the political and social purpose and reception of these new sites.

8 Settis 2008, 14.

9 See Koortbojian 2011, 163, who argues from three fifteenth- and sixteenth-century case studies precisely that "the use of *spolia* was intertwined with a conspicuous and deliberate attempt to negate the great gulf of time that lay between now and then."

10 Christian 2010, 2.

11 Christian 2010, 4; she cites the work of Paula Findlen as a particularly important influence on this argument.

3 Antiquities from façade to courtyard

By 1450 antiquities had long been used in the façades of buildings to advertise their owners' distinction. The most famous example was that of the twelfth-century Casa dei Crescenzi, where an inscription, visible today, even attested to the civic commitment of its owner, asserting his desire to "renew the ancient splendor of Rome."¹² By the time Manuel Chrysoloras visited Rome at the beginning of the fifteenth century, he could comment that "Here the streets are full of ... statues, images of the ancient heroes cover ... the walls of houses ... walking through the city, one's eyes are drawn from one work to another"¹³, and even if he overstated his case, it seems clear that he was referring to a common phenomenon. Private citizens of the second half of the century continued the trend. Lorenzo Manlio, for example, a successful apothecary, built ancient inscriptions and bas-reliefs, including one with the portrait of a freedman (Manlio could have recognized in an ancient freedman a figure of equivalent status to his own), into the façade of his new house (Fig. 1).¹⁴ A huge, classicizing inscription began with the assertion that 'Rome is being reborn in her former guise' ('Urbe Roma in pristinam forma[m] [r]enascente'). Like the Crescenzi, therefore, Manlio placed his decision to display antiquities on the outside of his new house within a wider civic project of the renewal of classical Rome. The rest of the inscription complicated that position, however. It was dated from the founding of the city (2229 'ab urbe condita' rather than AD 1476), and connected Manlio with 'the Manlius name.' Manlius could refer either to an ancient Roman general who defended Rome in 390 BCE, or to a rather less prominent Manlius Homullus celebrated in one of the inscriptions immured in the façade.¹⁵ With these details, then, the newly-prominent Manlio presented himself as having deep roots in the city and asserted a continuity between his own time and classical antiquity; if this was a renaissance, it did not follow a clean break with the past.¹⁶

Manlio's house, with its inscription, helps us understand other, less explicit façades. Like Manlio, some families included inscriptions referring to Roman individuals bearing similar names to their own. The De' Rossi, for example, showed an inscription featuring a Roscius.¹⁷ Others created more pointed displays. In 1457 Andrea Santacroce included a fragment of the consular Fasti (an inscribed list of Roman magistracies) featuring P. Valerius Publicola on the façade of his house. To this he probably added a

12 Gramaccini 1996, 79–80; for the inscription, Lansford 2009, 164–165: "Rome veterem renovare decorem."

13 Translation of Smith 1992, 202, from Manuel Chrysoloras, *Comparison of Old and New Rome*.

14 Tucci 2001; Christian 2010, 74–76, and 78 on freedmen.

15 The inscription was *CIL* VI.11142; Tucci 2001, 203–204.

16 Koortbojian 2011, 154–156.

17 *CIL* VI.25478, first recorded by Sabinus in the 1490s; Mazzocchi 1521, fol.142v–143r records it 'in domo' as opposed to two other inscriptions, not mentioning Roscius, which were 'ante domum' and 'supra portam.'



Fig. 1 Spolia in the wall of Lorenzo Manlio's house, with the extensive new inscription above.

togate statue which he entitled VALER PUBL CC (Valerius Publicola, consul more than once), and a fragment of a relief showing the fasces.¹⁸ Santacroce was a prominent civic dignitary at Rome, holding the positions of *maestro delle strade* in 1449–1450 and conservator in 1466; on a basic level, these images and textual references to Roman magistracy seem to have been designed to convey his authority (in the façade of one of the residences of the della Valle family, great political rivals to the Santacroce, was an ancient relief described as showing ‘a shrouded man holding a book, with two cocks on each side,’ which seems similarly designed to convey power).¹⁹ More specifically, Andrea seems to have decided that Valerius Publicola, one of the four Roman consuls legendarily responsible for overthrowing the monarchy, was an ancestor of the Santacroce family. Like Manlio, therefore, Santacroce identified his family with a known Roman Republican hero.

18 For the Santacroce, see Christian 2003 and Christian 2010, 372–374. Andrea put together a manuscript collection of inscriptions, together with a guide to the interpretation of abbreviations in inscriptions and legal texts, showing his expertise with this sort of material. For the fasces see *CIL* VI.70*, Mazzocchi 1521, fol. 121r.

