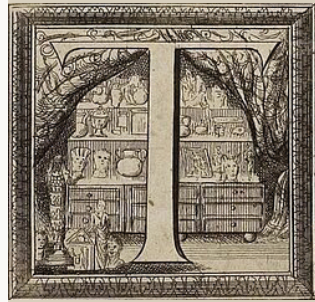


# Antiquitatum Thesaurus. Antiquities in European Visual Sources from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries



## Reception stories. The Antiquitatum Thesaurus blog

#2: Point(s) of View – How Early-Modern Antiquarians Depicted Three-Dimensional Objects in Their Publications


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## #2: Point(s) of View – How Early-Modern Antiquarians Depicted Three-Dimensional Objects in Their Publications

Ulrich Pfisterer

From the beginning, the Renaissance was a twofold 'rebirth': one of ancient texts and ideas as well as of the material remains and culture of antiquity. However, the two areas could not be distinctly divided -- for example, there was the artistic and architectural appropriation of the ancient models, but also the scholarly, philological and interpretive examination of the writings. Perhaps not all humanists and admirers of antiquity in the early-modern period shared the enthusiasm of Ciriaco d'Ancona (c. 1391–1453/55), who is said to have pointed out that the "relics of antiquity possessed much greater trustworthiness and potential for insight than the books". [1] Nonetheless, it was undisputed that for a comprehensive understanding of ancient cultures or even for a sufficiently competent commentary and interpretation of the texts, the most detailed available knowledge of all material evidence of antiquity was indispensable.

But while research has long studied the engagement with ancient texts on all levels – from vocabulary, linguistic form, and text genre to content and paratexts – archaeology and art history have been continuously content to use early-modern drawings and prints after ancient objects primarily as 'evidence' for other things. On the one hand, this allowed historical knowledge and earlier states of ancient relics to be determined. [2] On the other hand, reproductive prints (more rarely plaster casts or scaled-down sculptural copies) served as an indication that ancient 'models' and their aesthetic criteria were potentially available virtually anywhere to artists, craftsmen, architects, collectors, art writers, and enthusiasts. Surprisingly, the drawings and prints themselves played a rather subordinate role as epistemic objects. Only in recent years – with the growing interest in visual science, the history of science, and the history of collecting – have questions been increasingly asked about what visual information was actually considered important in the two-dimensional illustrations, what means were used in attempting to represent it, and what 'life of its own' or momentum was created by the reproductive drawings or prints, which in turn could be reproduced multiple times and over long periods of time. The project *Antiquitatum Thesaurus. Antiquities in European Visual Sources from the 17th and 18th Centuries* therefore addresses these questions and contexts in particular.

In the following contribution, we will focus on just one question from this complex spectrum: Since when and how was an attempt made in prints to convey a multi-sided representation of three-dimensional antique relics? Architecture, for which Vitruvius already demanded a ground plan, elevation, and perspective view in his architectural treatise in order to obtain an adequate notion of a building's appearance, remains excluded. [3] It is also known that artists (possibly as early as the late 14th century) produced drawings of ancient statues from several vantage points alongside each other (**fig. 1**).



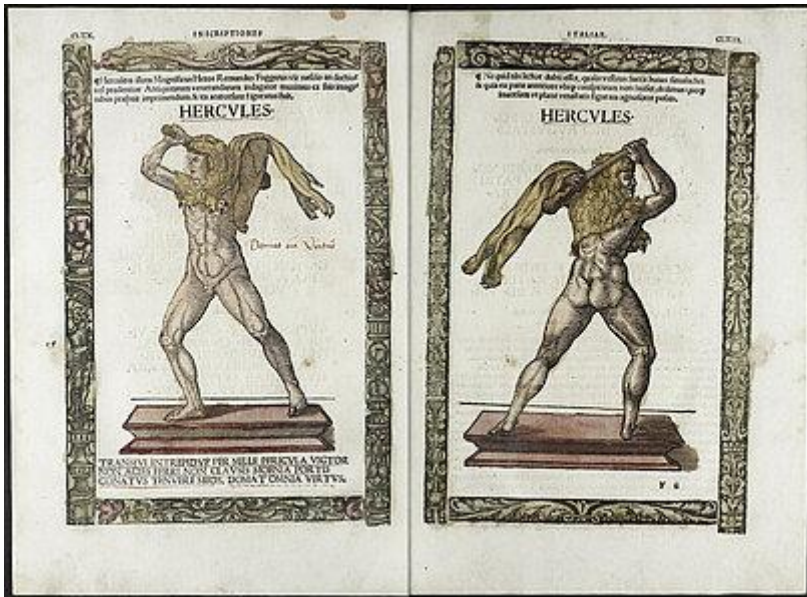
Maarten van Heemskerck: Three Views of a Crouching Venus, c. 1532/36, Berlin, SMB-PK, Kupferstichkabinett, Heemskerck-Album I, fol. 6v

Especially in the context of the paragone debates about the primacy of painting or sculpture, the question of views and, related to this, the question of which medium could convey a more complete and 'correct' representation of an object became increasingly important. However, the print reproduction of an object in multiple views in a book or in a coherently conceived sequence of engravings posed an additional and novel challenge, since the production of the artwork was already much more costly.

