


Selected Papers on Ancient Art and Architecture  Volume 6



Roman Sculpture in Context

Peter D. De Staebler
& Anne Hrychuk Kontokosta (eds.)



Archaeological
Institute of America



ROMAN SCULPTURE IN CONTEXT

SELECTED PAPERS
ON ANCIENT ART AND ARCHITECTURE

SERIES EDITOR
KATHRYN TOPPER

NUMBER 6
Roman Sculpture in Context

ROMAN SCULPTURE IN CONTEXT

edited by

Peter D. De Staebler and Anne Hrychuk Kontokosta

Archaeological Institute of America
Boston, MA
2020

ROMAN SCULPTURE IN CONTEXT

Copyright 2020 by the Archaeological Institute of America

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by means of any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to The Archaeological Institute of America, 656 Beacon Street, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02215-2006 USA.

ISBN 978-1-948488-63-1

Cover design by Susanne Wilhelm. Cover image: Scroll showing a “representation of the column erected in Constantinople in honor of the Emperor Theodosius,” Louvre, Arts Graphiques, Inv. 4951, attributed to Battista Franco, Venetian school, 16th century (photograph by Jean-Gilles Berizzi. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY). Front cover, detail of Anderson this volume, p. 243 fig. 3; back cover, detail of Anderson this volume, p. 242, fig. 1.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: De Staebler, Peter D., editor. | Kontokosta, Anne Hrychuk, editor. |

Archaeological Institute of America, issuing body.

Title: Roman sculpture in context / edited by Peter D. De Staebler and Anne Hrychuk Kontokosta.

Description: Boston, MA : Archaeological Institute of America, 2021. |

Series: Selected papers on ancient art and architecture ; number 6 | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020052180 | ISBN 9781948488631 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Sculpture, Roman—Congresses. |

Art—Historiography—Methodology—Congresses. | Archaeological assemblages—Congresses.

Classification: LCC NB115 .R655 2021 | DDC 730.937—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020052180>

CONTENTS

1	Introduction <i>Anne Hrychuk Kontokosta and Peter D. De Staebler</i>	1
2	The Statues on the Propylon of the Sebasteion Complex at Aphrodisias: “Grounding” and the Interpretation of Archaeological Context <i>Julia Lenaghan</i>	17
3	Grounding the Ny Carlsberg Vespasian: Analysis and Alternatives <i>Steven L. Tuck</i>	37
4	The Bronze Captive in the Rhône River and Roman Art History <i>Kimberly Cassibry</i>	55
5	The Sleeping Hermaphrodite: Reception and Interpretation in Three Eras <i>Elizabeth McGowan</i>	75
6	The “Lansdowne Homer”: A Neo-Attic Relief Depicting the Seer Calchas Grounded in Ancient and Modern Collections <i>Kenneth Lapatin</i>	99
7	Provenance, Historic Restorations, and the “Perseus Triumphant” Statue Type: An Overlooked Group of Heroic Hunter Portrait Statues from Imperial Rome <i>Mark B. Abbe</i>	117
8	Investigating the Ungrounded: The Paired Portrait Busts of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna in the Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University <i>Julie Van Voorhis and Mark B. Abbe</i>	141
9	The <i>Farnese Hercules</i> and Hercules within Roman Baths <i>Maryl B. Gensheimer</i>	159
10	Body/Culture: Display and Reception of the <i>Farnese Hercules</i> <i>Marice Rose</i>	177
11	Roman Sarcophagi in Context from the Catacomb of Praetextatus <i>Sarah Madole Lewis</i>	197

Roman Sculpture in Context

12	Lions at the Door: Ancient Context, Reuse, and Recreation on Italian Romanesque Façades <i>Steve Burges</i>	217
13	Eros and the Army (Constantinople and Context) <i>Benjamin Anderson</i>	239
14	Virtual Context for Roman Sculpture <i>Sebastian Heath</i>	257
15	Further Reflections on Groundedness <i>Elizabeth Marlowe</i>	275
	Contributors	289

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SLEEPING HERMAPHRODITE: RECEPTION AND INTERPRETATION IN THREE ERAS

Elizabeth McGowan

Abstract

When an ancient sculpture of the Sleeping Hermaphrodite was discovered in a drain in early 15th century Rome, the sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti marveled that the subtlety of its carving could only be appreciated in diffused light and immediately arranged for its shipment to Florence. Since that discovery, eight large-scale marble copies of the nymph-like prone demigod of dual sex have come to light, and interest in the second century C.E. sleeper has waxed and waned. Over the last 600 years, the Sleeping Hermaphrodite has been received positively at times, while derided at others. Cultural interest in the sculpture has been on the rise over the last 20 years, however. At the current moment, ideas concerning gender identity are taken seriously in the classroom, by the press, and in the Academy, and the Sleeping Hermaphrodite commands renewed interest, recognition, and a prominence not seen since the 19th century. This paper explores the reception of the Sleeping Hermaphrodite in the 21st century and also looks to its early modern reception in the Renaissance. Perspectives current today and ancient philosophical ideas prominent in the art and thought of the Renaissance together help provide a conceptual grounding for the sculpture in its own time, the second century C.E.

