



Marble

Value,
Perception,
Materiality

18th-19th century

CFP: International Workshop

14th–15th June 2019

Department of Art History, University of Vienna

"Marbre, c'est une pierre opaque, compacte, prenant un beau poli, remplie pour l'ordinaire de veines & de taches de différentes couleurs." (Encyclopédie)

This rather mundane account of “marble” published in the *Encyclopédie* by Denis Diderot and Jean-Baptiste le Rond d’Alembert describes in few words the qualities of a material that had fascinated humans since antiquity. The aesthetic characteristics of this stone – the translucency of Carrara marble or the exquisite crystals of Parian marble – have made it the most frequently used material of art since antiquity. Moreover, marble’s endurance imbued it with a sense of eternity, which it transferred to the sculpture and architecture in which it was used.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the presentation of marble, both in sculptural works and in decorative architecture, along with the patterns of collecting marble and the principals of classifying it, underwent a fundamental transformation. The way this stone was seen shifted according to new aesthetic, antiquarian, and historical standards. At the same time, dynamic social and economic contexts, as well as the blossoming of the natural sciences, enhanced this development.

Natural scientists began to question anew the age and origins of stone broadly construed. The emergent bourgeoisie invested more frequently both in prestigious sculpture collections and academically orientated teaching collections.

The workshop “Marble. Value, Perception, Materiality” revisits this apparently self-evident material and aims to approach it from three perspectives that span the tumultuous period of pre-modernity through modernity.

- What dimensions of imaginary and monetary value did marble evoke?
- Were there any patterns of collecting marble? How was marble presented and perceived?
- To what extent did a relationship exist between the scientific knowledge about marble and the reception of the material in the Fine Arts?

Papers 20 minutes in length can address the following three topics:

The perception of marble

- How was marble collected, presented, exhibited and looked at, in particular in contrast with collections of plaster casts?
- Have collections of stone sculptures been related to or compared with geological collections of stones? To what extent did these two types of collections interact?
- How were collections of marble sculptures spatially disposed?
- What role did the collections of „stone“ play in the larger context of natural history collections?
- Was knowledge about the materiality of marble important for the perception of sculpture?
- What about the relationship between marble and connoisseurship?

Marble and materiality

- Which role did the dimension of materiality play for sculptors who worked with marble?
- What did sculptors know about their materials?
- How did the knowledge of materials influence commissions of sculptures?
- What was the current state of general knowledge about marble? What did the layman know about its age, quality or composition?
- Who had that knowledge? How was it augmented and disseminated?

The value of marble

- From where were the stones sourced? Which quarries did sculptors and collectors contact?
- Who determined the market for marble?
- What characterized the supply chains? Who were the intermediaries?
- What determined the prices? Which criteria were significant?
- Which sorts of marble were popular? What were they used for?
- How were original marble stones and imitations differentially priced?
- Did the acquisition of marble increase the social status of its buyers? To what extent did owners/collectors gain social prestige by buying marble?
- How did those who received marble decode its material semantics as a luxury good?

The international workshop “Marble. Value, Perception, Materiality” will take place in Vienna from June 14th to 15th 2019. The event will be hosted by the Department of Art History at the University of Vienna and the Vienna Center for the History of Collecting. The workshop will be held in English and German.

The workshop brings together scholars in all phases of their careers. It is addressed primarily to faculty and students of art history, as well as to a broader audience. A collective visit to the geological collection of the Natural History Museum Vienna is being planned. Travel and accommodation costs are subsidized.

Please submit the following documents by **28th February 2019** to marthe.kretzschmar@univie.ac.at and anna.sophie.rath@univie.ac.at:

- Title of the paper
- Abstract (max. 400 words)
- Short CV with publications (max. half a DIN A4 page)

Website: <http://www.workshop-marmor.at/>

Organization:

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