19 Paoluzzi 2007, 153 and 171, on *CIL* VI.22219. Giocondo recorded this ‘Sub porticu domus Philippi

de la Valle; Sabinus ‘in vestibulo d. Andreae Vallensis’ Sabinus described a ‘homo sedens supra sedem, sub qua erat theca inter sedem et scabellum, velatus veste a capite usque ad pedes, tenens librum utraque manu in modum voluminis, circa quem advolant duo galli cristati?’ (later the figure was taken to the rear of the palace: for illustration, see Boissard 1597–1602, iv.54). The figure is now interpreted as an augur.

In the courtyard of his palazzo, Francesco Porcari displayed various ancient reliefs showing pigs (*porci*), related to the pig that appeared in the Porcari family coat of arms.²⁰ These spolia suggest a somewhat playful association with Roman antiquity. Giulio Porcari, Francesco's son, however, went further, and added a political edge to the family's displays. In the courtyard, above a doorway at the head of a flight of stairs, he installed an antique cornice, and added a new inscription above, which proclaimed "I am he, Cato Porcius, author of our progeny who, with arms and diplomacy, brought his noble name to the lips [of all]."²¹ The Cato Porcius could be either the elder or the younger Cato: both were distinguished for their upright service to the Roman republic, and the younger in particular for his resistance to the tyranny of Caesar. Giulio Porcari's grandfather, Stefano Porcari, had been executed in 1453 for mounting a conspiracy against Pope Nicholas V that appealed to republican ideals.²² As Christian argues, therefore, when Giulio Porcari, like Manlio and Santacroce, chose to highlight a famous republican servant of Rome, all three were demonstrating a commitment to independence from papal government even as they accommodated themselves to individual popes.²³ In the second half of the fifteenth century, then, medieval traditions of spoliating construction were given a contemporary political resonance, by engaging contemporary humanists' knowledge of Roman history, Roman visual culture, and Roman inscriptions.

Considering these carefully-chosen displays, Settis asks "if we think, say, of the patchwork of sculptures on the walls of Lorenzo Manlio's house, can we call it a collection or not?" and answers that "I leave the question open, maintaining that it is more important to recognize in it ... a *transition* from reuse to collection."²⁴ We should not, though, see the façades in isolation; by the later fifteenth-century they advertised the treasures that their owners kept behind the walls. These collections could include inscriptions, sarcophagi and reliefs, like the Porcari pigs, but increasingly, towards the end of the century, free-standing figural statues as well. Even the relatively humble Manlio owned statues, according to Francesco Albertini, writing in 1510,²⁵ and more prominent civic and ecclesiastical figures developed significant collections. Andrea Santacroce's nephew, Prospero, also a conservator (in 1495), added various figural statues to the family collection, including a torso of Venus. Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere displayed various inscriptions in front of the complex around the Basilica dei Santi Apostoli, which he began to restore in the late 1470s; inside his palace he included a garden courtyard, which featured two immured inscriptions, and a series of free-standing stat-

20 Modigliani 1994, 310–311, 330–331; Christian 2010, 354–358.

21 Minasi 2007; Christian 2010, 71–72 and 355. Modigliani 1994, 311 and figs. 9–10.

22 Modigliani 1994, 445–477.

23 Christian 2010, 76–77. On the place of antiquity in the resistance of the Roman nobility to papal control more generally, see e.g. Miglio 2003.

24 Settis 2008, 24.

25 Albertini 1510, Q2v.

ues with a giant porphyry vase in the middle.²⁶ Della Rovere, in fact, probably created his courtyard in response to the earlier example of Prospero Colonna, who had created an enclosed space to display ancient statues as a backdrop for elite gatherings very close to where della Rovere was building.²⁷ By the end of the century this model was increasingly common. When della Rovere was elected pope, as Julius II in 1503, it is not surprising that he soon turned his attention to creating a purpose-built statue court, the Belvedere, for his new Vatican palace.²⁸

Ostensibly, these spaces lacked the political thrust of pointed façade-displays. When Cardinal Cesarini placed an inscription at the entrance to his collection, he announced that it was to provide “*honesta voluptas*” for his contemporaries, and one observer called the Belvedere a *viridarium*, the term used by Roman writers for a garden for relaxation.²⁹ The collections were withdrawn from the business of the public street, except on special occasions.³⁰ A visitor to Rome from Milan in 1490, Giovanni da Tolentino, reported that he was accosted outside the della Valle residences by “a certain Roman citizen”, who asked “What if you were to come across works in a private house probably not inferior to those you have seen in public?” before presenting the courtyard and statuary that it contained.³¹ The house was not entirely private, but the contemplation of the works that it contained – and hence the pleasure that they could provide – was at the behest of their owner. The 1471 donation of Sixtus IV to create the Capitoline antiquity collection is sometimes assumed to have paved the way for more public collections, but the evidence suggests the opposite is true; in the two generations following Sixtus, antiquities were increasingly moved out of public thoroughfares into private dwellings. A direct connection with figures from antiquity, such as Manlio boasted, remained a central mark of status for Roman dwellers (there are several sixteenth-century examples of families highlighting inscriptions to demonstrate a connection with classical Roman families),³² but the simple ownership of beautiful remains became an increasingly important sign of status, too.