WHEN AN ANCIENT SCULPTURE OF THE SLEEPING HERMAPHRODITE was discovered in a drain in early 15th-century Rome, the sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti marveled that the subtlety of its carving could only be appreciated in “diffused light,” and immediately arranged for its shipment to Florence¹ (fig. 1). We do not know, however, if Ghiberti’s *Hermaphrodite* ever actually left Rome. None of the surviving replicas of the type have been identified as the one that Ghiberti saw, and the only known inventory of his collection of antique

Fig. 1. Self-portrait of sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti. Detail from the Florence baptistry east door (Gates of Paradise) 1424–1452 (Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY).



artworks, contested by his heirs, makes no mention of the sculpture.²

Since this first discovery of the large-scale Roman marble sculpture of the nymph-like prone demigod of dual sex, interest in the Roman, second-century C.E. sleeper has waxed and waned. Over the last 600 years, the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* has been received positively at times. For example, in the 17th century the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* was so prized when it came into Cardinal Scipione Borghese's collection that Gian Lorenzo Bernini was appointed to create a marble pillow and tufted mattress for the statue (fig. 2).³ At other times, however, the sculpture type has been derided, possibly desexed with a sharp implement, shoved against the wall in a museum display, and lampooned in textbooks. But a positive shift in how the sculpture is viewed and valued has unfolded recently. Cultural interest in the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* has been on



the rise over the last 20 years. At the current moment, ideas concerning gender identity are taken seriously in the classroom, by the press, and in the Academy. Possibly as a result of this welcome change, today the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* commands renewed interest, recognition, and a prominence not seen since the early 19th century. In light of this recent surge in the sculpture's popularity, and the present day's queering of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, it is important to keep in mind how the sculpture has been received in earlier periods as well.

Attempts to “ground” well-known Roman sculptures that were discovered from the 15th through 19th centuries, or even to imagine a sculpture in its original physical context, are admittedly difficult, as Elizabeth Marlowe points out, and raise many questions about origins and meaning. The sculptures of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* discussed in this essay are no exception. In the rare cases where we do know their find spots, and can speculate on their original settings, often we do not know what other artworks may have been found close by. It is possible that a sculpture that we view today in isolation was originally part of an ensemble of works brought together in a single home or garden.⁴ In addition, along with our efforts to place Roman sculptures, and consider their physical grounding, we need also to consider, or attempt to reconstruct as best we can, the *conceptual* frameworks or context for a given work. In the following, I attempt to find a conceptual home for the various sculptures of the *Hermaphrodite*, who lies belly-down on a large piece of cloth, with elbows bent, the right leg straight and the left leg bent. Each work is close enough in pose to the other to be titled *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*. This paper looks into the reception of the piece in three periods, first considering how it has been viewed in recent years by artists and historians in light of inquiries into

Fig. 2. Sleeping Hermaphrodite (*Borghese Hermaphrodite*), view of the back (Louvre MA 231; photograph by Ralph Lieberman).

the layered gender dynamics of the sculpture. I will review briefly the popularity and reception of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* in recent artworks, on the art market, and in current scholarship. Next, I turn to the early modern reception and reflection of the type in a Renaissance painting, made shortly after the publication of Ghiberti's observations in his *Commentaries*, which date to about 1450. Finally, I suggest that the reception of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* sculpture in the Renaissance may serve to further complicate our view of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite's* meanings to its audience in the second century C.E. Ultimately, ideas about the sculpture in the Renaissance may help us add a layer of understanding to its original meaning.

The Sculpture Known as the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*

All six of the more or less complete large-scale marble versions of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* are essentially the same size, about one and a half meters in length, or, in Ghiberti's words "the size of a 13-year-old girl."⁵ All were discovered in Roman contexts, between the early 17th and the late 19th centuries.⁶ And all have been dated by carving techniques to the Antonine period, which accounts for most of the second century C.E.⁷

In myth, the dual-gendered demigod, as the name suggests, was the result of the union of Aphrodite, the beautiful Greek goddess of Love, and Hermes, the handsome youthful messenger god. In Greek sources Hermaphroditus was dual-sexed from birth, but Ovid in the first century (*Met.* 4.276–388) suggests that the doubling of gender occurred when the nymph Salmakis's ardent body fused with that of the youth Hermaphroditus, against his will. It is not clear which version of the Hermaphrodite is intended in the sleeping figure known through the Antonine period sculptures. But before we explore further iconographical analysis, a brief description and formal analysis is appropriate.

The Sleeping Hermaphrodite: Form and Analysis

In the best-preserved examples, the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* is stretched out horizontally on a large piece of cloth, and the topmost line of the shoulders and hips slowly undulates like a landscape of soft hills.⁸ The long back, rounded buttocks, lanky thighs call to mind the back view of some sculptures of



the young gods Apollo and Hermes, and also some nymph and Aphrodite sculptures. Folds of drapery curve below the hips. In a recent essay, Jennifer Trimble notes that the slow curves of the nude sleeper's back become complicated as one nears either end.⁹ At the head a hairstyle of ornate braids and curls topped by a gem forms a counterpoint to an amazingly smooth classicizing face with an impossibly straight nose. At the feet, the drapery forms a counter curve across the lower legs that seems to bind them. The Hermaphrodite lifts one leg in an unconscious attempt to shake off the fabric, while the toes of the extended right foot catch the cloth and stretch it tight¹⁰ (fig. 3). As we circle the sleeper at the feet and cross over to the other long side, we see, at first, a bent knee, raised hip, dipping waist, and full breast visible under the raised left arm. At this point the viewer might still understand the figure as a sleeping nymph. But as we walk towards the upper body male genitals, and an erection, come into view (fig. 4). The lines of drapery run in different directions at this point, then the fabric catches the Hermaphrodite's bent left arm above the elbow and swirls tightly around the wrist. The left hand of the Palazzo Massimo's *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* is missing, but the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* in the Louvre preserves enough

Fig. 3. Sleeping Hermaphrodite (*Borghese Hermaphrodite*), view from the feet (Louvre MA 231; photograph by the author).



