



How One Should Photograph Sculpture

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Editor's Note: The three texts by Heinrich Wölfflin published here have been translated to accompany Geraldine A. Johnson's article, "(Un)richtige Aufnahme: Renaissance Sculpture and the Visual Historiography of Art History", which appears in the present issue of Art History. They are the first in an occasional series pairing works of art-historical interest never before translated into English with original pieces of research that engage with the texts in question.

Part I'

Whosoever is interested in the history of sculpture is at the greatest loss for good illustrations. Not that the publications [i.e., photographic prints] are missing - the things are offered for sale in all sizes and manners - but it seems to be the widely held opinion that sculptural artworks can be photographed from any side, and it is left totally to the discretion of the photographer at which angle to the figure to set up his machine. He then believes that his artistic temperament will be best revealed if he avoids in every case the frontal viewpoint and seeks out a 'painterly' side view: painterly and artistic being concepts that seem to overlap completely. The public buys these photographs in good faith, [believing] that with a mechanically-made illustration nothing of the original could be lost; it does not know that an old figure has a particular main view, that one destroys its effectiveness when one takes away its main silhouette; without batting an eye, present-day people allow their uncultivated eyes to put up with the most disagreeable overlaps and lack of clarity. One gets altogether used to completely false impressions, since the corruption then goes further: the photographs serve as templates for illustrations in popular art-historical literature, indeed even in monumentally-scaled publications such false images find a place and are tolerated.

It would thus not be superfluous once and for all to make it more widely understood how sculptural photographs should be made, and guide the viewer back to seeking out the view that corresponds with the artist's conception. It is not right [to say] that a sculptural monument can be seen from all sides. Nowadays there are admittedly some sculptures that leave it so-to-speak undecided from where they wish to be seen, in that they present themselves completely from no single side, but rather allow the viewer to arrive at full clarity only through the sequence of all individual views. However, [a work made in] the good [old] tradition provides one main view, and the educated eye feels it is a virtue that here the figure explains itself all at once and becomes completely understandable, so that one is not driven around it in order to grasp its content, but rather that it informs the beholder about its viewpoint right

Detail from Benedetto da Maiano. Bust of Pietro Mellini. Frontally. (Florence, Museo Nazionale) Photograph by Anderson in Rome [see plate 13].

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from the start. Whosoever wants to instruct himself about such matters should read the relevant section in Adolf Hildebrand's *Problem der Form*.² Here I only have to add that this normal viewpoint is first of all naturally none other than the direct frontal view and that only the most developed art adds yet further views to this.

Hundreds of cases offer themselves to illustrate these sentences. For the art historian, who is also - it is necessary to note this in particular - an art lover, there is no more pleasant way of occupying his time than to go to a museum of casts in order to put matters right so that things are as they should appear, and to confront

I *David* by Donatello.



wretched handyman-photography with the pure image of the artwork. I will restrict myself here to a few cases of the most well-known kind, to three free-standing figures that at the same time represent a good section of evolutionary history: I mean the [bronze] *David* by Donatello and the one by [Andrea del] Verrocchio in the Bargello [Museum in Florence] and the *Giovannino* [i.e., *Young St John the Baptist*] in the Berlin Museum.

With the magnificent *David* of Donatello it is almost impossible to miss the view. Too loudly do the right and the left arm insist on being of equal importance: the view from the middle that does equal justice to the two body halves is also the given one for the layman's eye. The line calculation then is such that the contour lines of the body drawn out in different directions - the gently flowing left one and the sharply angled right one protruding from the hip - should be accompanied by arm lines drawn out in opposite directions. One is thereby indeed convinced of how little room there is to manoeuvre, how there truly is just one viewing angle from which everything is clear and well disposed. The test is undertaken in the lower sections: one should see the foot whose toes wrap themselves around the head of Goliath, one should see the helmet wing that leans itself against the leg, the lowered sword must intersect the leg line at a clear angle - all this occurs only from the precise middle. How a minor shift to the side immediately destroys the clarity of the figure and the beautiful coordination of the lines is evident, for example, in the illustration in Bode-Bruckmann's *Toskana-Skulptur*.³ I present here Brogi's photograph, which is better (plate 1).

The *David* by Verrocchio is an instructive counterpoint. Not only does another individuality lie behind it, but also another generation. The figure is enriched through contrasts. The height differences between right and left shoulder, between right and left hip are considerable, despite the motif of the raised foot being abandoned. A photograph must make this increase in contrast visible with great sharpness. Here the widely-available photographs leave us completely in the lurch; a view is consistently



**2 David by Verrocchio.
(Incorrect photograph.)**

**3 David by Verrocchio.
(Correct photograph.)**

chosen that weakens the contrast, almost negates it. Furthermore: Donatello's figure lays itself out, so to speak, only in one plane, [but] with Verrocchio there is the contrast of advancing and retreating [planes]. The two arms do not keep themselves in the same spatial layer: the right one is drawn back and the pointed elbow of the left one pushes forward. The photographs by Brogi and Alinari (plate 2)⁴ show this as little as [they do] the space between the feet. On top of this, the actual movement of the legs is completely lost. From a normal photograph, then, one must also demand that the extension of the leg placed behind makes itself fully visible and [then] it becomes apparent once again that the direct frontal view is the one that shows most clearly the height differences between the shoulders and between the hips, as well as the advancing and retreating [planes] and the overall theme of movement (plate 3).⁵ The head of Goliath, which in the original arrangement lay between - not beside - David's feet, does not disturb given that the wonderful run-up of the left leg's line remains intact in the main view.