These courtyards did not necessarily break with earlier traditions of spoliative construction. For the most part they continued to include antiquities in their new walls.

26 Magister 2002, Christian 2010, 368–372.

27 Magister 2002, esp 390–421 for the relationship between della Rovere and the Colonna; and for Colonna, see Christian 2010, 37–61.

28 Della Rovere moved some statues from his collection to the new space, which would have made the link clear to his contemporaries: for the Apollo Belvedere, see Brown 1986.

29 Christian 2010, 296; Stinger 1998, 272.

30 For Leo X’s possesso of 1513, della Valle erected a temporary triumphal arch as a sort of display-

scaffold (and so prefiguring Raphael’s ability to distinguish statues from structure in the Arch of Constantine): see Paoluzzi 2007, 163–167, and Christian 2008, 40 and 48 with previous references, and for the context of the contested Via Papalis, Cafà 2010.

31 Schofield 1980, 254–255, translated in Christian 2008, 37–38.

32 These include the Porcari (*CIL* VI.1852, first recorded in the 1540s), the Massimi (*CIL* VI.1407, again first recorded in the 1540s), and the Cenci (*CIL* VI.9978, first recorded in the 1560s).

Andrea della Valle experimented with two types of private display for his collection. In the walls of a new courtyard for an existing palace, the Palazzo di Mezzo, the inner cortile included ancient friezes in the architraves, sarcophagi appeared at ground level, and symmetrical niches held sculptures.³³ Then for a new palace, designed from scratch in the 1520s, he commissioned Lorenzetto (Lorenzo Lotto) to create a sculpture garden above the stables.³⁴ Whereas the courtyard of the Palazzo di Mezzo could still be a place for business, decorated with antiquities, the garden offered an opportunity for inspired retreat, apparently on the model of the Belvedere. New inscriptions included the manifesto that the garden was “For the enjoyment of life, as a retreat of grace and elegance,”³⁵ and suggested that it was “as a *viridarium* of ancient things and as an aid to poets and painters.” Lorenzetto included four ancient columns at each corner, and, on either side, two layers of symmetrical niches to hold statues, with reliefs below and attic masks above immured between them. Whereas before ancient fragments featured on the façades of houses, now they appeared within. Roman nobles increasingly commissioned painters – Polidoro da Caravaggio is the best known – to produce completed all’antica relief scenes for the façades. As antiquities were admired qua antiquities inside their palaces, nobles wanted complete frescoes for the classical, coherent façades that they presented to the general public.³⁶ Della Valle included one ancient relief on the street wall of his hidden hanging sculpture garden, an advertisement of what lay within for the select few.³⁷ It was also probably a knowing nod to the form of display that his garden was replacing; similarly, when Francesco Gualdi included antiquities facing the street in the façade of his museum in the early seventeenth century, his seems to be a consciously anachronistic gesture.³⁸

33 Christian 2008, 38–41.

34 Christian 2008, 41–53.

35 Christian 2008, 50 for texts and translation: “Ad delictum vitae elegantiarum gratiarumque secessum.” and “Antiquarum rerum viridario [for vivario] pictorum poetarumque subsidio.”

36 Note, though, that the della Valle still presented actual statues on their façade, which was in place by 1550: see Christian 2008, 45. For the contrast between the classicizing façade of the Palazzo Mattei di Giove and the knowing display of spolia in the courtyard, see Koortbojian 2011, 151–153.

37 Christian 2008, 42 with figs. 15 and 18.

38 For the Gualdi museum, see Federici 2002, esp. 277 and Settis 2008, 27, and, more generally, Franzoni 1991 and Franzoni and Tempesta 1992. I would argue that the effect of mounting many antiquities in the walls of later garden villas, like the Villa Medici and Villa Borghese, was somewhat different because they were sites for contemplation, not business; see Federici 2002, and on the Villa Borghese, Fiore et al. 2007.

4 Courtyard collections and the discourse of preservation

Wholly private hoarding of antiquities, however, served the interest neither of the owners – whose magnificence and generosity would not then be apparent – nor that of participants in a developing debate about the ownership and preservation of Rome’s classical treasures. Della Valle’s and Cesarini’s inscriptions made it clear that their collections were not for family alone, but rather for guests and visitors, or more specifically poets and painters, as above (Maarten van Heemskerck’s drawing of the courtyard was adapted as a popular print).³⁹ In addition the renaissance collections emerged at a time when both papal and civic authorities were attempting to regulate the excavation and export of antiquities. In this climate, owners were able to present their collections as contributing to the preservation of ancient Rome, and hence to the glory of the contemporary city.

