



11<sup>th</sup> International Round Table on Polychromy in Ancient Sculpture and Architecture  
**THE MATERIALITY OF POLYCHROMY**  
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# Restauring *Patinas* and *Tartars* in the Musée Napoléon's Workshop of sculptures

The Musée Central des Arts, ancestry of the Louvre was found in 1793 and he was in part the result of an old reflections about the presentation of the royal collections. Inside the Louvre the first workshop of sculptures, in the beginning exclusively destined to the restoration of the antiques was established in 1798 when the collection was increasing with antiques from Versailles and Italian's conquests. The signature of the treaty of Tolentino had also powerfully accelerated this movement. A sculptor, Bernard Lange, will have a central place for the creation of the workshop until his death in 1839. Born in 1754, Bernard Lange studied in The Académie Royale de Toulouse and obtained a gold medal in 1777. Since his success, he decided to move to Italy where his master François Lucas, had also studied. After a brief time in Carrara, Lange arrived in Rome in 1778 and had to stay there until 1792. Just few months after his arrival, he worked in the workshop of Carlo Albacini and as a worker paid per day for sculptors of the French Academy before opening his own workshop and gallery. During this years he studied, with Albacini who restored the Farnese collection the specific technics and very lucrative business of restauration. His forced back to France in 1795 match with the demand of the first restorations and the project of the creating a school of restauration of painting and sculpture inside the Louvre. The sculpture department would have been directed by him. The creation of this school was the revelator of the taste and interrogation of the antiquarians and connoisseurs and the desire to import what was considered as specifically Italian and maintain knowledge and technics in France. Even before the 17th century, the general method of restoration had been established: plaster molding of the fragment, sketching in clay, and finally installing a marble or plaster complement. A tradition existed in France but it is not our subject here. During the first years of the institution, the techniques of restoration, especially installation of the tasselli and consolidation of marbles as well as all the tools came from Italy before real transfers of technology allowed for an autonomy of practices.

The arrival of the works seized in Italy as a result of the French military campaigns was a fantastic victory of image.

Because of its threefold mission to be a universal museum requiring exceptional conservation of masterpieces, to repair the traces of vandalism and time, it was unthinkable to show mutilated works and fragmented or dilapidated sculptures in the Louvre's halls to amateurs. The creation of a sculpture restoration workshop was necessary for a nation that wanted to be the only one able to save the arts. The Pio-Clementino Museum was undoubtedly the model for the administrators of the Central Museum.

## CLEAN AND POLISH :

About the state of the surface and polish of the sculptures, a debate existed. In 1796, the sculptor Augustin Pajou (who was in charge of the Salle des Antiques in the Louvre and one of the administrators of the museum since 1793) published in *La Décade philosophique* a text on the necessity of changing the methods of cleaning sculptures, especially the ones from gardens.

"For a long time I have been revolted by the way in which the statues exhibited in public gardens are cleaned; before long it will alter and destroy the masterpieces that we must preserve for posterity. At certain times of the year, people climb on our most beautiful statues, rub them with sponges, with pieces of wood, they even use second water (a solution of acid nitric) to shorten their work [...]. If for two thousand years they had cleaned the Apollo, these sublime forms which make the admiration of the universe, would not exist any more. The solution of acid nitric was, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, used to clean metals and suppress rusts. As an example, the sculptor Canlers, to restore 2 bronzes vases from Germany wetted them with an acid to clean of the rust before painting a new oxidation. After 1850, the restorer Togneri had changed the method by shaving the oxides. The call of Pajou had no immediate impact because, as another example, always in 1796, the marble worker Scellier cleaned all the sculptures antics and moderns of the Grande Galerie of the Louvre with a solution of acid nitric, black soap and crushed pumice stone. The use of black soap was constant and at the end of the century, conservators had stopped to apply solutions of chlorhydric acid, as did sculptors of Versailles during the second part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The year after Pajou's publication, in 1797, the sculptor and restorer Claude Dejoux was questioned by a special commission about his technics of cleaning sculptures when he worked in Versailles and in the Tuileries. When we read his positions and answers, we understand that, according of him, the main danger for the sculpture were dusts and lichens and the gardens and them types of trees had to be adapted to the types of marbles exposed outside. In his opinion, chemical was better than human hand. In Versailles, the painter Joseph Duplessis had been appointed supervisor of the maintenance of the figures in the park in the fall of 1798, a position he held until 1801. Deploring the state of the exterior sculptures and wishing to clean them "as they were done in the past, with black soap and mixed water", Duplessis, in order to develop his method, had been in contact with Michel-Joseph Majault (death in 1790), inventor of a process for coloring marble that consisted of heating the stone to incorporate pigments, liquid wax and turpentine. Secret on his methods, Duplessis was obliged by the minister to stop talking about his experiences in July 1800. The same year, a commission send the conclusion that all chemical and manual cleaning were reprobate. To protect the sculptures from lichens, the best way was to enter them in the museums. For them destined to stay outside, the protection could be by using a brush, water and some oxygenated hydrochloric acid saturated with potash, easily called Eau de Javel. The protection of the sculpture had might also done by application of a thin slice of liquid wax. After the departure of Duplessis, an anonym sculptor, friend of Pajou?, wrote : The sandstone is still a plague for the statues, as well as the pumice stone. One must especially avoid using it on nudes, unfortunately, this way of cleaning is used much in Versailles."

