THE "MEMO" PROJECT: THE STUDY, DIGITALISATION AND VALUE ENHANCEMENT OF GREEK AND SOUTH-ITALIAN POTTERY IN VENETO

THE ISSUE OF FORGERY

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In archaeology, the topic of fakes, copies, and imitations has been around since the 18th century. Recent studies have found that the phenomenon of counterfeit pottery worked in the ancient Greek world is very present in private and public collections, thus showing the extent of an issue that, in fact, pervades the history of archaeology.

One of the MemO Project pillars, launched in March 2018 by the Department of Cultural Heritage of the University of Padova, stems from an awareness of this reality. The MemO Project is dedicated to enhancing the effectuation of archaeological artefacts (especially ceramics) within academic training and research.

Accessing the technical, formal and iconographic universe of objects made thousands of years ago requires a wide-ranging apprenticeship: this is why the "Laboratory of Authentication of Archaeological Heritage" was created, an absolute novelty in the Italian academic panorama. Through the analysis of concrete cases, teachers and students can work systematically on each artefact using techniques that integrate humanistic diagnostics with the most advanced analytical and digital imaging techniques. The workshop experience is an essential practical activity essential to which students are introduced to the drawing up of concrete expert reports to training increasing professionals to defend the genuineness of art.

In addition, all materials inspected in the Laboratory and archived due to forgeries will be included in an accessible database. This tool will contribute to the defence of cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION: COLLECTIONS, FORGERIES AND THE
MEMO PROJECT

Venice and the Veneto Region witnessed a very early form
of Greek and South-Italian vase collecting and, as these items
were considered a symbol of cultural and social distinction,
their presence in the collections of several Venetian notables
was documented as early as the XVI century (De Paoli, 2006):
in Padua, in the collection of jurist Marco Mantova Benavides;
in Venice, in the collections of the Grimani di Santa Maria For-
mosa family, Apostolo Zeno, Jacopo Contarini and Onorio Ar-
rigoni; in Verona, in Scipione Maffei's collection; in Adria, in
the Bocchi collection and Rovigo, in the Silvestri collection.

While most of these items now belong to several Euro-
pean museums, some have contributed to the formation of
the Veneto Region museums, which have become, at least in
some cases, "recipients of private collections" over the years.

During the last decades of the 20th century, the study of the
vases belonging to the historical collections of the museums of
Veneto was started at the University of Padua (Favaretto, 2001,
2004) and focused, among other things, on the controversial
question –still open and perhaps unresolvable– whether the ori-
gin of these artefacts in Veneto can be dated to Antiquity or can
be attributed to the Modern Age, through an as yet unidentified
antiquarian market (Favaretto, 2006; Baggio et al., 2019).

More recently, a new line of research is stimulated by con-
temporary archaeological collecting, a phenomenon that is
still globally very active and organised (Adam, 2017).

In this regard, in December 2015, a legacy has enriched
the University of Padova Cultural Heritage. There was the
urgency to reflect how an archaeological collection is being
created in the contemporary age. It is a considerable collec-
tion of presumably archaeological artefacts donated by a
well-known family from Veneto.

A preliminary analysis of the materials immediately revealed
the need for a multidisciplinary approach to the study and valo-
risation of this collection: it is a miscellaneous collection of over

three hundred and fifty pieces, belonging to the most varied material classes and from different periods (from the Phoenician pendant to the Etruscan chariot, from the Roman *terra sigillata* cups to the Greek and South-Italian figured vases).

As archaeologists, who consider the context of the artefacts to be fundamental, the burning questions are: how can we study a newly formed collection? How do we study the objects that compose it?

From a practical point of view, we are aware that in starting the scientific analysis of a collection composed of a material whose provenance is not ascertained, two controversies arise: on the one hand, the 'status' of the artefacts in the collection and their informative potential as historical sources (Lippolis & Mazzei, 2005); on the other hand, the problem of looting of antiquities and archaeological forgery. As far as the 'status' of collections is concerned, their study allows us to appreciate the extent of the contemporary circulation of artefacts, analyse the problem of areas of origin better, and increase the sample of forms and iconographies. At the same time, in a broader cultural perspective, precisely because they are part of a collection, collectable antiquities are important testimonies to the tastes, social and cultural values, and commercial and legislative concerns of the time of the revival and/or creation of the collection, thus making it possible to map the practice of art collecting in a diachronic perspective.