The tautness, [the] dashing, the elegance of Verrocchio's youthful victor now suddenly becomes apparent to the eye. What liveliness is gained by the contour!

The streamlined arm with the weapon, the boyish squared elbow and the fine drawing of the undeveloped musculature! And only now do the knees gain their strength. The hand set on the hip becomes visible with all its fingers, whereas otherwise the thumb disappears, and - something that is no less important - the blade of the weapon appears in measurable length, whereas the strongly foreshortened view is not sufficiently informative about its [i.e., the sword's] form and thus unsettles the viewer. Everything that Verrocchio has lavished on ornamental motifs is now mixed into the overall view, that is, not only the fine accents of the epaulettes, but also the side clasp of the armour, things that are completely on the same track as the extremely delicate and yet energetically precise way of modeling the body.⁶

I have not yet spoken of the head, [but] it is the most noteworthy point. Wouldn't one swear that the boy with the lowered head (plate 2) could not be the same figure as the one with it held high (plate 3)? A few tests would quickly clear up such wonders of perspective for laymen; for us the only question now is: is our photograph correct in the motif of [the head] held high? No. Here it contains a decidedly abnormal accent that gives the original an appearance that does not fully correspond to the facts, insofar as the head is actually slightly tilted forwards. The fault lies in the height of the photograph. It immediately disappears when one views the head slightly less from below, in other words, when one steps back further from the figure. I present another illustration of a detail (plate 4), which includes this correction. One sees how the head immediately takes on different proportions and only now does the wholly 'Leonardesque' beauty unfold. The viewpoint otherwise remains the same and it is the dot on the 'i' that in seeing the figure directly from the front, the crowning head reveals itself in its pure face view.

With Michelangelo there are innovations. They raise a host of questions for the researcher. How did his *David* wish to be viewed? There are photographs where the figure possesses a wonderful forward momentum and others that are completely lame. Passing judgment here is not so simple and I put aside this in every sense exceptional case for a later discussion. One could sooner speak of [Michelangelo's] *Bacchus*, which has a normal genesis. What is new here: [is] that the figure must be seen slightly from the side, from its left side. It has usually been photographed in this way, [and] it should also be thus displayed. The artist has in the formation of the base clearly indicated where the main view must be sought. The so-called *Cupid*, which I don't believe to be a youthful work [by Michelangelo], is to be seen from the back. Other secure early works like the [Vatican] *Pietà* and the *Bruges Madonna* [both by Michelangelo] are precisely calculated for the old frontal view. It is very surprising how much is lost through small deviations.

When finally in this context I also put forward the Berlin *Giovannino*, I do so not because I would like to propose it as a work by Michelangelo, [but] rather [because] it can represent a stylistic period that extends well beyond Michelangelo's youthful oeuvre, the period of the multi-faceted, painterly composition.⁷

The *Giovannino* is a figure to which one does wrong if one places it in front of a wall without making sure that it can be turned, and when one wants to publish it, one must take multiple photographs in order to do justice to it. It wants to be seen from various sides. With amazing artfulness it is composed so that the various views yield clear and harmonious images. With gentle compulsion the viewer is led around [the sculpture], [but] he puts up with this most willingly since the path is marked by nothing but way-stations of beauty. I present three views, without claiming that one could not extract many more.

4 Head of [Verrocchio's] *David*, lowered.

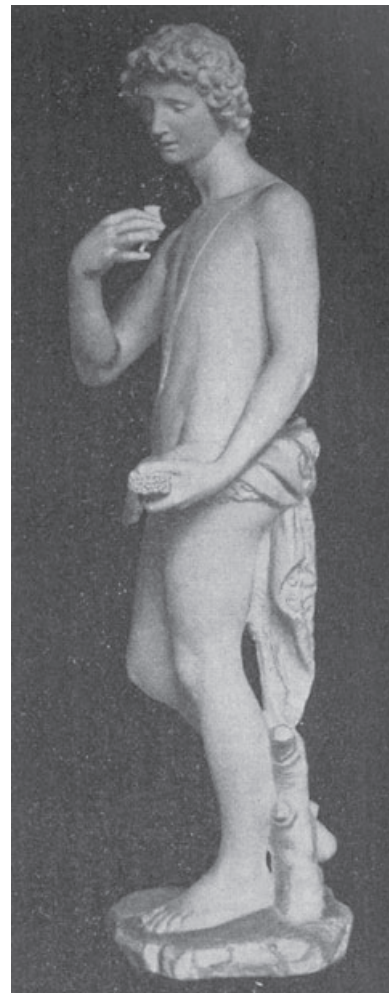




5 *Giovannino* in the Berlin Museum.



6 *Giovannino* in the Berlin Museum.



7 *Giovannino* in the Berlin Museum.

The first [view] from the right (plate 5) above all perfectly presents the rear standing leg.⁸ It is evenly drawn forward. Here the momentum of the line goes through the entire body.

If one positions the figure frontally (plate 6), one then perceives most clearly the system of directional contrasts in the body, [and] he almost becomes something uncomfortably broken. Without any doubt, the viewer is also directed to seek out the side views.

The view from the left (plate 7) is the simplest and calmest. The block's vertical becomes palpable and in contrast with this tectonic awkwardness, the detached right arm gains a very particular effectiveness. This free positioning of the extremity in front of the torso is stylistically such an essential feature of the figure that this view too has the right to count as a normal view.

The painterly content of the statue and the possibility of gaining a wealth of (permitted) effects through lighting techniques will not be further discussed here.