Fig. 4. Sleeping Hermaphrodite (*Borghese Hermaphrodite*), inside view of the front (Louvre MA 231; photograph by Ralph Lieberman).

of the hand to show that it was free of drapery. The bent right arm, also free of drapery, cushions the figure's left cheek. The head is turned sharply to the right in an extremely difficult—if not impossible—pose, considering the raised left side of the body. Trimble suggests that whereas the curving rhythms of the sleeper's back entice the viewer to circumambulate the figure, once on the other side the bent knee and elbow, messy drapery, and the confusing combination of breast and erect penis work in concert to repel or push the viewer away.¹¹ To Trimble's fine analysis, I would add that we naturally seek out faces, and we do not find one on this side of the sculpture. As a result, we hope for some informed resolution by continuing the course around the top of the head, and ending up back where we started, at the statue's back, where we can see the sleeper's face. In fact, from the spectator's point of view, and so far as the artwork is concerned, the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite's* back is actually, conceptually, the front.

Reception: Contemporary Art

Recently a number of contemporary artists have incorporated or alluded to the image of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* in their practice, and this interest is due at least in part to the heightened awareness of the ongoing and shifting societal values that have challenged the traditionally accepted gender binary of male and female, and traditional ideas about heterosexuality.¹² In fact, references to the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* have an especially strong resonance in the work of artists who ac-



Fig. 5. Patricia Cronin, *Memorial to a Marriage*, 2002, carrara marble; 27" x 47" x 84" (image courtesy Patricia Cronin Studio, LLC; photograph by Stephen Bates).

knowledge and challenge the concept of a strict gender binary in their practice.

Patricia Cronin's life-size marble mortuary sculpture, *Memorial to a Marriage* (2000–2002), installed in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, samples drapery and poses from a number of historical statues of sleepers, the gender-eliding *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* among them (fig. 5). The double portrait of Cronin and Deborah Kass, united in an unconscious embrace, emulated and transformed the romantic trends in 19th century funerary art by presenting marital harmony in a nonnormative unity, a memorial to a marriage a full ten years before same-sex marriage was legal in New York state.¹³ The photographer Nan Goldin, known for intimate and edgy photographs of transvestites and transsexuals in black and white, included more than one photo of the Louvre's *Borghese Hermaphrodite* in her *Scopophilia* show at Matthew Marks



Fig. 6 Nan Goldin, *The Back*, 2011. Archival pigment print (45 ½" x 57 ½" in. [115.6 x 146.1 cm]; courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery).

Gallery in 2011.¹⁴ In one artwork, Goldin placed the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* in a photo collage of back views, some from works in Parisian museums, others from her own oeuvre (fig. 6). She juxtaposes the Louvre's *Borghese Hermaphrodite* and Renoir's youthful male nude, *The Boy with the Cat* from 1868 (in the Musée d'Orsay), whose pose was inspired by the sculpture.¹⁵

The uptick in interest in the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* has led to the inclusion of the version of the sculpture in Rome's Palazzo Massimo in two high-profile exhibitions of ancient art in major museums in the United States, one at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 2011, and the other at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2016.¹⁶ In addition, in Madrid in 2017, a 17th-century bronze copy of the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* by Matteo Bonucelli was incorporated into an exhibition that focused in part on the gaze beyond strict gender norms in the Prado's permanent collection of European sculpture and painting.¹⁷ The year 2016 also saw two modern versions of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* command large prices at auction. One, a bronze copy of the Uffizi's hermaphrodite



Fig. 7. Barry X Ball, Sleeping Hermaphrodite, 2008–2010. Belgian black marble. Base: carrara marble, stainless steel, Delrin. Overall dimensions: 174.0 x 91.0 x 80.3 cm. Private Collection (photography by Barry X Ball).

dating between the 17th and 19th centuries, sold at Christie's, London, for over one million dollars.¹⁸ A contemporary version of the sculpture created by Barry X Ball in 2010 was featured in Christie's 2016 "Postwar and Contemporary" sale (fig. 7). The artist made a 3D scan of the Louvre's *Borghese Hermaphrodite*, then had a machine carve a copy of the sculpture from a block of black Belgian marble. A team of human assistants worked over several months to create the final polished surface. The sculpture sold at Christie's for over half a million dollars.¹⁹ Barry X Ball's studio has also recently sold a version of the *Borghese Hermaphrodite*, again executed using 3D imagery and robotics, in pink onyx.²⁰

We do not know who bought the modern versions of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* in these recent sales. The appearance

of the type at top auction houses, the inclusion of the Palazzo Massimo's Antonine period *Hermaphrodite* in a show on second century B.C.E. Pergamene art at the Metropolitan Museum, and the appearance of the 17th-century bronze copy of the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* in Prado's exhibition on alternative gazes, all suggest that the sculpture's attractive power, and its power to provoke and excite interest and discussion, is stronger now than it had been throughout the entire 20th century.

Reception: Roman Context

This high-profile reception by the art world speaks to a resonance of the sculpture in the 21st century. Recent scholarship, however, has made an attempt to determine its reception in antiquity. In the years since 1990 when Aileen Ajootian's excellent entry on "Hermaphroditos" was published in the *Lexicon*, and since the Salmakis Inscription with its details of Hermaphroditus's early life and characteristics as a deity was discovered in Bodrum in 1995 (SEG 48.1330), a number of scholars have revisited images of the *Hermaphrodite* in Roman wall painting and in sculpture.²¹ The context and role of this dual-sexed demigod in the domestic sphere of ancient Roman villa and house decoration has sparked new interest, one informed by current methodologies.