It begins, based on these observations, the MemO Project, "The memory of objects. A multidisciplinary approach to the study, digitisation and valorisation of Greek and South Italian pottery in Veneto", supported by the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Padova e Rovigo within the call for proposals "Projects of Excellence 2017".

The MemO Project aims to study and valorise the archaeological collections preserved in Veneto, including a rich heritage of Greek and South-Italian vases, whose social and cultural role is significant, both for the history of the classical world and for the search for our identity in the contemporary age. At the same time, the progress of archaeological

studies in recent decades has opened up new possibilities for examining ancient materials, whose semantic and communicative potential can now be analysed in innovative ways. Thus, the great heritage of Greek and South Italian vases, belonging to different museum collections in the Veneto Region, is brought to light through investigation and valorisation, using a multidisciplinary approach that integrates traditional archaeological survey methods with new techniques of high-resolution and photorealistic 3D scanning and digital image processing and archaeometric analysis. Moreover, this interdisciplinary approach, which ranges from traditional comparative archaeological analyses to archaeometric techniques, is essential to distinguish authentic objects from fakes. Recent studies have shown that the phenomenon of forgery of ceramics produced in the ancient Greek world is very present in private and public collections. This shows the extent of a problem that pervades the history of archaeology and sometimes falsifies reconstruction.

In this regard, within the MemO Project, the debate on the issue of forgery has always been very intense, as witnessed by the participation in several conferences and the organisation of two International Winter Schools in 2017 and 2019, as well as the launch of a new dedicated journal (*Authenticity Studies. International Journal of Archaeology and Art*).

Although the Authors firmly believe that forgery is a reprehensible phenomenon, when it involves malicious intent, both because of the economic damage (private collectors, public institutions) and because of its ethical implications and its action of mystifying history, from a social and cultural point of view, forged artefacts represent a valuable source of information regarding the knowledge, tastes, techniques, art market dynamics and epistemological values of the time of their creation.

In a broader perspective, fake objects could lead to an understanding of (and perhaps fighting) the current illicit phenomena adopted on cultural heritage and develop a widespread culture of legality in contemporary society.

In particular, in the eyes of scholars, students and professionals involved in the conservation and promotion of archaeological heritage, counterfeit artefacts could provide an opportunity to develop and train effective, low-cost and non-invasive means of authenticating artefacts for study. We propose to re-evaluate the status of fakes, not from a legal point of view but an anthropological one: by unveiling fakes, we reveil the truth, that is, the instances of cultural, epistemological and aesthetic history that produced them. Reproduction is both 'victim' and 'witness' of those instances and, due to its 'palimpsestic' nature, bears the sign of them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: IDENTIFY, STUDY AND TRAIN ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORGERIES

The MemO Project stems from the awareness of the importance that Greek and South-Italian pottery had in Antiquity for the cultural identity of local communities referable to the Veneto region. This importance has been maintained over the centuries by collecting archaeological goods and is still very present today, both in the public and private sectors.

This multi-year (2018-2023) and multidisciplinary research project intends to focus on the phenomenon of collecting and on what can be defined as a direct consequence, namely the falsification of archaeological material.

In the contemporary world, when one speaks of "forgery" (Eco, 1975; Zeri, 2011), it is implicit to also talk of fraud, thus defining "forgery" (action, behaviour, object) only in the presence of deception (otherwise one can speak of imitation).

The term derives from the Latin *falsum* (*fallĕre,* to put one's foot in the wrong, to deceive). It expresses its primary meaning: partial or total alteration of the truth in documents, literary texts, legal acts, signatures, seals, keys, goods, products, weights, measures, works of art, theories, scientific research, religious and political doctrines.

If one considers 'authentication' (Holtorf & Schadla-Hall, 1999; Scalabroni, 2011) as the operation by which an object is

recognised as authentic and its originality is declared (thus affirming the truth expressed, shown), or its provenance is demonstrated (Casarin, 2015), on the opposite plane is falsification, i.e. the mental, artificial and manual operation by which a technical artifice is designed, created and/or elaborated to make an object appear to be what in reality it can never be, i.e. an authentic good endowed with authority since it is recognised as such (Arnau, 1960; Calaon, 2018).

It seems clear that it is necessary to distinguish forgeries from other types of mimicry, such as copies, replicas, pastiches (which presuppose a condition of freedom from the model), and from mystifications, i.e. fakes created to be revealed at a given moment. Not to mention the products of restoration or revivals and serial productions that were at a specific moment disowned as such.