As David Karmon has recently shown, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanists’ frequent complaints about the degeneration of the ancient city’s built environment have obscured the fact that several deliberate attempts to preserve classical Roman structures succeeded in this period.⁴⁰ Both the papacy and civic authorities increasingly used their powers to protect existing structures, and directed builders looking for construction material to excavate for it, rather than to take it from visible buildings. In the course of the 1520s, Karmon argues, we can see “that papal legislation [became] considerably more specific in its efforts to preserve ancient remains,” and identify “a new interest in locating the source of value [for the city] precisely in the age and antiquity of Rome’s historic artifacts.”⁴¹ For collectors of antiquities, this environment had various consequences. Excavations, of course, regularly turned up displayable antiquities as well as broken stone, and collectors could justifiably claim that by taking these remains to their homes, they were saving them from the kiln.⁴² More generally, the careful display and celebration of objects would maintain them. In his famous letter to Leo X on the Arch of Constantine of around 1519, Raphael had begged him to “ensure that ... what little remains of this ancient mother of the glory and renown of Italy is not to be completely destroyed and ruined by the wicked and the ignorant.”⁴³ By this point, collectors who

39 On questions of representation and access, see Cofin 1982; Falguières 1988 and Stenhouse 2005. A copy of the print of van Heemskerck’s drawing is available at http://www.britishmuseum.org/collectionimages/AN00109/AN00109095_001_1.jpg (consulted 7 September 2016).

40 Karmon 2011; see also e.g. Franceschini 1986.

41 Karmon 2011, 97.

42 As Fancelli notes (Fancelli 2005, 57): “Spolia vuol dire, appunto, riutilizzo, re-impiego, di certo spoliazione, sottrazione, talora scavo mirato allo scopo. Ma altro era il raccogliere, quasi naturaliter, dei brani sparsi a terra, altro la caccia al materiale nel sottosuolo, altro ancora era, oltretutto con i pericoli derivanti, perseguire il fine previa manomissione di un monumento ancora in piedi.”

43 Hart and Hicks 2006, 181; see Di Teodoro 1994.

saved fragmentary remains could legitimately present themselves as already protecting Rome's glory.

Andrea della Valle went one step further. In a 1530 letter – whose main purpose, interestingly, seems to have been to ask Cardinal della Valle to make sure that he distinguished the public road from his private property – the papal Camerlengo Agostino Spinola referred to della Valle's project as follows: “restoring [statues and other stones] to their former appearance, imitating buildings collapsed through time, and refreshing them for the new use and enjoyment of us and our descendents.”⁴⁴ Della Valle certainly restored some of the antiquities that he displayed – one of his new inscriptions stated that the garden was “for the restoration of collapsing statues” – but the link between imitation (*imitando*) and refreshment or restoration (*reparando*) requires more explanation. Spinola seems to allude to the source of some of della Valle's pieces. Della Valle worked hard to gather material for his new creation, and unusually for the period paid for deliberate excavations.⁴⁵ He also looked around for material from buildings that were still standing, including the Arcus novus on the Via Lata. This had suffered significant damage when Innocent VIII restored the church next door (Santa Maria), but its remains were still visible in the early sixteenth century.⁴⁶ Della Valle got hold of a number of reliefs from this structure, and had them placed in structures influenced by triumphal arches. Thus della Valle was not simply preserving them from further deprecation, but also recreating their ancient structure, both imitating and restoring. Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood's recent explorations of notions of replacement and substitution in fifteenth-century artistic production are relevant here.⁴⁷ If renaissance

44 The version of this letter in the Vatican archives seems to be a draft, and resists a straightforward translation. For the full text of the first section (taken from Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Divers camer., armadio 29 vol. 79, fol.76v) see Frommel 1973, ii.337: “... Laudabile tue ... propositum quod in exornanda amplificandaque urbe roma unde oriunda est plurimum usatur marmoreas porphires easque longenj temporis subterraneas statuas et alios lapides dignorum artificum manibus elaboratos historijs memoratu digna sculptos clara maiorum gesta vivificantes ad lucem restituendo priscam ediftia vetustate colapsa imitando eaque in novum et modernum posteriumque nostrorum usum et delectamentum reparando non solum commendatione et approbatione sed etiam omnj favore gratia admonimento [?] dignum esse existit monumentum [?] ... cum nuper accepimus eandem tuam Reverendissimam dominationem pulcherrimum quoddam edificium pro suo posteriumque suorum

usu et commoditate urbisque decoreo novis et veteris lapidibus exornatum in regione sancti Eustachij construere inceperit [?] eademque et[?] pro ea quandam plateolam que Cardinalis ipsius edificat et existit.” I have taken “resituendo” with “statuas et alios lapides”; cf. Christian 2002, Appendix IX.9.

