Interpreting the Sculptural Canon (London/online, 10–12 Dec 25)

Institute of Classical Studies, Senate House, Beveridge Hall & Warburg Institute (School of Advanced Study, University of London), Dec 10–12, 2025

Kathleen Christian

The Future of the Antique: Interpreting the Sculptural Canon.

This conference marks the publication of the new, expanded edition of Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny's seminal Taste and the Antique (3 vols, Harvey Miller/Brepols, 2024).

The original edition was a landmark study that established a canonical list of ninety-five ancient sculptures that were widely admired, collected, and copied between c. 1500 and 1900. It traced how these works—from the Apollo Belvedere to the Laocoön—shaped artistic taste, collecting practices, and artistic discourse by defining a classical aesthetic and pedagogy. As one of the most influential texts in the history of art history, Taste and the Antique has profoundly shaped scholarship and curatorial practice on the reception of ancient sculpture.

The revised three-volume edition of 2024 substantially updates the original text with recent research. It broadens the discussion of the reception of the classical canon, incorporates decades of intervening scholarship, and brings the conversation into the realm of contemporary art, opening new perspectives on the afterlives of Greek and Roman sculpture.

Taking the new edition as a point of departure, the conference assesses the state of the field, explores emerging methodologies, and considers future directions.

Sessions will address how classical statues shaped visual culture beyond replication, including:

SHAPING AND TRANSMITTING THE CANON: Examining the establishment, radical alteration, and dissolution of the sculptural canon in the early modern era.

THE CANON AND THE BODY IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE: Exploring the role of classical statuary in the conception of "proportionate" and "disproportionate" bodies, in the representation of non-European populations, and in colonial educational and social policies.

RESTORATION AND DISPLAY: Considering reconfigurations of the antique and notions of authenticity; situating the antique within modern museum contexts.

CHANGING AND RETHINKING CANONS: Rethinking the antique within modern and postmodern theoretical frameworks and practices.

A core aim of this event is to foster dialogue across generations, traditions, and methodologies of

scholarship.

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Programme

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Wednesday, 10 December, Institute of Classical Studies - Senate House – Beveridge Hall

18:00: Doors open

18:20: Katherine Harloe (Director, Institute of Classical Studies), introducing:

18:30–19:30: Salvatore Settis (Accademico dei Lincei)
Keynote paper: Only Connect: Dionysus and Christ

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Thursday, 11 December, Institute of Classical Studies - Senate House – Beveridge Hall

MORNING

10:00: Registration

10:30: Welcome and Introduction
Adriano Aymonino and Kathleen Christian

SESSION 1: SHAPING AND TRANSMITTING THE CANON
Chair: Katherine Harloe (Director, Institute of Classical Studies)

10:45: Katharina Bedenbender (Institut für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
An Antiquity of Plants and Animals? Towards a Non-Human Canon

11:05: Clare Hornsby (British School at Rome – The Walpole Society)
Piranesi and the Classical Body

11:25: Vivien Bird (University of Buckingham)
Art, Historiography and Connoisseurship: The Specimens of Antient Sculpture (1809)

11:45: Discussion

12:00: LUNCH BREAK (lunch provided for speakers only)

AFTERNOON

SESSION 2: THE CANON AND THE BODY IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE
Chair: Caroline Vout (Professor of Classics - Director of the Museum of Classical Archaeology, University of Cambridge)

14:00: Annette Kranen (Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Universität Bern)
Living Antiquities? Anthropological/Travel Imagery and the Sculptural Canon in the Late Eighteenth Century

14:20: Eva Ehninger (Institut für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
The Bodies of Gods. Drawing from the Antique in Colonial India

14:40: Anna Degler (Kunsthistorisches Institut, Freie Universität Berlin)
A Black Apollo? John Quincy Adams Ward's The Freedman and the Belvedere Torso

15:00: Rebecca Yuste (Department of Art History & Archaeology, Columbia University)
Between Plaster and Stone: Reframing the Classical Canon in Bourbon New Spain

15:20: Discussion

15:35: TEA/COFFEE BREAK (for all attendees)

16:05: Kathleen Christian (Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance, Institut für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
Introducing the Updated Census

16:25: Adriano Aymonino (Department of History and History of Art, University of Buckingham) and Eloisa Dodero (Capitoline Museums, Rome)
Introducing the New Edition of Haskell and Penny, Taste and the Antique

16:45: Discussion

17:00: Bill Sherman (Director, Warburg Institute), introducing:

17:10: Nicholas Penny (Former Director, National Gallery, London)
Keynote paper: The Invention of the Classical

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Friday 12 December, Warburg Institute, Auditorium

MORNING

10:00: Registration

10:30: Welcome and Introduction
Adriano Aymonino and Kathleen Christian

SESSION 3: RESTORATION AND DISPLAY
Chair: Chiara Piva (Professoressa Associata, Sapienza Università di Roma)

10:45: Jeffrey Collins (Bard Graduate Center)
Zooming In: The Social Lives of Statues

11:05: Elizabeth Bartman (Former President of the Archaeological Institute of America)

Zooming Out: Restoration as Taste

11:25: Astrid Fendt (Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart)
Restoration, De- and Re-restoration of Ancient Sculptures in the Munich Glyptothek, Nineteenth to Twenty-First Century

11:45: TEA/COFFEE BREAK (for all attendees)

12:15: Eleonora Ferrazza (Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Vatican Museums) & Claudia Valeri (Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Vatican Museums)
The Braccio Nuovo in the Vatican Museums: Display and Restorations of the Antique in the Nineteenth Century

12:45: Lisa Ayla Çakmak (Department of Arts of Greece, Rome, and Byzantium, Art Institute of Chicago) & Katharine A. Raff (Department of Arts of Greece, Rome, and Byzantium, Art Institute of Chicago)
Revealing Restorations: Assessing the Presentation and Reception of Restored Roman Sculptures from the Torlonia Collection at the Art Institute of Chicago

13:15: Discussion

13:30: LUNCH BREAK (lunch provided for speakers only)

AFTERNOON

SESSION 4: CHANGING AND RETHINKING CANONS
Chair: Flora Dennis (Deputy Director, Warburg Institute)

15:00: Joanna Fiduccia (Department of the History of Art, Yale University)
The Head of an Etruscan: Alternative Antiquities and the Physiognomies of Modern Sculpture

15:20: Domiziana Serrano (Institut ARTS, Université Jean Monnet – Saint-Étienne)
The Fragmented Marble Body: Surrealism, Political Phantoms, and the Canon Recast

15:40: Tilman Schreiber (Department of Art History and Film Studies – Friedrich Schiller University Jena)
From the Cortile to the Cosmos: Interpreting the Sculptural Canon in the Context of US Space Travel

16:00: Discussion

16:15: TEA/COFFEE BREAK (for all attendees)

CLOSING PAPER: HISTORIOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE CANON

16:45: Mateusz Kapustka (Freie Universität Berlin – University of Zurich)
Fear Revealed: Jacob Burckhardt on Classical Anthropomorphism and Demonic Hybridity

17:05: Final Remarks

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Institute of Classical Studies & Warburg Institute
(School of Advanced Study, University of London)

Online attendance available

Pre-registration required at: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-future-of-the-antique-interpreting-the-sculptural-canon-tickets-1932060758739

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Organised by Adriano Aymonino (University of Buckingham) & Kathleen Christian (Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

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Supported by:
Trinity Fine Art
Center for Palladian Studies
Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Londra
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Reference:
CONF: Interpreting the Sculptural Canon (London/online, 10-12 Dec 25). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 6, 2025 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51078>.