Part II⁹

In a first article I discussed a number of well-known Italian Renaissance pieces,¹⁰ with the intention of re-sharpening awareness of the fact that an old figure should not be viewed from every which side, [but] rather that it has a particular view, and that only a criminal carelessness denies it this artistically-willed view whenever an illustration is made. Unfortunately, this carelessness is so common that only in rare

cases does one find satisfactory photographs of sculpture: one almost always avoids the normal frontal view and believes one does the figure the greatest favour when one gives it a 'painterly appeal,' that is, takes the viewpoint slightly from the side. Few know that, by doing so, in most cases the best quality [of the sculpture] is lost. One destroys the silhouette on which the artist has set himself and this does not only mean that the lines are brought out of harmony, no, this means much more: great artistic effort was expended precisely in laying out the entire sculptural content in one plane and that which in nature has to be comprehended through individual successive perceptions is presented [in the sculpture] with effortless ease to the eye all at once. That is not to say that a figure could not also have good side views. Sculpture has in fact developed so that it has advanced from a one- or two-sided plane-style to a multi-sided composition (with turns and rotations); [but] there must always be only one comprehensive main view if one does not want to be endlessly driven restlessly around the figure. (See Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, chapter 5.)¹¹ Once the eye has become sensitive to the differences between clear and unclear seeing, it is then a great torture to go through modern book illustrations and presentation volumes, of which one must say at every turn: but why then this most unfortunately distorted view? The leg is repulsively overlapped! The arm movement is incomprehensible

8 Apollo Belvedere. Alinari photograph. (Incorrect photograph.)

9 Apollo Belvedere. After an engraving by Marc Anton[io] Raimondi.



and the overall outline is as ragged as possible! When coming face to face with the original, however, one will find a particular relish in moving from the inferior views to the completely convincing [view], and one does not tire, when repeating the experiment, of allowing from inadequate appearances the purified image to emerge, which stands calm and clear and in the true sense is felt to be a liberation. This is a pleasure that painting cannot give us.

If in recent centuries the undisciplined eye wanders aimlessly and the fine artworks of the Renaissance are handled quite arbitrarily, how much more will this be the case for ancient art with figures where the original base is almost always missing, where later additions obscure the original thought and a false museum installation finally leads the viewer completely off the right track! In the German university collections of plaster casts these errors might more or less be compensated for; [but] for the benefit of the public that travels to Italy and all those who photograph and buy photographs, a few cases will be noted here that are characteristic of the present-day confusion about the sculptural sense.

Who could believe it? A key example of all sculpture, a work as famous as the *Apollo Belvedere* - it is displayed in the Vatican in such a way that one must press oneself hard up against the wall in order to partake of the original view, and all modern photographs right up to the heliogravure in Brunn-Bruckmann's *Antiken Denkmälern* present the figure in a false, intolerable way (see plate 8).¹² The outstretched arm with the cloak belongs in the wall plane, parallel to the viewer; the head then puts itself into pure profile and the feet lock together for the eye. I know of only one instance since its resurrection that the *Apollo* has been thus depicted, [this was] still in Raphael's time, in an engraving by Marc Anton[io Raimondi] (see plate 9). The difference between the two images is certainly not an insignificant one. All at once [in the engraving] the torso gains an undreamt of power, vertically and horizontally, chest and arm are set in sharp contrast against one another, and the flaccid contours of the first view [i.e., plate 8] are suddenly full of life and energy in every particle. Through the meeting of the leg lines, the figure now gains stability and calm,¹³ without losing forward momentum. And the outstretched arm becomes only at all tolerable when it does not obliquely approach the viewer, but rather integrates itself into the wall plane. From every other view, the figure appears insecure, brittle, disturbing.¹⁴

The *Barberini Hera* stands in the Rotunda of the Vatican. Opposite her the other, older *Hera*,¹⁵ which has been attributed to Alcamenes, [provides] an instructive comparison. Both figures, representatives of two centuries, have a weight-bearing leg and a free leg; the one, developed in a plane-like manner like a wall, does not give rise to even a moment of doubt about where to seek its frontal view, [while] the younger one in contrast, which has a greater rotation, does not readily let the viewer come to rest, one is forced to pursue the free leg and thus to abandon the frontal plane that the (modern) pedestal indicates.

This is not the fault of the figure, but rather the fault of the installation. As soon as one has grasped the view of the free leg, that is, as soon as one has positioned oneself slightly to the side, one notices that now the figure as a whole arranges itself, and without requiring any further movement, despite the motif of rotation, [the figure] lays itself out completely satisfactorily and clearly in all its parts. Of course, it should be exhibited so that the viewer does not have to seek out the view in the first place, but rather that already in the pedestal, the frontal view is accentuated. Incidentally, in the Museum of the Baths [of Diocletian] in Rome this is reiterated, where the old plinth is preserved and our opinion about the orientation of the figure is confirmed.¹⁶

The *Capitoline Venus* [in Rome] is installed so it can be rotated. Who would not have allowed the poor woman in her niche to turn herself around? And one certainly has the right to savour each individual view. But one should then in any case also know the fixed point at which the figure should be placed for an illustration. And here once again the photographers wander around indecisively, the one claiming the right [side] is more beautiful, the other the left, while actually one has no choice at all: the base says completely categorically how the body should be seen (plate 10).¹⁷ Nothing is more instructive than to see side by side a number of slightly different photographs. Only then does it become truly clear (which for painting is of the greatest importance) how one and the same movement can produce images with a completely different expressive value, how a minimal change in the viewing angle can paralyze all the force of the line or can allow the motif to appear like an altogether different one. The *Medici Venus* [in Florence] (plate 11) is infinitely finer in its movement than the *Capitoline Venus* - the pressing together of the thighs is here a (sensual) coarsening of the motif - however the entire peculiarity of the leg position, the wonderful delicacy of the movement is immediately lost if one diverges from the exact frontal view. The [sense of] floating disappears and the right leg - the essential bearer of expressiveness - becomes somewhat dejected, sluggish.