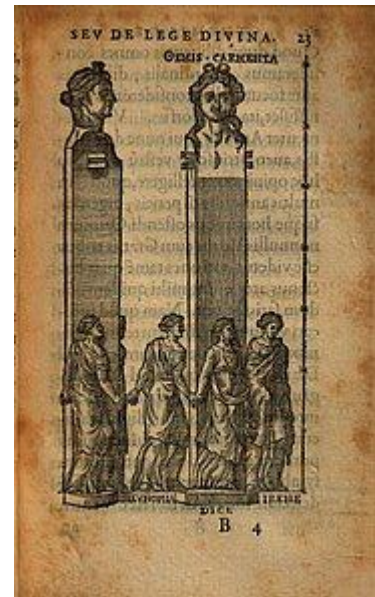
A survey of the print representations of sculptures and other artefacts in books of the 16th and 17th centuries leads to three startling insights:

- 1.

Even though the first prints after ancient sculptures were produced in Italy toward the end of the 15th century, the first illustrations showing objects from two sides were published as woodcuts in Petrus Apian's and Bartholomäus Amantius's *Inscriptiones sacrosanctae vetustatis non illae quidem Romanae, sed totius fere orbis* (**fig. 2**) in Augsburg in 1534. [4] The decisive factor, as an accompanying text explains, was that apparently unknown and unfamiliar details of these sculptures did not seem to be conveyable in any other way. And another important principle, which had also been tried out in earlier drawings, was first used in print north of the Alps: roll-outs ('Abrollung'). Probably the earliest examples of this can be found in two publications by Stephanus Winandus Pighius published in the Netherlands in 1559 and 1568 (**fig. 3**). Modern sculptures, on the other hand, do not seem to have been presented from several points of view until 1583. Printed books showing multiple views of the same sculpture were thus first realized north of the Alps, rather than in Italy. And the impulse for this came from antiquarian, not artistic interests.



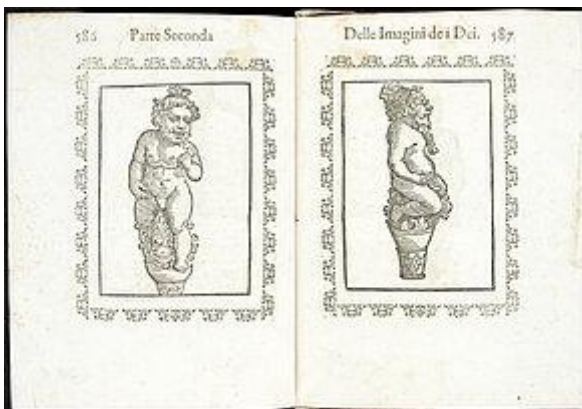
Petrus Apian/Bartholomaeus Amantius: *Inscriptiones sacrosanctae vetustatis non illae quidem Romanae, sed totius fere orbis*, Ingolstadt 1534, pp. CLXX–CLXXI



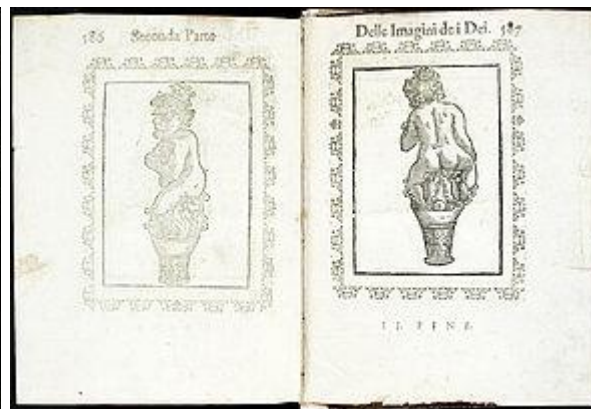
Stephanus Winandus Pighius: *Themis Dea*. Amsterdam 1568, p. 23

2.