Therefore, creating a forgery requires artifice in the mystification of the material and the executor's will, who attempts to fit into a tradition that does not belong to him (Brandi, 1977). The actual forger, potentially the most dangerous for the order that would like to be founded on the authenticity of art, is the one who in his work of forgery does not aim to reproduce a simulacrum of already existing objects but attempts to construct a new work, which escapes the comparison of truth that a usual copy has with its original, simulating the very originality of art (Paul, 1995; Dalla Vigna, 2000).

As Marco Bona Castellotti recalls (Zeri, 2011, p. 11), "perfect forgeries do not exist, but dangerous ones do [...], forgeries are not always a bad thing, since sometimes it was thanks to them that a circumstantial process was set in motion that led to the discovery of the original", thus giving rise to history (or archaeology) of forgery (Paul, 1995) and the consequent need to determine the authenticity continually or otherwise of works, or rather the need to train professionals in the identification and evaluation of counterfeits.

If in 1979 Massimo Pallottino (1979) expressed a clear *j'accuse* towards his colleagues guilty, with their lack of inter-

est, of having allowed the spread of fakes in society to worsen, Tommaso Casini recently expressed the need for this field of study, stating that:

> "the historicity of the fake, like that of the copy, is still one of the many aspects of European art of the modern and contemporary age, as well as a fundamental element of the history of reception that should be reconsidered with more awareness in a broader art-historical reflection on the variants of forms of expression" (Casini, 2015, p.307).

Again according to Pallottino, whose reflections date back to a period in which artistic forgeries had reached the headlines (the first Italian law to contrast artistic forgeries dates back to 1971), the best way to counter this illicit and dangerous phenomenon is to narrate it to the general public, discussing it as much as possible, to spread sensitivity to the issue and awareness of the risks that even cultural heritage can run. Pallottino's critical analysis continues on the need for a "systematic documentation of current forgeries" to be collected in a "real archive of news and photographs" (a theme also taken up in Conley, 2004, p. 65), as well as on the need to implement research in this sector, to recognise the sources of manufacture and to identify the routes of sale.

The author concludes his reflections with a sentence that is still valid today:

> "activity of this kind does not seem to me to be a foreign or undesirable task for scientific institutions dealing with archaeology and art history. It can not only make a useful contribution to the clarification of historical and critical questions that are still sometimes nebulous but can also be of benefit to culture and society" (Pallottino, 1979, p.1191).

Suppose it seems necessary and proper (from a disciplinary point of view) to study the falsifications reproducing historical, artistic or archaeological goods. In that case, it may also be helpful to outline the profile within which to turn the operations mentioned above. The history (or archaeology) of forgery (Radnóti, 2006; Ferretti, 2009) thus possesses some unique characteristics for bearing witness to the history of

past and contemporary civilisations, not only through the material element (i.e. the objects created) but also through the intangible element (the knowledge on which those same objects depend):

1. it narrates not only the history of taste but also the history of art criticism itself, understanding forgery as a way of reading a work of art and inferring from that reading the style, technique and symbolic scope of a given period;
2. it can rely on the methods of proven disciplines such as the archaeology of production, the archaeology of trade, the archaeology of consumption and archaeometry; in doing so, the object of investigation must always be seen against the background of all those that are close to it in space and time, or those present similar characteristics, and even apparently insignificant individual elements can have informative value as constituents of a complex whole;
3. it can consider not only fakes but also copies and imitations;
4. it can be based on its intrinsic criticism, namely the difficulty of proving fraud (an essential element for the judgement of counterfeiting) and the impossibility of excluding an intentional production of counterfeits (as artefacts of human ingenuity).

It is correct to speak of "history" (Carr, 2000) precisely because of the multifaceted and multidisciplinary value of counterfeit objects, analysed above, as historical documents, emblems of knowledge and technical skills. In the same way, one can speak of the archaeology of forgery (Paul, 1995) precisely because of the methodological characteristics set out above: although the forged objects studied do not possess an archaeological "cultural", they are (and will always be) artefacts, i.e. the material result of a planned activity carried out in a given time and place, in a defined cultural context (Bietti Sestieri, 2009).

In this way (Zamparo, 2019), the stories of those who could not tell them, the technical methods, the knowledge present and exploited in a given space and time are reconstructed solely with material remains, remembering that the archaeo-

logical discourse is not based on evidence but on clues, not on demonstrations but on arguments that cannot always be proven but are nevertheless probable.