Before 1803, during the first campaigns of restoration of the antics marbles in the Louvre, the last remnants of the color of the **Ergastines Plate (Fig.1)** would disappeared, perhaps carried away by a mixture of sulfur and marble powder frequently used by the polishers. Another example, the **Diana of Versailles (Fig.2)**, the restoration By Lange and Mariano Giosi had "erased some of the remains of color that detached its drapery from the nude" said the author Antoine Quatremère de Quincy. This information was given directly from Bernard Lange, who was in charge of the restoration. Knowing the long-lasting ties between Lange and Quatremère, this testimony seems very likely Bernard Lange was a neoclassical sculptor and he ever been in good relations with Ennio Quirino Visconti. The positions of the curator has not to be forget in the choice of each restoration. The question of the polish of the white marble was really important and, depending the type of stone, the technics was sometimes complex. By the way, the surface to be polished or the cutting plane was first unified before being rubbed with pottery shards and clayey sands. The homogenized and cleaned surface was then passed through lead and emery while receiving water. A last passage, in order to make the marble shiny, was done with bone pot composed of alum and calcined sheep bones. Visconti transposed from Rome the taste, already established in France by the neoclassical sculptors, of the polishings of the ancient marbles. The grey granite of the Nakhthorheb was thus to find "a very beautiful polish according to the use that one constantly practised in Rome since the rebirth of art said Visconti. Similarly, the red granite basins from the Baths of Diocletian that were offered for sale in 1806 were to be entirely repolished, as was the porphyry basin from the Round Room of the Pio-Clementino Museum.

With all this technics, how the polychromy may survive ?

## PLASTER, PATINA, STUCCO, RUST AND GILDING :

The sculptor Pierre Cartelier, during his restoration of a presumed ancient torso of Trajan and not identified, worked on the surface of the fragment. He explains his work as follows: "I cleaned the whole thing and freed it from the patina that covered it, then I [stained?] the restoration parts to make them look as much like the ancient marble as possible." These stains, workshop recipes, were made from cinnamon, tea, tobacco leaf, wax, smoke black or boiled urine.

Shortly after the statue's arrival at the Louvre in 1808, and certainly before its installation in the galleries in 1811, Lange examined the **Silene Borghèse (fig.3)** and drew up a report on the statue. We learn that "Several parts have been covered with a factitious tartar or stucco which even separates and detaches in all places." Before his exhibition, the surface have been cleaned by the restorers' workshops and that the plaster joints will have been redone. The description of the **Ceres Mattei (fig.4)** just arriving in Paris, indicated the sculpture was cover of rust due to the metal placed in her neck and shoulders. It was decided to sand the surface of the marble before creating a patina covering the entire sculpture.

As we have seen, the sculptures placed outside were most of the time completed with marbles or, as in Versailles, with bleached lead. Although the term stucco can refer to many compositions, it is generally a lime-based plaster tinted in the mass with ochres, and its use was occasionally composed in the Louvre workshop to complement the sculptures. "Stuc" could also refer to patinas or tartars applied to homogenize the appearance of marble. Real recipes were used. Thus, to "make the stucco to a table of Porphyre and a sculpture identified as Minerve", fish glue - composed from dogfish skin, - shark - and brandy were used while a thick acid patina was completed with lime, egg white, calcined bones pot and red pot

In 1816 after the fall of the Empire Visconti, who managed to reconcile promptness and economy of funds, again considered postponing the execution in marble of several restorations, and was content to have them done in stucco, "especially those of the bas-reliefs, since they are monuments that are sheltered from the ravages of the air. These stuccos, plasters and tinted cements, quickly applied in thickness or in whitewash on the marbles, had as function to homogenize the sculptures and to hide the marks of certain restorations. The aesthetics of the works shown in the Louvre were determined by the techniques of smoothing the stucco and polishing the marble.

More rarely, colophony was also used as a sculpting material for its plastic qualities. For example, the nose of the **Isis** from Versailles. The arms, from the shoulders down, were changed using black-tinted plaster as material. A sistrum handle was placed in the left hand. Several tasselli or larger fragments were replaced and a patina applied in the workshops of the Louvre. Pierre-Maximilien Delafontaine (1774-1860) or his father was paid 30 francs after 1805 for «Raccords de la dorure et du vert antique» to the  **bust of Antonino Pio (fig.5)** now come back to Parma. The **Horses of Venice**, one of the first sets seized by Bonaparte's troops in 1796, were transported to Paris. Their last place in Paris was in the composition of the chariot overhanging the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel, designed by the architects Percier and Fontaine and decorated with sculptures whose themes were chosen by Denon. In 1815, they were, according to Fontaine, brutally removed from the Arc du Carrousel and went back to Italy. They were arrived color of bronze, and left in gold said an observatory. Thus, the general appearance of the four antique Horses would have been modified in Paris, but was it a vigorous cleaning or had they been entirely redone?

In his 1839 critic of the Salon, Théophile Gautier recounted that, following Canova's example, the sculptor Antoine Étex had given a warm tone to his marble of Cain and his race cursed by God thanks to an iron oxide stain which gave it an aspect "preferable to the gaudy and flickering lustre of new marbles which have the appearance, against the light, of immense pieces of sugar cut into facets".

Neoclassicism was an international movement and the absence of color was a rule in sculpture.

The history of restoration is also a history of taste and the antique.