Most recently, Katherine Temple von Stackelberg, Jennifer Trimble, and Rosemary Barrow have addressed the ideas and objectives of villa and house owners who placed images of hermaphrodites in their homes, and the roles of both hosts and guests as viewers.²²

Stackelberg, in a review of images of hermaphrodites in Pompeian houses, posits, in light of the Salmakis inscription, where Hermaphroditus is described as the inventor of marriage, that part of their role as garden sculptures or in fresco decoration would be to watch over marriage and promote and protect fertility. At the same time their garden setting reflects the idea of the garden as an in-between place, where the intersex body of the hermaphrodite might question or challenge the norms of male voyeurism.²³ Trimble provides a deeply nuanced formal and conceptual analysis of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, specifically the version in the Palazzo Massimo.²⁴ She asks how the sculpture might function after one knows its secret, after the initial "surprise." In

considering “the particular cultural and social interests that shaped the visual culture of 2nd-century Rome,” Trimble suggests that the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, constantly shifting within the polarities of male and female, youth and woman, is ultimately the passive visual object of the dominant male homeowner’s piercing gaze.²⁵ Its effect, she suggests, would be much like the Roman “sexy boy” sculptures, a term Elizabeth Bartman coined to describe the pubescent Paris or Ganymede statues that served as villa and garden decoration, and, as such, a voyeuristic opportunity for the privileged male host and his guests.²⁶

The late Rosemary Barrow has also provided a much-needed update to the theoretical framework for the discussion of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*.²⁷ She interweaves her discussion of the ancient statue, the Romans’ positive view towards hermaphrodites in art, and the negative response to actual intersex children in antiquity, with current cultural attitudes towards intersex individuals, highlighting the work of artists such as Del LaGrace Volcano and XXXora, both of whom identify as hermaphrodites.²⁸ In his 1991 handbook, R.R.R. Smith suggested that on one level the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* was “the Utopian amalgam of the sexes ... a female body with male genitals.”²⁹ Barrow concurs, and, further queering the study of the sculpture, comments that “the erotic nature of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* sexualizes the body in much the same way as MTF [male-to-female] transvestism and transgenders are marketed in today’s porn industry.”³⁰

The recent scholarly essays on the reception of the sculpture in the Roman period, well-informed by current theoretical trends, all agree that the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* was in essence an expensive villa decoration intended for male delectation. But the size of the sculpture, the intricacies of the carving, and the number of preserved replicas suggest that there may be more to the piece than necessarily meets the eye; that it may have had a meaning beyond its perceived role as an object of homosocial scopophilia. In fact, the figure’s restless sleep may suggest more than the idea that the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* is troubled by a mixed sexuality and a subconscious awareness of objectification.³¹ A possible reference to the sculpture in a Renaissance painting may hold clues to other modes of understanding the sculpture in the Roman period.



Fig. 8. Sandro Botticelli, *Venus and Mars*, ca. 1485. Tempera and oil on poplar, 69.2 x 173.4 cm. 1874 (NG915). (National Gallery, London; © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY).

Reception: Renaissance Italy

This paper began with Lorenzo Ghiberti. In his *Commentaries*, Ghiberti notes that a headless version of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* was discovered in Rome in the 1420s and implies that additional stone was carved away to lighten the sculpture for shipping to Florence.³² No actual drawing or painting of the Sleeper that dates to the 15th or 16th century has been identified. Details, however, of Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, painted ca. 1483 and now in the National Gallery, London, may derive from the pose of the Hermaphrodite that Ghiberti saw (fig. 8).³³ In this horizontal tempera and oil painting, Venus is stretched out, clothed in a clinging white dress embellished with gold braid. She reclines on the left side of the picture, her right elbow propped on a velvet pillow. She is alert, her head raised and looking towards Mars. Mars, nude save for a swag of white cloth across his pelvis, lounges with head thrown back in what is presumed to be a postcoital slumber. His bent left elbow rests on his cuirass, over which a pink cloth has been thrown. His right leg is bent and the triangle of the knee juts up, indicating the midpoint of the picture. Venus's limbs and drapery are made up of long, slow curves, save for a delta-shaped passage of cloth close to her hips. Mars's form is angular: pointing elbow, jutting right knee, crossed ankles. These two separate figures call to mind the female- and male-centered views of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*. Venus's pose and dress remind us of the extended horizontal curves of the Hermaphrodite's back, while Mars's restless limbs recall the jutting angular forms of the front. But there's more. Ghiberti comments on the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*:



Fig. 9. Sandro Botticelli, *Venus and Mars*, detail showing Mars's foot, about 1485. Tempera and oil on poplar, 69.2 x 173.4 cm 1874 (NG915). (National Gallery, London; © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY).

The figure was on the linen cloth and was turned in a way to show both the masculine and the feminine characteristics. The arms rested on the ground and the hands were crossed one over the other. One of the legs was stretched out and the large toe had caught the cloth, and the pulling of the cloth was shown with wonderful skill.³⁴

Botticelli definitely seems to have seen the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* sculpture, because one of Mars's legs is stretched out, and, like the Hermaphrodite's, his big toe catches the cloth and pulls it. And this is shown with admirable skill (fig. 9). This tantalizing detail suggests that the balance of male and female elements in this picture may owe their forms in part, to those of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, which, to the Renaissance eye, might have appeared to house, likewise, a balance of male and female elements in one figure.