45 Vacca 1704, 22; Christian 2008; Campbell 2004 for rescue archaeology.

46 Lanciani 1989–2002, i.273–274. On the arch see the useful summary of *LTUR* i.101–102.

47 E.g. Nagel and Wood 2010, 31: “This book argues that the apprehension of historical artifacts in the late medieval and early modern period, as well as the production of new images and buildings, was built on the following paradox: the possibility that a material sample of the past could be both an especially powerful testimony to a distant world and at the same time an ersatz for another, now absent artifact.”

scavenger-archaeologists removed the most distinctive elements from a particular structure and installed them elsewhere, they could argue that that structure was preserved. Perhaps della Valle thought that through his work, the *Arcus novus* lived on.⁴⁸ Certainly when fifty or so years earlier Lorenzo Manlio proclaimed that Rome was being reborn in her former guise, we should take the sentiment seriously; by building anew, but with antiquities, fifteenth-century patrons could argue they were recreating the old. With these arguments, humanist patrons could defend taking material from existing structures, and, like Manlio, could use ancient material to suggest a continuity with the past.

More generally, we can see late fifteenth-century collectors trying to match their new displays to the original function of their objects.⁴⁹ The display of funerary epitaphs by Pomponio Leto in Rome and his student Giovanni Pontano in Naples offer interesting examples. Leto collected mainly funerary inscriptions, from which he made a “little atrium built out of erudite epitaphs,” according to a later account.⁵⁰ Here he met his pupils and friends to discuss antiquity, and to recreate some of its rituals. Christian suggests that he began to conceive of this garden “as a sort of tomb”; or large burial chamber, from the original function of the objects there included.⁵¹ The point here is strengthened by Leto’s first-hand knowledge of ancient burial sites.⁵² In Naples, Pontano pondered the question of the function of collections, wrote about tombs and inscriptions, and included some classical, pagan inscriptions (along with a bone of Livy) on his Christian, classicizing *tempietto* that he built in 1491 to house his wife’s tomb.⁵³ Even more than Leto, Pontano tried to find an appropriate structure to house his collection, one that he used for meetings of his *accademia* when he was still alive.⁵⁴ By assembling funerary relics in a building containing a modern tomb, he is, perhaps, conceiving of them less as admirable objects from antiquity, and more as remains with an authority he should honour.

A related issue is the renaissance use of ancient structures to display objects. The Savelli family housed their collection in the remains of the Theater of Marcellus.

48 See also David Karmon’s comments (Karmon 2011, 134) on the reuse of material from the *coscia Colisei* ruins in the Benediction loggia of the Vatican and parts of the Palazzo Venezia complex: “Perhaps structures of this sort, built with material from the *coscia Colisei*, could also be conceived of as a kind of Renaissance preservation measure, as they helped to perpetuate and preserve the Colosseum in a way that transcended the physical properties of the actual building itself.”

49 Bardati 2010, 426–430 and Riccomini 1995.

50 Christian 2010, 131.

51 Christian 2010, 147.

52 As well as Leto’s visits to the catacombs, he had copied several funerary inscriptions from a columbarium probably found near his property: see Stenhouse 2011.

53 For Pontano’s work on magnificence and collecting, see Welch 2002; on the chapel, Pane 1975–1977 ii.199–205 and Michalsky 2005, 82–84 with previous bibliography.

54 Divitiis 2010.

Fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century observers do not seem to have seen the connection as especially important or appropriate, nor does the family seem to have exploited the potential of the building to display their pieces. In 1510 Francesco Albertini mentioned the theater without mentioning its owner in his section on ancient Rome, and then, in the section on cardinals residences in ‘New Rome,’ noted that Cardinal Savelli owned two marble sarcophagi, and the labours of Hercules, and then simply that under the house was “the Theater of Marcellus, most beautifully constructed in the Ionic and Doric orders, as its remains reveal.”⁵⁵ Baldassarre Peruzzi’s work on the building and its foundations after 1525 does not seem to have changed that situation.⁵⁶ By the middle of the century, however, as prominent figures at Rome began to exploit the possibilities of display in the suburban villas and gardens, they used classical ruins as the backdrop, or even the housing, for their stone sculpture. When Francesco Soderini bought the Mausoleum of Augustus, he excavated for statues, and displayed them in the structure. Flaminia Bardati suggests that Jean du Bellay used the south exedra of the Baths of Diocletian, which he had acquired in 1554, to show off his collection.⁵⁷ In these later collections, therefore, the creation of gardens for leisure and contemplation maintained buildings and objects, as well as preserving, in the case of the Baths, the buildings’ one-time function as a place of relaxed retreat.