Unknown and unfamiliar modes of design subsequently led to even more extensive graphic documentation – and not so much of statues of ‘classical’ antiquity or contemporary Mannerism as of enigmatic objects of everyday use and of non-European figures. Here once more the references to examples such as contemporary natural history and medical illustrations showing bodies from different perspectives are particularly obvious. They remind us that modes of representation and use of illustration can always be analysed in the larger context, not just within the confines of a particular group of objects. In any case, in an expanded new edition of Vincenzo Cartari’s highly successful mythological handbook, illustrated since 1571 – the *Seconda novissima edizione delle Imagini de gli Dei delli Antichi* (Padua 1626) – Lorenzo Pignoria is probably the first to have an unfamiliar “idol” on a Balinese Kris illustrated from four sides (fig. 4a–b). [5]



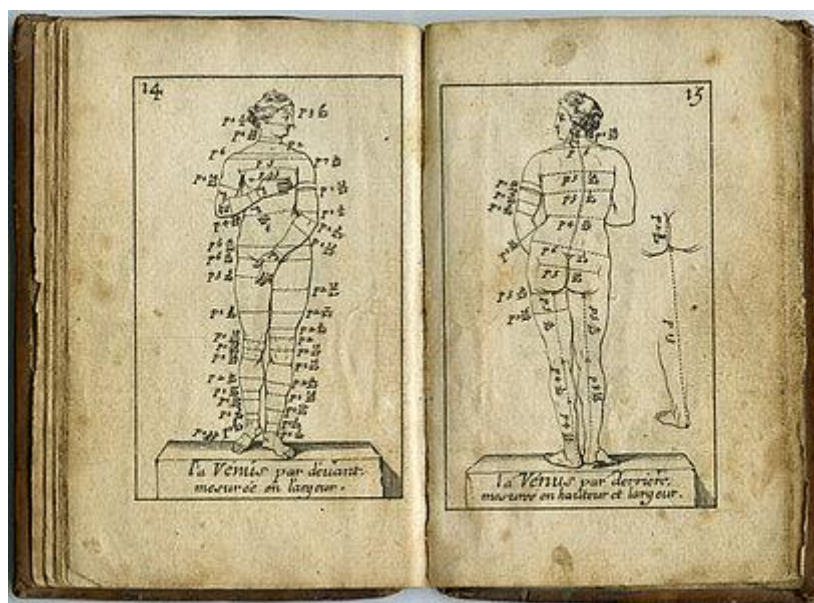
Vincenzo Cartari: *Seconda novissima edizione delle Imagini de gli Dei delli Antichi*, hg. v. Lorenzo Pignoria, Padua 1626, S. 586–587



Vincenzo Cartari: *Seconda novissima edizione delle Imagini de gli Dei delli Antichi*, hg. v. Lorenzo Pignoria, Padua 1626, S. [588–589]

3.

Elaborate publications, which depict sculptures in larger numbers from several viewpoints, depended on higher sales. Such compilations are found only in the second half of the 17th century in works that were intended less for antiquarians than for art lovers, artists, and collectors, and which usually included little text. Even the emerging body of works which provided precise dimensions and measurements for some outstanding antique sculptures were aimed primarily at this audience (fig. 5). Only at this point do artistic interests once again become a decisive factor for new forms of sculpture visualisation.



Abraham Bosse: Représentation des différentes figures humaines, avec les mesures prises sur les antiques qui sont de présent à Rome, Paris 1656, pls. 14–15

The following centuries brought forth no further fundamental innovations in the representation of sculptures and antique artefacts until the beginning of the 19th century.

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[1] Carlo R. Chiarlo: "Gli frammenti dilla sancta antiquitate": studi antiquari e produzione delle immagini da Ciriaco d'Ancona a Francesco Colonna, in: Salvatore Settis (ed.): Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana. I: L'uso dei classici, Turin 1984, pp. 269–297; for further discussion cf. Ulrich Pfisterer: 'Sinnes-Wissen': Jean Siméon Chardin and Numismatics between Art and Science, in: Ulrike Peter/Bernhard Weisser (eds.): Translatio Nummorum – Römische Kaiser in der Renaissance. Akten des internationalen Symposiums Berlin 16.–18. November 2011, (Cyriacus. Studien zur Rezeption der Antike, 3), Ruppolding 2013, pp. 17–37.

[2] A compilation of antiquities known to the 15th century – the starting point for projects such as the *Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance* or Phyllis P. Bober/Ruth Rubinstein: *Renaissance Artists & Antique Sculpture. A Handbook of Sources*, London et al. 1987 – appears to have been first published in the appendix to Richard Krautheimer/Trude Krautheimer-Hess: *Lorenzo Ghiberti*, Princeton 1956.

[3] Cf., for example, Valentin Kockel: *Ichnographia – Orthographia – Scenographia. Illustrationsmodi antiker Architektur am Beispiel des Columbarium der Liberti der Livia*, in: idem/Brigitte Sölch (eds.):

Francesco Bianchini (1662–1729) und die europäische gelehrte Welt um 1700, Berlin 2005, pp. 107–133.

[4] <http://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.8405>.

[5] <http://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.4196>.

A detailed account of the relationships outlined here has just been published online in the series *FONTES. Text- und Bildquellen zur Kunstgeschichte 1350–1750* at [arthistoricum.net](http://arthistoricum.net) with the title „*Wie man Skulpturen aufnehmen soll*“. *Der Beitrag der Antiquare im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*: <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.1016>. The text is available there not only as PDF but in HTML and also links to digital copies of most of the early modern sources cited.