Botticelli's *Venus and Mars* is thought to illustrate ideas known from the Roman poet and Epicurian philosopher Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* as well as ideas from the fifth century B.C.E. Greek philosopher Empedocles's work *On Nature*, both of which were known in the 15th century.³⁵ Gordon Campbell suggests that Botticelli's picture refers to the triumph of the force of Love or Attraction, over Strife or the Power of Repulsion, whom Venus alone has the power to pacify and lull into slumber, an effect that Lucretius describes in his opening ode to Venus.³⁶ In Campbell's reading, the pic-

ture juxtaposes Love and Strife. Love is watchful, even wary, because although she is now ascendant, she knows that the balance is about to shift. As she watches, Mars is set upon by a number of child-like Pan figures who play with his armor as they weave in and out around his body. One little faun is ready to blow a triton shell; Mars will awaken, and the world will move again from Peace to War.³⁷

It is possible that the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* was understood in the Renaissance as a figure that incorporated Love and Strife, Attraction and Repulsion, powers described by Empedocles, and echoed by Lucretius. The nymph-like back attracts, while its flipside, with bent elbows, and knees, and an erect phallus, repels the viewer.³⁸ Furthermore, both Empedocles (Fragment D. 156 LM=B61DK) and Lucretius (5.837–841) refer to the creation of androgynous beings of dual sex during the ascendancy of Love, or Attraction, when during the world's formation elemental fragments of beings were drawn together.³⁹

In fact, Botticelli may make reference to more than one ancient source on androgynous beings. In Plato's *Symposium* (189–191) Socrates debates with his guests the relative merits of mixed-sex and same-sex love. Plato gives voice to Aristophanes who describes the origins of humans and human desire in light of three types of beings, each of which has eight limbs, two heads and two sets of genitals. Some are male–male, some are female–female, while the third group are androgynes, made up of male and female parts. All have their faces turned out over their backs. When the gods are angered by their hubris the beings are split apart, the half-beings are fated to spend their lives looking for their true other half. Apollo sets them straight by sewing up the wounds of separation and turning their heads around from back to front. Later, Zeus makes sure that the genitals and face are on the same side of the body (*Symp.* 191C).

Again, when we look at Venus and Mars in Botticelli's painting in light of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, we can interpret the two halves of the picture, one female (Venus) and the other male (Mars), as the two halves of a single figure, the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*. Imagine that the three-dimensional androgyne has been split longitudinally, and the two halves turned to face each other, feet first in a two-dimensional picture plane. In this case, Venus and Mars would represent two parts of a cosmological androgynous whole in Botticelli's



Fig. 10. Sleeping Hermaphrodite, Villa Borghese 749 (Scala / Art Resource, NY).

painting. What is more, the picture itself was believed to have served as a *spalliera*, the headboard of a matrimonial bed in a Florentine home.⁴⁰ And it has long been noted that the oblong, horizontal composition is not unlike those for Florentine painted wedding chests, *cassoni*.⁴¹ The male–female binary of Botticelli’s *Venus and Mars* might serve to bless a marriage. In this light, it is interesting to think back to Hermaphroditus’s role in ancient Roman domestic contexts as a demigod associated with marriage and fertility.

The complex set of allusions to ancient myth and literature in Botticelli’s *Venus and Mars* is no more complicated than those found in his *Primavera* or his *Birth of Venus*. All three paintings are thought to have been completed after Botticelli spent nine months in Rome, where he had been summoned to participate in work on the Sistine Chapel (1481–1482), and during which time he certainly was exposed to more ancient sculpture than he had come across in Florence.⁴² The *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* that he studied, and to which he alludes in his painting of Mars and Venus, is most likely the one that Ghiberti witnessed being pulled from a drain in the neighborhood of San Celso in the 1420s. As mentioned above, no trace of that *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* has been clearly identified in Florence, and it is possible that the sculpture never left Rome.

A version of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* sculpture, intact in all parts but missing the head, was recorded in the late 18th century as part of the collection of ancient sculptures on the ground floor of the Palazzo Borghese, on the Via di Ripetta and only about a half mile from the church of San Celso (fig. 10). Could that have been the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* that Ghiberti and Botticelli saw? Around 1773 the sculptor An-

drea Bergondi restored that hermaphrodite and added a mattress, likely in imitation of the second, better preserved and more famous version of the sculpture owned by the Borghese family, the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* now in Paris.⁴³ The latter was discovered ca. 1605 and outfitted with a mattress by Bernini by 1621.⁴⁴ The *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* with the restorations by Bergondi would be moved to the Villa Borghese and take the place of the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* in the *Sala d'Ermafrodito* once the Bernini version was sold to Napoleon in 1807 and sent to Paris.⁴⁵

In sum, it is likely that Botticelli, in the 1480s, makes reference to a sculpture of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* in his painting *Venus and Mars*. The *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* he saw may have been that which Ghiberti witnessed being hauled from a drain in Rome, on the city side of what is now the Ponte Sant'Angelo near the medieval church of San Celso in the 1420s. His mention of the sculpture in his *Commentarii* is the earliest report of the discovery of the statue type. Botticelli and his circle may have interpreted the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* as the physical embodiment of the Empedoclean principles of Love and Strife, Attraction and Repulsion.

Conclusions

One question remains: Is it reasonable to assume that the Romans of the second century C.E. who commissioned sculptures of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* for their villas understood the demigod to embody or illustrate philosophical ideas, such as those of Empedocles, Plato, and Lucretius? I believe the answer should be "yes." It seems entirely plausible that in the hothouse atmosphere of philosophical learning and deep reading in the era of the Second Sophistic in the second century C.E.,⁴⁶ the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* was seen not only as an embodiment of attractive elements of nymphs and youths designed for the male gaze, but also as something more metaphysical, an embodiment of the Empedoclean principals of Love and Strife, Attraction and Repulsion. And perhaps the artist who first designed the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* sculpture also had Plato's androgynous creatures in mind. Certainly, the Sleeper's impossible turn of the head, where the face is positioned to look out over the back and buttocks would recall the plight of Aristophanes's androgynes when first split in two (Pl. *Symp.* 190E). The cultivated villa owner would understand the multiple layered meanings of the sleep-

ing demigod and could reveal them to his guests. Privileged viewing of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* would entertain less sophisticated visitors to the villa and for others would provide an inspiration for nuanced philosophical conversation.