The fake, therefore, has its "rights": it has the "right" to be studied, to be included within the understanding of the social, historical, economic and cultural context that generated it, that put it on the market, that acquired it and, finally, it has the "right" to be protected (Severini, 2012). The fake, once identified and intelligently used, can be a formidable tool for the promotion of lawful behaviour in the cultural heritage sector against unlawful conduct, for the enhancement of authentic material and the training, for example, of the future archaeological class, increasingly multidisciplinary and with an extended vision towards the materiality of objects (Salvadori et al., 2018): as previously advanced, distinguishing originals from copies and fakes is, therefore, a necessity for those who want to trace a new historical panorama, no longer based on acquired and indirect notions but the direct examination of the works (Natale, 2017).

At the same time, forgery (and not the fake object), understood as criminal behaviour involving deception, must be outlawed (Malnati, 2018): our duty is to study it, recognise it and oppose it, precisely because it damages the Community and the very idea of Culture.

Within the MemO Project research group, addressing these issues, especially in the context of Greek and South-Italian pottery, has meant focusing attention on three different aims and three different audiences/users: firstly, research actions have been set up to identify and evaluate forgery in the archaeological field; secondly, training courses have been set up for students and professionals to create a forum for discussion and reflection on these issues; finally, ways have been developed to disseminate a culture of legality to the general public (conferences, publications, videos, exhibitions).

From the outset, specific courses were set up for university students (with the creation of the Laboratory for the Authen-

tication of Archaeological Heritage, now officially included in the curriculum of the master's degree in Archaeological Sciences) and post-graduate students (with the two editions of the International Winter Schools "Anthropology of Forgery") to focus on the theme of authentication, i.e. how to recognise forgeries, how to identify them and how to combat the illegal phenomena associated with them.

The Authentication of Archaeological Heritage Laboratory analyses the role of archaeologists in contemporary society (i.e. their role as experts, as provided for by Ministerial Decree 244/2019), criticises and evaluates the current art market (knowledge of which is necessary for understanding likely future counterfeits), studies authentic archaeological material (from its materiality to its intrinsic cultural, social and economic characteristics) to understand the differences that counterfeit material presents.

Beginning in 2018, analyses of single artefacts or classes of artefacts homogeneous in production have been conducted within undergraduate and graduate theses and, notably, during the Laboratory's teaching experience. It has trained 60 students in three editions, giving rise to 13 different theses, which have investigated the theme of forgery, from the operational methods to achieve a correct authentication to the more theoretical considerations and ethical implications. Three different collections (public and private) have been investigated during these years, in agreement with the above mentioned Soprintendenza, and more than 350 objects have been analysed, 60% of which have been proven to be faked.

The methodological approach to each item is based on the so-called "humanistic diagnostics" (Calcani, 2006), thanks to which the student puts in the field the knowledge he acquired in his university archaeological training (Zamparo, 2019), however, expanding the horizons of investigation towards a still unexplored area.

The operational method developed is then applied in practice thanks to the didactic collections available at the De-

partment of Cultural Heritage and the material made available by the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio for the metropolitan area of Venice and the provinces of Belluno, Padova and Treviso.

The purpose of these moments of in-depth study and comparison lies in the desire to educate the future class of cultural heritage professionals on niche issues in their field of work in such a way as to lead to a non-superficial knowledge of the underlying social and cultural phenomena. In this way, counterfeit objects can be identified to protect the authentic cultural heritage and be appropriately valued by excluding artefacts that could alter its memory and narrative.

THE *OON* CASE STUDY (DIDACTIC COLLECTION UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA, INV. 250)

While archaeological research methods have been consolidated for a long time, studying material culture implies an ever-renewed desire to investigate the technical and intrinsic aspects of the artefacts and their external (aesthetic) characteristics.

The archaeological analysis, in fact, must try to reconstruct not only how the objects were made (and therefore understand the knowledge and skills of a particular society in a particular historical period) but must also try to understand where these objects were made, who and how they were used, how they were broken, lost, buried and, finally, how and when they were found.

In concrete terms, the study of the artefacts analysed is done on the visual examination of the archaeological item and the comparative analysis of its formal, iconographic and stylistic constitutive elements and technique (exemplar is Fontannaz, 1999).

