Traveling Marble (Copenhagen, 10 Apr 25)

Thorvaldsen's Museum, Copenhagen, Apr 10, 2025

Ariane Varela Braga

Traveling Marble: Agents, Networks, Technologies (18th-20th centuries).

Through thousands of years, white marble stones have been quarried and circulated to be consumed for architectural and artistic purposes worldwide. The stones are known from ancient Greek and Roman cultures, but during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, white marble assumed a central role in the formation of European and Western art- and cultural history reaching far beyond the boundaries of antiquity. As a material signifying cultural prestige, white marble became a popular material for building and decorative projects, and the Imperial powers of Europe established new quarry facilities all over the world. These growing marble networks circulated white stones in far-reaching patterns of distribution from central Europe to the USA and from the Mediterranean to Scandinavia.

Moving large quantities of solid stone requires a complex infrastructure, developed and maintained to support the increasing consumption. Yet scholars of art history and architectural studies have traditionally addressed white marble through the lens of aesthetics, leaving its omnipresence and global condition largely unexplored.

This seminar explores the distribution patterns of white marble, with particular emphasis on the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, but with perspectives on antiquity. Framing white marble as both a local and global phenomenon, the seminar shifts focus from the traditional emphasis on artists and their materials towards unseen networks of quarry owners, extractors and trading agents. In doing so, the seminar probes questions related to how quarries have been organized through time and the role played by marble consortiums, associations and federations, who have regulated labour, transportation, and distribution over time. The seminar thus targets patterns of distribution, such as trading routes by land and sea, and the technical improvements realized over time, bringing scholars together to discuss how to gather and share data on the extraction and circulation of marble to lay the first foundations for a future global archive of white marble distribution for this period.

Organizer: Institut for Kunst- og Kulturvidenskab / Amalie Skovmøller. In collaboration with Ariane Varela Braga / UNED, Madrid

Please note that registration is required for attendance: https://artsandculturalstudies.ku.dk/research/moving-monuments/calendar/traveling-marble/sign-up/

Programme

9:30
Registration and coffee.

10:00
Welcome by Amalie Skovmøller and Ariane Varela Braga

10:15
A World in Marble
- Amalie Skovmøller

10:45
Materials that connect. The circulation of white marble in the ancient Mediterranean
- Alessandro Poggio

11:15
Ancient Naxian Marble Quarries and Dedications: Documentation and Study from the 18th century to today
- Rebecca Levitan

13:15
18th Century Norwegian Marble in Copenhagen
- Kent Alstrup

13:45
The Workshop of Antonio Caniparoli & Figli in Carrara 1850 to 1930 c.
- Sandra Beresford

14:15
Reading into Greenland Marble: “A noble Danish material”
- Jonathan Foote

15:15
Marble for the Duce. The networks of agents, merchants and marble workers at Foro Mussolini
- Ariane Varela Braga

15:45
The "Archivi del Marmor Project (AMP)”
- Cristiana Barandoni and Luca Borghini

16:15
Summing up and final discussion

Reference:
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