Ideas from the Presocratic philosophers, from Plato, Lucretius, and Ovid all may figure into the composition and interpretation of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* in the Roman period, grounding it conceptually and lending it a weightier cultural value than had been conferred previously. We have no proof that the many versions of the sculpture found in Roman contexts were copies of a Hellenistic original, as has been assumed since Winckelmann's day.⁴⁷ The *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* type, however, may ultimately derive from a sculpture publicly displayed in Rome or a province, perhaps in a temple dedicated to Venus, in the second century C.E. A coin of Marcus Aurelius (r. 161 to 180 C.E.) shows a profile of the emperor on the obverse, and, recently identified, the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* on the reverse.⁴⁸ Such a commemoration of a statue on a coin suggests that the original sculpture was not just a delectable piece for villa decoration, but was a well-known and serious artwork, prominently displayed in antiquity.

Notes

¹ *I commentarii* (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, II, I, 333: Part III, III, 1). This manuscript dates to about 1450. For a full English translation of Ghiberti's narrative of the discovery of the hermaphrodite statue, see Holt 1981, 163–64.

² Carl 2019, 299.

³ Haskell and Penny 1981, 234. This version of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* is now in Paris (Louvre MA 231).

⁴ For a discussion of intentional clusters of sculptures, and an ensemble of portraits at Aphrodisias, see Marlowe 2013, 29–33. For sculptures found in proximity to the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* now in the Palazzo Massimo, see Trimble 2018, 30.

⁵ Holt 1981, 163–64.

⁶ LIMC V(1):276–77 s.v. "Hermaphroditos" (A. Ajootian). Of the full-scale *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* sculptures listed by Ajootian in 1990, one, originally from Velletri and now part of the Louvre collection, has been moved from Paris to the Louvre-Lens Museum in Pas-de-Calais and has a new inventory number: MA 222. In addition to those listed by Ajootian, two further examples of the same scale have come to light in recent years, one, a fragment of the torso and missing head, arms, lower legs and plinth, lacks provenience: Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig BS 1211, donation

Novartis AG 2002, published by A. Bignasca (Bignasca 2004, 319–39). The other is in a private collection in Lugano, and is not yet published (Mancinotti 2018, 10). Mancinotti also mentions a fragmentary, reduced-scale version in marble preserving only the upper body, with arms crossed under the head and a simplified hairstyle, which appeared on the art market in France in 2013 (Mancinotti 2018, 74, and 75, fig. 8). Two well-preserved examples of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* will be much of the focus of this article, the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* with its added mattress by Bernini (Paris, Louvre MA 231) discovered in Rome shortly after 1600, and the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* now in the Palazzo Massimo, (Museo Nazionale delle Terme, Palazzo Massimo, inv. no. 1087), discovered in Rome in 1879. See Trimble 2018, 13–14.

⁷ LIMC V(1):276 s.v. “Hermaphroditos” (A. Ajootian). One well-preserved small-scale figurine of the type was found on the island of Kos: Kos, Archaeological Museum, inv. 66. See Mancinotti 2018, 72 with figures 3–5 on p. 73. Mancinotti follows the excavator, Laurenzi, in assuming the statuette dates to the late Hellenistic period (Laurenzi 1955–1956, 113). Laurenzi, however, does not have a securely dated context for the figurine and dates the piece purely on its “Praxitelean style with a pronounced sfumato.” The house in which the statuette was found was still in use in the mid-second century C.E. It is therefore possible that, like the full-scale versions, it is Roman.

⁸ For the following description of the figure I am indebted to Jennifer Trimble’s exemplary formal analysis (Trimble 2018, 16–18).

⁹ Trimble 2018, 16. Trimble also notes that added color on the hair and ornaments at one end and on the drapery at the other would have contrasted the “long nude curves” of the back.

¹⁰ This is true of all the examples of which the lower right leg is preserved. The head and the lower legs of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* in Florence (Uffizi 1914, 343) are modern restorations. In the restored version the right foot does not catch the drapery.

¹¹ Trimble 2018, 17–18.

¹² For an analysis of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* and other ancient images of the Hermaphrodite in light of contemporary gender theory see Barrow 2018, 82, 86–88.

¹³ Miller 2013, 9; Miller and Robbins 2019, 102–3. In 2002, Cronin and Kass’s marriage was not recognized legally, and would not be until 2011 when New York state passed the Marriage Equality Act. In 2015 the Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality throughout the United States.

¹⁴ In 2011 as well the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* from the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme visited Boston for the exhibition “Aphrodite and the Gods of Love” at the Museum of Fine Arts. See Kondoleon et al. 2011, 128–30.

¹⁵ On the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* as inspiration for Renoir’s *The Boy with The Cat*, see Myers 2019, 77–78.

¹⁶ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, *Aphrodite and the Gods of Love*, October 26, 2011–February 20, 2012. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Pergamon and the Hellenistic Kingdoms of the Ancient World*, April 18–July 17, 2016. On the latter: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/06/27/arts/design/statue-hermaphrodite.html>

¹⁷ Museo del Prado, *The Other's Gaze: Spaces of Difference*, Madrid, 06/14/2017–09/10/2017. See Hadden 2017: <https://hyperallergic.com/395191/on-the-hunt-for-depictions-of-queer-sexuality-at-the-prado/>. In the same year the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* was mentioned a number of times in the catalog of the exhibition “TRANS: Diversidad de intidades y roles de género” that ran at the Museo de América, Madrid, from June 22 to September 24, 2017: González 2017, 94; Conde 2017, 69–70.