5 Collections and Christianity

The examples of Leto and Pontano, above, raise the related question of the connection between these collections and Christianity. As Settis argues, there is a general move in this period to the desacralization of newly-displayed antiquities: when the popes exhibited a statue of Apollo in the Vatican, they were not encouraging pagan worship. Yet the process of desacralization was not completely straightforward, either. On the one hand, suspicion persisted in the sixteenth century about the potentially dangerous idols in the collections of ecclesiastical grandees; on the other, pagan material remains continued to be adapted for use in churches. Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, for example, happily added an ancient carved eagle to the entrance of Santi Apostoli (Fig. 2), with a new inscription announcing that he had it was “saved from so many ruins.”⁵⁸ He also seems to have adapted a pagan altar for the church.⁵⁹ The classical altar, decorated with rams’

55 Albertini 1510, Gr and [Y iv].

56 For Peruzzi, see Tessari 1995, 123–136.

57 Bardati 2010, 426–430; Dickenson 1960, 102. For the site, see Günther 1994.

58 Magister 2002, 428; Bober and Rubinstein 2010, 237–238; Christian 2010, 368. The inscription reads

“TOT RVINIS SERVATAM IVL CAR SIXTI IIII
PONT NEPOS HIC STATVIT”.

59 The altar is now in the Palazzo Altemps. The inscription reads “EVCHARISTIAE/ IVL. CAR.
SAX/VM EX VRBI/CA RVINA RE/LICTVM OB
E/LEGANTIAM/ EREXIT”; see Christian 2010, 175–
176 and 295, who attributes it to Cesarini.

heads, eagles, and a Medusa, includes a renaissance inscription which reads as follows: ‘To the Eucharist. Cardinal Giuliano put this stone up, which was left from the city’s ruins, for its beauty.’ The Giuliano of the inscription is not specified, and following Lanciani, it is usually assumed to be Cesarini; Francesco Caglioti argues convincingly, however, that Lanciani misread a record of the inscription’s site, which should be Santi Apostoli.⁶⁰ The language of the inscriptions added to both pagan pieces is certainly similar (and mirrors the dedicatory inscription for the restored church as a whole: Giuliano “restored this church, which had almost collapsed”); perhaps the paired eagles appealed to the cardinal.⁶¹ Whatever its site, the altar’s decoration is not particularly appropriate for a Christian context, and so we should take the inscription at face value: the *elegantia* of the object seems to have made it an appropriate dedication for a church, in Rome. Another earlier example of the ostensible Christianization of pagan remains is the famous interpretation given by the Santacroce to their classical funerary relief, showing three freedmen, displayed outside their palazzo.⁶² Andrea Santacroce seems to have added the inscriptions: beside the man, there is “HONOR”, beside his wife, “VERITAS”, over their son, “AMOR”, and then above all three the title “FIDEI SIMVLACRVM”. Phyllis Williams argued that this was a trinitarian interpretation of the relief, as representation of Faith connected to the restoration of S Maria in Publicolis.⁶³ A further inscription, though, makes clear the link between the ‘renovata templa’ and the family’s ‘lares’, the household spirits of pagan Rome, and it seems that this reinterpreted and adapted relief provides a sort of bridge between pagan antiquity and the classical present. Christian suggests that it was placed between the family’s house and the church,⁶⁴ though originally it may have been in the house of Andrea, and by the time of Giacomo Santacroce, in the sixteenth century, it was certainly inside the house.⁶⁵

There is also some evidence that collectors of pagan antiquities were interested in early Christian objects. Although a recognizable field of early Christian antiquarian investigation does not really emerge until the seventeenth century, some humanists were certainly interested in the realia of the early Church at Rome. Maffeo Vegio’s *De rebus antiquis memorabilibus Basilicae Sancti Petri Romae*, written between 1455 and 1457, is a good example of the application of the interests of Biondo to Christian remains,

60 Caglioti 2000, i.147–48 n.189.

61 For the restoration, see Frank 1996, 117–120 and Magister 2002, 428. The inscription read “SEDATE SIXTO IIII PONT. MAX./ IUL. CAR. S. PET. AD. VINC. NEPOS HANC/BASILICAM PENE COLLABENTEM RESTI/TUIT”.

62 Christian 2003, 258–259.

63 Williams 1940–1941, 52–58; see Wirth 1987, 831–833. The inscription, with details of early records, is edited as *CIL* VI.4*b.