These are all comparatively simple problems. But what about when a figure turns itself sharply, when, to take a striking example like the *Callipygian Venus* in Naples (plate 12), it looks down over its own back? I confess that in fact all the photographs [of this statue] that I have come face to face with made an unsatisfactory impression. If the figure is photographed from the front, then one also wishes to see something of the focus of its gaze, and if it is photographed from behind, then the view appears all too random and unimportant. And yet despite this, it is an artistically seriously-elaborated composition: the woman is not just calculated [to be seen] from the frontal view nor from the rear view, but rather, in this case, the [main] face lies to one side. If one takes this position, then the figure develops itself extremely beautifully. The artist also tells the viewer clearly enough where he should position himself: not for nothing are the drapery masses in the main orientation gathered wall-like into a ground plane. The way in which this *Venus* is now installed inevitably leads the viewer astray. She belongs with her left side against a wall or possibly in a niche.

Of course, besides this there are cases where even with the best will a unified view cannot be found. The *Farnese Bull* in the Naples Museum is a monstrous example of an ancient lapse of good taste. But even apart from such aberrations of an art that was becoming ever more decadent, the law of planar sculpture was not understood everywhere. Besides the late [example of the *Farnese Bull*], very early examples of singular brutality occur. Even a figure like the *Scraper* by Lysippus [i.e., the *Apoxyomenos* in the Vatican Museum] will never be absolutely resolved. If one takes the expressive legs as they present themselves in the frontal view, then the arm directly confronts us, thereby not only appearing unclear due to the strong foreshortening, but also in general uncomfortably aggressive thanks to the fact that, to some extent, he reaches out beyond the stage space. If one steps to the side, the arm develops itself satisfactorily, but the legs lose out. The statue is thus composed of two views, and that is a deficiency that cannot be entirely denied. Another well-known example is the thorn-pulling boy [i.e., the *Spinario* in the Capitoline Museum in Rome] where one can also long ponder how he would actually like to be seen and, in the end, still not come to a correct conclusion. The artistic conception of Marc Anton[io Raimondi], who we can thank for making an engraving after the figure, has here once again, as with the *Apollo* [Belvedere], acquiesced into a very planar image. He takes [i.e., depicts] the boy



10 *Capitoline Venus*. Alinari photograph.



11 *Medici Venus*. Brogi photograph.



12 *Callipygian Venus*. Brogi photograph. (Incorrect photograph.)

completely from his right side, which allows one to see well the sole of the foot and the entire operation, but important parts like the face lose out, so that one is still left to wonder whether the correct [view] has been hit upon.

It would then be a particularly interesting investigation to pinpoint the places where such licence goes unchecked: the *Thorn-Puller*, as well as the *Scraper*, are products of Peloponnesian art, [while] in Attic art one will not find these types of offences. However, it would go well beyond the remit of this essay to delve into such questions. Before seeking out the few figures that resist a clear pictorial perception, one should first devote one's attention to the many that cry out for a planar view and to which justice has not yet been done.

How Should One Photograph Sculpture? (Problems of the Italian Renaissance)¹⁸

Having been asked by the Editorial Staff for a contribution for the beginning of the fiftieth volume of the journal [i.e., the *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*], I put together the following notes relating to two essays that I published 20 years ago in the same place and under the same title ([see the] 1894/95 volume).¹⁹ Even though the article did not appear - due to external circumstances - on the anniversary, I do not want to let it fall completely under the table, [especially] not given the subject matter, and even less given the event to which it owes its origins.

The problem of photographing the [sculpted] figure overlaps completely with the problem of viewing the [sculpted] figure. It only lets itself be treated historically: there is no universal answer to the question of how figures are to be viewed. Beyond