¹⁸ <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/a-bronze-reclining-figure-of-the-hermaphrodite-6046644-details.aspx>. The Uffizi's *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* was discovered in Rome and included in the collection of Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi by about 1621. See Haskell and Penny 1981, 235. The bronze cast of the Uffizi's hermaphrodite was offered at Christie's London sale of “European Sculpture and Works of Art.” Although the sellers originally thought it was ancient, a thermoluminescence test suggested that the copy was about 150 years old. A record in the Uffizi suggested a cast had been commissioned in 1858. Christie's, however, suggested a 17th-century date for the sculpture, citing the bronze technique. The estimate for the piece was £200,000–300,000 and the sculpture sold for £785,000, or \$1,060,000, before fees. This followed a precedent set in 2009, when a 17th-century one-third scale bronze version of the *Borghese Hermaphrodite* (from the collection of Yves Saint-Laurent and Pierre Bergé, and with a far better surface than the one auctioned in 2016) sold for almost three times its estimate, bringing in €721,000, at the time about \$900,000: <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/figure-en-bronze-dhermaphrodite-dapres-lantique-attribuee-5171645-details.aspx>.

¹⁹ <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/barry-x-ball-b-1955-sleeping-hermaphrodite-5994671-details.aspx>. This sculpture is also mentioned in <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/06/27/arts/design/statue-hermaphrodite.html>.

²⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/19/arts/design/tefaf-maastricht.html>.

²¹ LIMC V(1):268–85 s.v. “Hermaphroditos” (A. Ajootian). On the Salmacis Inscription see Isager and Pederson 2004.

²² Von Stackelberg 2014, 395–426; Trimble 2018, 13–37; Barrow 2018, 76–88.

²³ Von Stackelberg 2014, 404. Von Stackelberg's article is based on the mural decoration of Pompeian houses and only briefly touches on the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* sculpture type.

²⁴ Trimble 2018, 13–32

²⁵ Trimble 2018, 33.

²⁶ Trimble 2018, 23–25. Bartman 2002, 263–65 with n. 56.

²⁷ Barrow 2018, 76–88.

²⁸ Barrow 2018, 82, 88.

²⁹ Smith 1991, 134.

³⁰ Barrow 2018, 86.

³¹ On the hermaphrodite's restless sleep see Smith 1991, 134 and Trimble 2018, 26. See Trimble 2018, 29–32 on the intricacies and multiple layers of viewing the sculpture.

³² *I commentarii*, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, II, I, 333: Part III, III, 1.

³³ Sandro Botticelli, *Venus and Mars*, (ca. 1483–1485), National Gallery of Art London, NG 915, tempera and oil on poplar.

³⁴ Holt 1981, 164.

³⁵ Campbell forthcoming.

³⁶ Campbell forthcoming. Lucretius 1.34–44.

³⁷ Campbell forthcoming.

³⁸ As noted by Trimble 2018, 18.

³⁹ I thank Guy Hedreen for this insight.

⁴⁰ Bellingham 2010, 356.

⁴¹ Gombrich 1945, 49.

⁴² For Botticelli's work in Rome, see Lightbown 1989, 90–113.

⁴³ *LIMC* V(1):277 s.v. "Hermaphroditos," 56e (A. Ajootian). Paul 1989, 229, refers to a manuscript listing the work of artists employed by the Borghese family: AB 8253 (*Artisti dei Principe Borghese*, 1773, no. 34r). The entry notes that Bergondi was paid 250 scudi to restore an ancient marble statue of a "Maufrodito" with a mattress, pillow, and sheet. It also notes that the sculpture is in the "Galleria terrena de questo Palazzo di Roma." According to Winckelmann, prior to this the hermaphrodite sculpture was in the "Villa Borghese's vaults." See Winckelmann 2008: 323. It is possible that he meant instead the storage area of the Palazzo.

⁴⁴ Haskell and Penny 1981, 234.

⁴⁵ Haskell and Penny 1981, 234.

⁴⁶ Borg 2008.

⁴⁷ Winckelmann 2008, 323, is the first modern art historian to associate the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* type with Pliny's mention of the sculptor Polykles, who was said to have made a famous sculpture of a hermaphrodite in bronze (*HN* 34.80). Ajootian points out that this association "remains at best highly tentative" *LIMC* V(1):276 s.v. "Hermaphroditos."

⁴⁸ RPC IV, 1 9257 (temporary number), minted at Augusta Traiana, Thrace: <http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/4/9257/>. The Ashmolean Museum's Roman Provincial Coinage online database catalogues four examples, with a photo of specimen no. 2 (with Gorny and Mosch, Munich, auctioneers in 2001). A fifth sold at auction in 2017: <https://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=3718323>. All five coins are apparently without provenance, and have come to light in collections and at auction since 2000. Auction houses that sell and collectors who garner undocumented ancient coins,

while turning a blind eye to the manner of their sourcing, present a nightmare for archaeologists and historians who seek to create a cultural history of art in which objects are contextualized. Despite action over the past two decades to raise public awareness of the trade in looted and illegally procured cultural patrimony from vulnerable source countries, the illicit trade in ancient coins continues unabated. See Elkins 2012, 91–107, esp. 97–100.