64 Fifteenth-century epigraphic collectors stated that it was “in domo domini Andreae de Sancta Cruce”, though for the Mazzocchi 1521, 122v, it was supposedly in the same place as another inscription, “Ante fores Sanctae Mariae in Publicolis statim a sinistris in quodam pariete”.

65 Vicarelli 2007, 79–80.

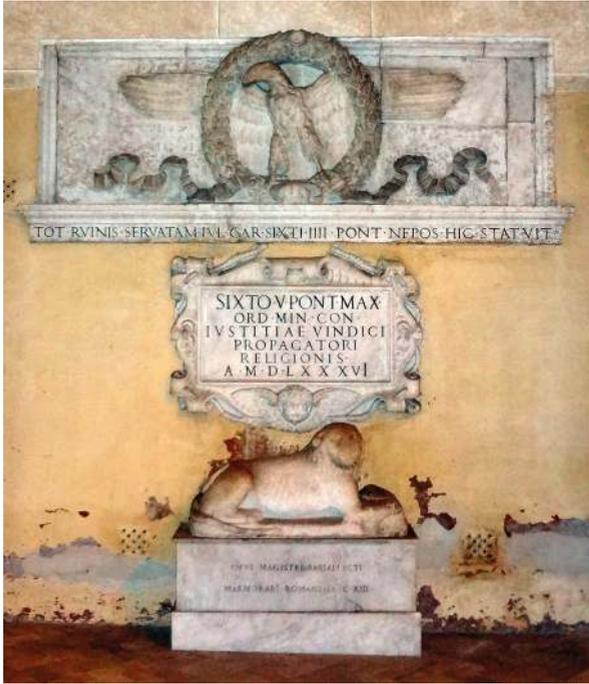


Fig. 2 The porch of Santi Apostoli, Rome.

and there is good reason to believe that the expeditions of Leto and friends to the catacombs were inspired by pious curiosity.⁶⁶ Leto's grotto of inscriptions included Christian examples, though there is no reason to believe that they were highlighted in any way. More striking is the collection of a number of Christian inscriptions assembled by the Millini (or Mellini).⁶⁷ In 1470 Pietro Millini finished the restoration of the oratory of S. Croce a Monte Mario, and placed various early Christian inscriptions in the pavement outside the church.⁶⁸ The oratory was near their suburban villa, where they displayed some classical inscriptions; it seems that during construction, they discovered a pre-Constantinian cemetery, and so removed the inscriptions to redisplay them. They clearly felt that Christian antiquities should be kept distinct from pagan examples. But if we imagine the experience of visitors to the site (the Millini sponsored scholarly symposia), it would have been fairly clear who had collected and displayed both sets of material, and who, therefore, could bask in the prestige that both sets of antiquities brought. Even as pagan and Christian material was kept distinct, therefore, there are

66 For Vegio see Foffano 2002, with previous bibliography, and the summary in Stinger 1998, 179–183. On Leto, Oryshkevich 2003, esp. 302.

67 Santolini 2007; for the family, Corbo 1995.

68 Santolini 2007, esp 43. Armellini 1942, 1036–1038 records twenty-four inscriptions; there may originally have been more, and some of those that survive may have been added later. See De Rossi 1894.

benefits to thinking of the collection of antiquities in toto, as there are to considering spoliation practices in churches and secular buildings together.

6 The singularity of Rome

Finally, how unusual was the city of Rome in the emergence of collections as a means of reusing and appropriating antiquities? Because of the wealth of ancient remains under the city, no other city had anything like the number of collectors. The city's increasing wealth and political importance in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century also means that it is reasonable to assume that cultural patterns in Rome could have considerable influence elsewhere. On the other hand, many Italian cities had well-established traditions of the collection and display of antiquities by the fifteenth century, and so it would be unwise to search uniquely Roman explanations for changes in collection and spoliation practice in the city.⁶⁹ Some time in the early fifteenth century, for example, seven heads were placed on the outside of the Palazzo Trinci in Foligno, home to the city's seigneurial family; it is fairly clear that the busts were associating their government with the authority of the Roman past.⁷⁰ When the sarcophagi were placed in the Campo Santo, in Pisa, they were raised above the ground, apparently in order to make them more easily seen.⁷¹ In Naples, Diomedea Carafa planned a palace in 1440s, which he completed between 1458 and 1465 (roughly contemporary, then, to Andrea Santacroce in Rome) adorned with antiquities, including in the cortile an ancient column, placed over an ancient cippus, which Carafa had reinscribed.⁷² In the courtyard, Carafa included a welcoming inscription to his guests (*hospes*), and next to the courtyard, a small garden including an inscription proclaiming that nymphs lived there. The use of a welcoming inscription of this sort predates Roman examples, as does the idea that a garden could be a *nymphaeum*.⁷³ Carafa's attitude to the display of antiquities and the imitation of ancient forms thus appears precocious in comparison with Rome. Above the gate, though, we learn that the structure was designed 'for the praise of the king, and the beauty of the country' ('*in laudem regis patriaeque decorum*'). From that, at least, we see none of the ambiguous attitudes towards ruling authority that existed in fifteenth-century Roman noble collections.