13 Benedetto da Maiano.
Bust of Pietro Mellini. Frontal.
(Florence, Museo Nazionale)
Photograph by Anderson in
Rome.

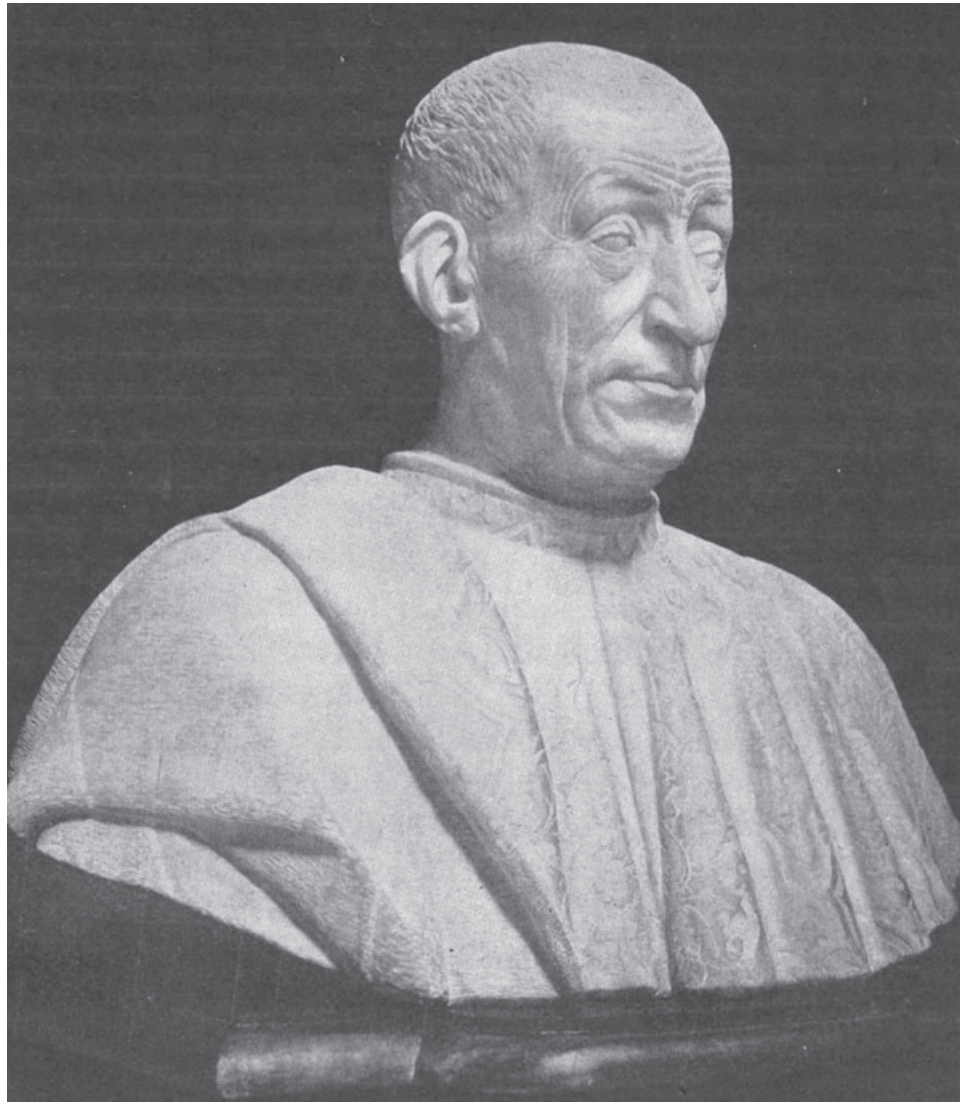


its theoretical importance, the matter has a practical side, insofar as the demand for a determinate view must naturally determine museum installations.

All sculpture in the round should be seen from various sides, otherwise it will have failed its calling. Only between one view and another view are there differences: some have little to offer, others more, [but] usually there is one view that through beauty and clarity makes itself felt to be the leading one. One can then also vary the other views, but in all of them the main view will continue to resonate like a base tone. One comes back to it again and again, and it is a particular pleasure precisely when the incoherent and misaligned suddenly regains coherence and harmony.

Fundamentally, the evolution of the Renaissance tends increasingly to gather together the content of the figure into one such view. But Renaissance means only one stylistic possibility; for the Baroque there is no similar obligation, not because it [makes] inferior [art], but because it makes different art. The single solid silhouette, in which the entirety [of the figure] rests as if in a golden ring, loses more and more of its importance, the figure performs in different scenes, the attraction lies not in a final fixed formula, but rather precisely in the unfixed view. This is the art of Bernini. However, one should not believe that, thanks to this, the door has been opened wide

14 Benedetto da Maiano.
Bust of Pietro Mellini. From
the side. (Florence, Museo
Nazionale) Photograph by
Alinari.



onto capriciousness: it is only on the foundation of Classic art, with its circumscribed view, that the more uncircumscribed Baroque became possible.

We discuss the problem here as the Renaissance put it to itself.

Section I

The case is simple with a bust like that by Benedetto da Maiano depicting Pietro Mellini. It seems that one really could not miss the [right] path with regards to the view. Decidedly frontally oriented, it also wants to be photographed frontally. Only with true frontality does the silhouette gain a uniform meaning. Only thus does the (quattrocentesque) rhythm of the line become audible. Only thus can the asymmetric accent of the cloak over one shoulder achieve true recognition. Nevertheless, such sculptures are usually photographed a little from the side, whereby the stylistic character immediately blurs and the clarity of the form suffers (plate 13 and plate 14).

If the head looks sideways like, for instance, Michelangelo's Brutus, then naturally is it even more correct to hold on to frontality so that the deviation in direction becomes effective.²⁰ It is the Baroque that first abolishes the law of rigid orientation. An orientation is still always there - one knows precisely where the front lies - but the

head now truly comprises a sequence of views where one leads into another without letting the viewer feel that he has strayed from the main direction. The photographer can take photographs from different angles and no historian will raise an objection. They are all typical views.

And so it is with complete figures. It would not be worth working in the round if just a single view were anticipated, [but] only the Renaissance has with great discrimination formed out of the possible views one that alone says everything and in which alone the theme resonates purely. Here the lines and forms come together in a clear melody. It will not be lost when the view shifts itself, but it will sound blurry and as if [coming] from far away.