Works Cited

- Barrow, R. 2018. *Gender, Identity, and the Body in Greek and Roman Sculpture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bartman, E. 2002. "Eros's Flame: Images of Sexy Boys in Roman Ideal Sculpture." In *The Ancient Art of Emulation: Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity*, edited by E.K. Gazda, 249–71. MAAR Supplement 1. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bellingham, D. 2010. "Aphrodite Deconstructed: Botticelli's Venus and Mars in the National Gallery, London." In *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, edited by A.C. Smith and S. Pickup, 347–74. Leiden: Brill.
- Bignasca, A. 2004. "Un nuovo Ermafrodita addormentato." *NumAntCl* 33:319–39.
- Borg, B., ed. 2008. *Paideia: Die Welt der Zweiten Sophistik*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Campbell, G. Forthcoming. "Botticelli's Venus and Mars, Lucretius and Empedocles." In *Material World: The Intersection of Art, Science, and Nature in Ancient Literature and Its Renaissance Reception*, edited by G. Hedreen and M. Kwakkelstein. Istituto Universitario Olandese di Storia dell'Arte. Leiden: Brill.
- Carl, D. 2019. "An Inventory of Lorenzo Ghiberti's Collection of Antiquities." *BurlMag* 161:274–99.
- Conde, M.M. 2017. "La delicada frontera entre los sexos en la antigua Grecia." In *TRANS: Diversidad de identidades y roles de género*, 66–81. Exhibition Catalogue, Museo de América 22 June–24 September 2017. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.
- Elkins, N.T. 2012. "The Trade in Fresh Supplies of Ancient Coins: Scale, Organization, and Politics." In *All the King's Horses: Essays on the Impact of Looting and the Illicit Antiquities Trade on Our Knowledge of the Past*, edited by P.K. Lazrus and A.W. Barker, 91–107. Washington, D.C.: The Society for American Archaeology Press.
- Ghiberti, L. 1998. *I commentarii*. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, II, I, 333. Biblioteca della Scienza Italiano, edited by L. Bartoli. Milan: Giunti.
- Gombrich, E.H. 1945. "Botticelli's Mythologies: A Study in Neoplatonic Symbolism of His Circle." *JWarb* 8:7–60.

- González, F.M. 2017. "La mirada indiscreta: Transgénero, mitología y arte en la Edad Moderna." In *TRANS: Diversidad de identidades y roles de género*, 82–97. Exhibition Catalogue, Museo de América 22 June–24 September 2017. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.
- Hadden, M.L. 2017. "On the Hunt for Queer Sexualities at the Prado." *Hyperallergic*, <https://hyperallergic.com/395191/on-the-hunt-for-depictions-of-queer-sexuality-at-the-prado/>.
- Haskell, F., and N. Penny 1981. *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Holt, E.G. 1981. Reprint. *A Documentary History of Art*. Vol. 1, *The Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Original edition, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957.
- Isager, S., and P. Pederson, eds., 2004. *The Salmakis Inscription and Hellenistic Halikarnassos*. Halikarnassian Studies 4. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.
- Kondoleon, C., and P.C. Segal, eds., 2011. *Aphrodite and the Gods of Love*. Boston: MFA Publications.
- Laurenzi, L. 1955–1956. "Sculture inedite del Museo di Co." *ASAtene* 17/18:113.
- Lightbown, R. W. 1989. *Sandro Botticelli: Life and Work*. New York: Abbeville Press.
- Mancinotti, L. 2018. *Ermafroditi Dormienti: tipo Borghese*. *StArch* 221. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
- Marlowe, E. 2013. *Shaky Ground: Context, Connoisseurship, and the History of Roman Art*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Miller, P.B. 2013. "Roma Sparita." In *Patricia Cronin: Le Macchine, gli dei e i Fantasm*, 8–29. Exhibition Catalogue, Musei Capitolini, Centrale Montemartini 10 October–20 November 2013. Milan: Silvana Editoriale.
- Miller, P.B., and M. Robbins, eds. 2019. *The Academic Body*. Exhibition Catalogue, American Academy in Rome 23 May–19 July 2019. Rome: American Academy in Rome.
- Myers, N.R. 2019. "From Realism to Impressionism: Renoir's Early Nudes." In *Renoir: The Body, The Senses*, edited by E. Bell and G.T.M. Shackelford, 69–81. Williamstown, MA: Clark Art Institute.
- Paul, C. 1989. "The Redecoration of Villa Borghese and the Patronage of Prince Marcantonio IV." Ph.D. diss., Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Smith, R.R.R. 1991. *Hellenistic Sculpture: A Handbook*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- von Stackelberg, K.T. 2014. "Garden Hybrids: Hermaphrodite Images and Gendered Space in the Roman House." *ClAnt* 33:395–426.
- Trimble, J. 2018. "Beyond Surprise: Looking Again at the Sleeping Hermaphrodite in the Palazzo Massimo." In *Roman Artists*

Patrons and Public Consumption: Familiar Works Reconsidered, edited by B. Longfellow and E.E. Perry, 13–37. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Winckelmann, J.J. 2008. *History of the Art of Antiquity*, edited by A. Potts, trans. H.F. Mallgrave. Texts and Documents. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute.



This volume tackles a pressing issue in Roman art history: that many sculptures conventionally used in our scholarship and teaching lack adequate information about their find locations. Questions of context are complex, and any theoretical and methodological re-framing of Roman sculpture demands academic transparency. This volume is dedicated to privileging content and context over traditions of style and aesthetics. Through case studies, the chapters illustrate multivariate ways to contextualize ancient objects. The authors encourage Roman art historians to look beyond conventional interpretations; to reclaim from the study of Greek sculpture the Roman originals that are too often relegated to discussions of “copies” and “models”; to consider the multiple, dynamic, and shifting contexts that one sculpture could experience over the centuries of its display; and to recognize that postantique receptions can also offer insight into interpretations of ancient viewers. The collected topics were originally presented in three conference sessions: “Grounding Roman Sculpture” (Archaeological Institute of America, 2019); “Ancient Sculpture in Context” (College Art Association, 2017); and “Ancient Sculpture in Context II: Reception” (College Art Association, 2019).

☀ Peter D. De Staebler is assistant professor in the History of Art and Design Department, Pratt Institute. He has coedited volumes on ancient fortifications and the Aphrodisias Regional Survey and published articles and chapters on diverse aspects of Classical material culture including graffiti, ceramics, tombs, city walls, and monolithic columns.

☀ Anne Hrychuk Kontokosta is assistant professor/faculty fellow of Roman art and architecture at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She has published articles and chapters on Roman sculpture, gladiatorial inscriptions and graffiti, Roman baths and horti, and the freestanding Roman arch.



Archaeological
Institute
of America



Selected Papers on Ancient Art and Architecture ☀ Volume 6