In the northern Italian cities, the veneration and display of antiquities became a means to express the prestige of the town as a whole. This is well-illustrated by proposals

69 In general, Franzoni 1984, 304–316.

70 Settis 1993, 1372–1373; Sensi 2001; Fiore et al. 2007.

71 Tolaini 2008.

72 Divitiis 2007, 43–135; Divitiis 2008 (who argues for a local Neapolitan *all'antica* style).

73 In general, gardens for the display of antiquities remained much more common in Rome than elsewhere: see Franzoni 1984, 316–327.

for civic collections of inscriptions in Brescia, Osimo, and Reggio Emilia. On 13 October 1480, the comune of Brescia made the following decree:

We have decided, with no one opposing, that the finished stones recently discovered in the ground and removed to the seat of our commune ... should be preserved for the public buildings of our community.⁷⁴

As a result, the inscriptions were preserved, in a wall in the Piazza della Loggia, where they survive today. In Osimo, various honorific bases were preserved on the site of the ancient forum, though the exact means through which this was achieved are not known; in Reggio Emilia, probably under the influence of the Brescian example, the commune decided that various recently-discovered ancient tombs should be placed “in a public place, so that they could be seen by everyone”, because the civic officials desired “that this city of Reggio should be adorned with similar antiquities, and so made famous.”⁷⁵ Unfortunately in Reggio, the decree does not seem to have been followed, but the wording gives a good idea of what was at stake. Antiquities developed the prestige and standing of the city. In Brescia, the inscriptions were displayed on a secular, communal building, but in Verona, for example, a classical inscription was placed in the façade of the church of Santa Maria in Organo, with the following addition: “what carelessness lost, carefulness restored to antiquity”, dated 1486.⁷⁶ This example makes clear the origins of this form of display. The Brescian collection was described by an eighteenth-century Brescian as “il più antico Museo pubblico d’Italia”⁷⁷, perhaps in an effort to efface the position of the Museo Capitolino in Rome, but as Claudio Franzoni points out, we should seek medieval precedents for the type of display shown there.⁷⁸ As in Rome, medieval spoliation was developed, not abandoned, in early renaissance collections on the Italian peninsula. We should therefore be cautious of privileging Rome, despite the wealth of remains there; in the early renaissance, at least, we can see other sites similarly influenced by humanism. In these cities and in Naples, though, collections seem to have lacked the political edge that conflicts between native and ecclesiastical nobility brought to Rome.

74 Zamboni 1975 (1778), 30, cited in *CIL* V.1, 427: “captum fuit, nemine discrepante, quod lapides laborati nuper sub terra reperti et inde extracti apud domum communis nostri... conservari debeant pro fabricis publicis communitatis nostrae”. For the wider context of this decree, see Bowd 2010, 88–90.

75 Franzoni 1999, 43: “cupientes hanc civitatem Regiam similibus vetustatibus ornari etiam et celebrem reddi, omnes unanimiter ... providerunt et ordinarunt quod infrascripti cives ... curent dicta sepulcra haberi in com(muni) (?) et reduci in hac civitate et collocari in aliquo publico loco ...”

76 Franzoni 1984, 353: “QVOD INCVRIA PERDIDERAT DILIGENTIA ANTIQVITATI RESTITVIT MCCCCLXXXVI”

77 Zamboni 1975, 31.

78 Franzoni 1984, 354: “questo uso medievale non viene scartato con l’arrivo delle correnti umanistiche, ma viene reinterpretato, prima isolatamente ed ancora in un edificio di culto... poi in un serie di costruzioni civili e secondo un programma più vasto, nella piazza di Brescia.” For these collections and others, see Stenhouse 2014.

7 Conclusion

If we conceive, therefore, of early renaissance collectors as reusing, or redeploing antiquities, and so place them within a tradition of spoliation, we gain new perspectives on their relationships with the ancient, medieval, and contemporary city of Rome, and particularly on the ways owners understood and presented their places within the city. The images of collecting that Settis and Christian present confirm that antiquities could have a living political charge in the later fifteenth century. Even as they became 'art objects' in the sixteenth, owners' canny exploitation of their status both as public records of a glorious past and as glorious private possessions meant that they retained important social and political functions. Early renaissance collections are not *sui generis*, or the first steps in the progression to modern museums, but part of a much longer history of the reception and protection of classical antiquities.

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