The feeling for the expressive silhouette only formed itself gradually. A figure like Donatello's bronze David is clearly set upon doing so. In the large publication on Tuscan sculpture by Bode-Bruckmann this does not become apparent.²¹ But also in the installation in the Bargello in Florence, the figure has difficulty developing its actual qualities. With a light that comes from three sides and without a clear [i.e., uncluttered] background, it silhouettes itself poorly. Likewise for the David by Verrocchio the satisfactory installation has definitely not yet been found. He too

**15 Verrocchio, *David*.
(Florence, Museo Nazionale)
Photograph by Anderson in
Rome.**

**16 In the style of Perugino,
Drawing with the motif of
David (Florence, Uffizi).**



fights with restless, closely-encroaching walls that make it almost impossible to see him in outline. On top of this, he has been moved altogether out of the [correct] orientation. The old round base is so encased in a modern wooden socle that for anyone who follows the directives of the socle, the figure appears somewhat pushed out of position. What this means is shown in a photograph by Anderson (plate 15). It is false because - besides the inevitable distortions of all photographs [taken] from the near distance - it takes [i.e., photographs] the figure too strongly from its right side. Therefore the actual theme becomes unclear. A drawing in the mode of Perugino in the Uffizi, which has a motif that fully overlaps with that of the sculpture, must make it clear to everyone what the centre of the composition is and how the figure should be seen [plate 16].²² As strange as it may seem, it is really only a matter of the [point of] view whether the pose appears sweet and rhythmic as in the drawing or hard and unrhythmic as in the photograph. The arrangement of the forms is totally identical. Of course, the ugly makeshift brace on the right wrist then also disappears from sight.

But, one will object, the head of Goliath must always stand in the way of a clear view. At least given how it now lies. But this arrangement is also not the original one. The head should connect exactly with the right foot of the boy - one sees the prepared surface [of the bronze where this connection once existed] - and then an unencumbered view of the outside line of the free leg can be had.²³

If one takes the principle of true frontality seriously, then surprising prospects arise. It suffices to establish the theme for all Renaissance figures and thereby determine general formal tendencies. Until now, one will find few photographs that can satisfy the more stringent stylistic demands.

But here too it has to be said: the law of the Renaissance is no longer the law of the Baroque. It is inherent in the general evolution of art that the sculptural figure gradually supersedes the scene gathered onto a single plane and then, without lapsing into the uncertainty of an absence of orientation, guides the viewer around the corners on principle. There are, therefore, many more serviceable photographs of 'painterly' than of 'more severe' sculpture.

Section 2

The question of the view cannot be separated from the question of lighting. Here arbitrariness is even greater. One relies on sculpture itself creating light and shade and that the sculptural form will always come through forcefully, even when the lighting changes.

But surely it is to be accepted right from the start that certain types of lighting have been perceived to be normal and others as abnormal. That which can be called normal can be extracted from contemporary painting. The history of light and shadow has not yet been written, but one differentiates without further ado the direction of light of the High Renaissance from, for example, that of the Quattrocento. And within the Quattrocento, it is particularly the second half that, in line with the general trend towards lightening tones, balances the lightnesses against the darknesses with such subtlety that it would be incomprehensible if sculpture had not in its own way taken part in this phenomenon. Indeed, the fine movement of planes seen in later fifteenth-century sculptors has always been highlighted as characteristic [of this period]. It is therefore only a matter of showing these elements to their advantage in the photographs or, rather, first bringing them to the fore through the mode of installation.

Here one indeed experiences many disappointments. Granted that museums often have to struggle against insurmountable difficulties, it is still a lamentable fact

17 Head of the Madonna in the relief in plate 19.

18 Verrocchio, Drawing. (London, British Museum).

19 Verrocchio, Madonna relief. (Florence, Museo Nazionale) Photograph by Alinari.

20 School of Verrocchio, Madonna picture (Berlin, Kaiser-Friedrich Museum).

that exceptionally beautiful pieces such as those owned by the Museo nazionale [i.e., the Bargello Museum in Florence] are for the most part consigned to an impossible lighting. In the room of marbles on the second floor [of the Bargello], the famous busts by Desiderio [da Settignano], Verrocchio and F[rancesco] Laurana stand one beside the other against a wall in direct frontal light, which naturally causes the cast shadow to arrange itself most unfavourably. Not that richer light-dark effects ought to be sought, only more authentic ones, a phenomenon that would allow these heads more nearly to approach the impression made by paintings from the same period. What a modern viewer finds interesting does not matter at all. In every collection one finds pieces that stand very attractively in the light, with deeply-covering darknesses and individual flashes of light - and photographers have not let this pass them by - but the question always remains as to which effect is the one originally intended. And here one can now respond in the negative, that in any case all those types of lighting that are unknown in contemporary painting have to be eliminated as unintended. I do not want to claim in general that sculpture was seen in terms of the movement of light to the same extent as in plane-bound painting, but only that it is evident that the general principles of how form stands in relation to light would have been the same in the one and the other.

The bust by Benedetto da Maiano in the Anderson photograph (plate 13) perhaps allows the form to appear a bit too ragged, but is otherwise good. The accents more or less come out as we can find them in the very closely-adhering shadows of later fifteenth-century drawings.²⁴ The sixteenth century strengthens the shadow masses and gives them more significance, but they remain in the service of form. The Baroque first liberates light from this dependency and allows it to flicker apparently freely over the planes.

But if one now wants to compare sculpture and painting, it would be best first of all to bring in relief sculpture. Furthermore, there are here [i.e., in relief sculpture] also compositions with motifs almost identical to those found in paintings. One would think, then, that every photographic take would of course strive for a similar handling of light. But this alone is not the case. Now more shallow, now fuller in effect, almost without exception the published photographs differ fundamentally from what, for the old painters, style meant. But, of course, how rarely does the photographer have a free hand! When is it possible to place an old relief against the light so that it shades itself in gradations like an old painting! And when this is possible, in the case of relief in particular a seemingly insurmountable obstacle remains: the cast shadows that brutally lay themselves over the most delicate ground forms. Perhaps in the past, the eye was able to let the formless, cast shadows disappear more or less from consciousness as something insignificant behind their own expressive shadows, or perhaps one does not need to overlook them at all, and they [simply] smoothly work themselves into the composition. There are examples where this is the case. One must leave it to the test to see how far these examples can be considered to be generally binding.

I now first present the beautiful photograph that Alinari made of the marble Madonna relief by Verrocchio [in the Bargello Museum] in Florence (plate 17) [and see plate 19]. The light comes from the upper right. A part of the forehead and the one cheek lie in darkness out of which the eyelid emerges as the only lightness. The weight of the shadows is lifted by reflections that also infiltrate the cast shadows. The whole [is] a clearer and altogether more pleasing sight. And yet here too one must ask oneself whether it really corresponds to the original intention. The British Museum [in London] possesses a drawing by Verrocchio²⁵ that includes a head with the same tilt and same gaze and [yet it] is lit altogether differently (plate 18). Not only does the



light fall from the left: fundamentally different consequences are drawn from the fall of light. The forehead comes together in one tone. Then comes the pair of eyes with symmetrical effect. And likewise the upper parts of the cheeks come across as symmetrical forms. Everywhere the shadow remains subordinate to the form. It is unnecessary to say how very much this lighting is in keeping with the spirit of old art. Conversely, a motif like the isolated appearance of light on the eyelid, which the photograph [of the relief] brings [out], is not a motif of the fifteenth century. The relationship of light and form and, through this, the entire rhythm of the movement of light are different in the drawing. I am convinced that the relief, like this [drawing], was worked on from the left under strong raking light.

If we take the overall appearance of the painting by Verrocchio's workshop in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum [in Berlin] (plate 20), then we see how the same direction of light also usually and in particular on the Child gives different results. What the photographer has brought to the fore in the relief is not unpleasant, but it is evidently not in the style of the painting. The cast shadow of the little left leg would also become innocuous if the light came from the other side. One should try for once [to take] a photograph in this sense.

I present here another test: the Madonna tondo by A[ntonio] Rossellino from the Bargello with a lighting [in the second photograph] that is the opposite of that selected by the Florentine museum [as seen in the first photograph] (plate 21 and plate 22). It might have already occurred to many how disagreeable the light is [in plate 21] where it ignites into the undercuttings of the form and how the whole appears admittedly animated, but also restless, and that, in any case, it does not possess the balanced clarity that one expects from Renaissance works. By chance the opportunity arose to test on a copy whether the piece would not improve if one put it under a different fall of light. The conditions for [taking] the photograph were not very favourable, but despite this I must confess that, through this experiment, the question is resolved for me about what the original light was. Even in the pale photograph [i.e., plate 22], one can recognise how calm and clarity have entered into the composition. Only now does one understand the empty area in the centre: it was undoubtedly meant to be filled by the shadow of the woman's head. The spatial relationship comes out clearly as soon as the rock face casts its shadow to the right, while in the other view, a lighter strip lets the flatly-modeled shepherds blend directly into the light upper ridge of the cliff. The modeling of Mary's face loses the flickering [effect], everything arranges itself into calmer planes and, all on their own, the disturbing figures of the cast shadows on the head and elbow and under the fluttering end of the veil disappear.

I do not know how much the original installation here and elsewhere took this type of genesis into account. It is possible, indeed likely, that already at that time [i.e., in the Renaissance] things only rarely rediscovered the conditions under which they had been made and under which alone their full effect can emerge. However, this is not a reason for us continuously to deprive them of this.

With the progressive development [of art], awareness sharpens about the integrating significance of light and shadow in sculpture. In the Medici Chapel [in Florence], Michelangelo had already reckoned with these motifs as elements of the composition. If one now says: figure, space, light - everything here is of the same cast, then of course this is not completely correct, since light here too is not of a fixed magnitude. It alternates. The photographers' very widely diverging images are, in fact, proof of this. One must add to this that a false effect certainly arises if direct sunlight comes into play. However, the large planes of michelangelesque

21 A[ntonio] Rossellino,
Madonna relief. (Florence,
Museo Nazionale.)
Photograph by Alinari.

22 A[ntonio] Rossellino,
Madonna relief. (Copy in
Munich art trade.) New
photograph.



drawings appear as soon as a single calm light from above takes over, as is foreseen in the architecture of the Chapel. Only thus should the figures be allowed to be photographed. Then is the face of Night [by Michelangelo in the Medici Chapel] also truly a shaded one.

*Translator's Note: The footnotes and figure numbers run consecutively in this translation, unlike in the three separately-published articles, with my additions incorporated in brackets. The illustration captions are direct translations of those that accompanied Wölfflin's original text. The bibliographic references that he provided, however, have here been standardized and expanded as necessary. In general, the layout of images has been kept as close as possible to that of Wölfflin's original three articles.

Wölfflin switches between 'Photographie' and 'Aufnahme' (and variants thereof) throughout the articles; both have been translated here as 'photograph' (and its variants). The somewhat stilted phrasings in the translation reflect the tone of Wölfflin's original text. In particular, Wölfflin's repeated use of anthropomorphizing sentence constructions (e.g., a sculpture 'wants to be seen from various sides' or 'wants to be photographed frontally') have been kept in the translation whenever possible since they clearly grow out of his long-standing interest in the active agency of art and architecture and in the notion of 'empathy' ('Einfühlung') in artworks. Wölfflin also often resorts to multi-sensory metaphors, perhaps most notably musical ones in the third article (e.g., 'forms come together in a clear melody').

Throughout the articles, Wölfflin refers to a number of artists, works of art, and their locations with an informality (e.g., 'Marc Anton' for 'Marcantonio Raimondi') that belies not only his own familiarity with his material but also most likely that of his original anticipated audience. These have been expanded and, where necessary, standardized for the benefit of non-specialist readers. For further information on Wölfflin, see my article entitled '(Un)richtige Aufnahme': Renaissance Sculpture and the Visual Historiography of Art History', which immediately precedes this translation in the present volume of Art History, especially note 71 and note 89.

In preparing this translation, I have benefited enormously from the many helpful suggestions, sensitive insights, and wise guidance of my mother, Ursula Gustorf Johnson. This translation is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, Wilhelm Gustorf and Maria Klees Gustorf, who were born in Germany in the years between the publication of Wölfflin's first and last articles on the photography of sculpture.

Notes

- 1 [Part I, the first of Wölfflin's three articles on the photography of sculpture (all translated here), was originally published as Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Wie man Skulpturen aufnehmen soll', *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, n. s. 7, 1896, 224-28.]
- 2 [The first of numerous editions of this text was Adolf von Hildebrand, *Das problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst*, Strasbourg, 1893.]
- 3 [Wölfflin is referring to Wilhelm von Bode, ed., *Denkmäler der Renaissance - Skulptur Toscanas in historischer Anordnung*, Munich, 1892-1905, which was published by Friedrich Bruckmann.]
- 4 [Wölfflin's text is unclear as to whether plate 2 is a Brogi or Alinari photograph, but it is in fact listed in the Alinari catalogue: *Firenze e Contorni*, Florence, 1891, 34, number 2641. In Wölfflin's 1915 article, an Anderson photograph (plate 15 in the present translation) is used to make the same point.]
- 5 Based on an amateur photograph. It is an old observation that in plaster, the forms of the original bronze seem much thinner. [Plate 3 is a photographic reproduction of a plaster cast of Verrocchio's David. In the 1915 article, Wölfflin makes it clear that he himself arranged for this photograph to be taken. (See below, note 23.)]
- 6 That the crossbar on the right wrist in the main view should not be allowed to be seen should be a given, were it not that mistakes on this point are also commonplace.
- 7 I believe I can now answer the question of authorship [of the Giovannino] that I previously had to leave unresolved (Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die Jugendwerke des Michelangelo*, Munich, 1891). I am looking for the artist in the circle of cinquecentesque Neapolitans and will shortly present further information.
- 8 [Note that plate 5 is a wood engraving, not a photographic reproduction, although Wölfflin makes no mention of this.]
- 9 [Part II, the second of the three articles, was originally published as Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Wie man Skulpturen aufnehmen soll', *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, n. s. 8, 1897, 294-97.]
- 10 See Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Wie man Skulpturen aufnehmen soll', *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, n. s. 7, 1896, 224-28.
- 11 [See above, note 2.]
- 12 [Wölfflin is presumably referring to the illustration of the Apollo Belvedere in Heinrich Brunn, ed., *Denkmäler griechischer und römischer Sculptur*, Munich, 1888, plate 419, which was published by Friedrich Bruckmann. Brunn was Wölfflin's doctoral dissertation supervisor.]
- 13 Marc Anton[i]o Raimondi] has moved slightly too far to the left (from the point of view of the viewer). The left foot is too forcefully overlapped, which impairs the legibility of the movement.
- 14 The engraving by Marc Anton[i]o Raimondi] seems to owe a part of its effectiveness to the fact that the ground plane disappears. Unfortunately, photography cannot compete with this since a view [photographed] from below would distort the proportions terribly. This is one of the principle limitations [of photography], which allows drawing again and again to appear more desirable than photography.
- 15 According to another interpretation, Demeter.
- 16 When the Barberini Hera, despite its incorrect installation, is

photographed nearly correctly, this is due to the chance circumstance that one cannot approach it directly from the front: a bowl stands in the way.

- 17 A particularly unfortunate photograph [is] in Brunn-Bruckmann's *Antiken Denkmälern*. [For the full reference, see above, note 12.]
- 18 [This third and final article was originally published as Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Wie man Skulpturen aufnehmen soll? (Probleme der italienischen Renaissance)', *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, n. s. 26, 1915, 237-44.]
- 19 [The first two articles' titles were not, in fact, exactly the same as the 1915 article's title since the latter ended with a question mark and included the subtitle: 'Probleme der italienischen Renaissance'. The first two articles appeared in the 1896 and 1897 volumes of the journal, not in 1894-95, as claimed by Wölfflin.]
- 20 The Pietro Mellini also turns sideways, but only with the eyes. One easily overlooks this. Presumably the eye-stars [i.e., pupils] were originally painted.
- 21 [See above, note 3.]
- 22 Published as Perugino by Adolf (a.k.a. Adolph) Bayersdorfer in *Zeichnungen alter Italiener in den Uffizien zu Florenz*, Munich, 1893, plate 11.
- 23 Without knowing this drawing, in 1894 [sic, 1896; see note 19 above] I had the figure [of Verrocchio's *David*] photographed in this way and published in the above-mentioned essay [see plate 3 in the present translation]. Then, later, Hans Mackowsky used a similar photograph in his *Verrocchio*, Bielefeld/Leipzig, 1901, 9, figure 6. However, it deviates too strongly to the right and therefore the gradually rising momentum of the free leg has been given a bit too much 'fling'.
- 24 A particularly close parallel is offered by the front head in the drawing by Lorenzo di Credi in the Louvre, in Bernard Berenson, *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, London, 1903, no. 709, plate XXX.
- 25 Berenson, *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, no. 2782, plate XXV. The connection between drawing and relief is not mentioned here.