For reasons of space, only one vase will be discussed here, that is the case of an egg-shaped red-figure vase (Didactic Collection, inv. 250), that seems to be of Apulian production, supposedly dating back to the second half of the IV century B.C. (Figure 1).

This vase shape, known in archaeological literature under the term *oon*, is very rarely documented in ancient Greek

Fig. 1 *Oon*, imitazione
contemporanea di ceramica
apula a figure rosse, metà/
seconda metà del XX secolo.
Collezione didattica inv. 250.
Università degli Studi di Padova,
Dipartimento dei Beni Culturali

pottery and must have struck the curiosity of our collector,
who –over time– purchased two of them. To understand the
authenticity or non-authenticity of the objects, we based our
analysis on a comparative type applied to the vase form, to
the ornamental and figurative decorative apparatus (with
particular attention to the layout, to the subject, to the
theme, to the pattern), to verify the coherence of the object
under examination with, at least, the area of production and
the chronological horizon of reference.

Accessing the technical, formal and iconographic universe of objects crafted over two thousand years B.C. requires a wide-ranging apprenticeship, which allows comprehending the specificity of a language with peculiar purposes, rules, means of expression and communication: the genuineness of a pottery object will depend on whether data surfacing from an examination of the item converge or not.

The artefact in question has reddish clay, black paint coating, shiny, opaque, spread evenly. The use of overpainting is limited to white and yellow and characterises particular attributes, parts of clothing and architectural elements. The combination of white and yellow combined is found in the accessory decoration, particularly in the rosettes that decorate the free field, in the *ovoli* of the upper decorative band, in the olives that punctuate the branch of leaves (to mark the lower part of the vase). Substantially the artefact is intact.

DISCUSSION

It is suitable to underline how doubts immediately arose from the observation of the ovoid form, rarely documented in ceramics and for this surprising: it is known that, in ancient times, the egg was attributed a powerful symbolic meaning, related to life that is born (or reborn), fertility and the luxuriance of growth, which is not excluded a funerary purpose of rebirth, as evidenced by the presence of real eggs in Greek tombs, Etruscan and indigenous elites of Magna Graecia, about the funeral ritual both male and female (Bartoloni & Alii, 2001, n. 85). If for these *realia* we cannot exclude a food value, of food prepared for the deceased or offered to the deities of the Underworld, their reproduction in terracotta should be read more likely, in a symbolic key, in an eschatological perspective, with perfect adherence to the forms of religiosity widespread in the second half of the fifth century B.C. (Dionysism, Orphism, myths linked to Demeter and the Eleusinian mysteries: Bottini, 1992).

Fig. 2 *Oon*, attico a figure
rosse, Pittore di Eretria. New
York, Metropolitan Museum,
1971.258.3 Ghali-Kahil 1955, pl. 5.

Until now, terracotta artefacts of this form appear exclu-
sively in Attic production, both in black-figure and red-figure
techniques, but in very few examples. If we owe to M. Nilsson
the first attention paid to this type of object (Nilsson, 1951, p. 3),
today the Pottery Database section of the Beazley Archive (an
online version of the archive of black- and red-figure Attic vases
of Sir John Beazley, from now BAPD) counts eight: one egg pro-
duced in the Six technique (decorated with animal figures: swan
and bird, Konigsberg, University, F198: Boardman, 1974, fig. 310,
BAPD 511), three exemplars in the black-figure technique (Bonn,
Akademisches Kunstmuseum, 846: BAPD 42077); Copenhagen,
National Museum, 9078: Beazley, 1971, 315 (BAPD 352377); Ath-
ens, National Museum, Acropolis Coll., 2.1496: Graef, Langlotz
(1933), II, n. 1496 (BAPD 9017769); lost, Marzabotto, Museo Na-
zionale Etrusco Po: Baldoni, 2009, p. 58, n. 6, figg. 44-45 (BAPD
9027403), one with a white background (Budapest, Hungarian
Museum of Fine Arts: BAPD 43469), three with red figures (New
York (N.Y.), Metropolitan Museum, New York (N.Y.), A. Martin,
1971.258.3 BAPD 217055); Athens, National Museum, 332: Beaz-
ley, 1963, 1257.2 (BAPD 217056), and Pellegrini, 2009, tav. 28).

The documents dating from the middle of the sixth to the
end of the fifth century B.C.

The exact function of this shape is not yet clear: we know that some Attic examples have lids, so it is conceivable that they were used as containers. As far as the use destination, some objects convey a precise and more frequent funerary connotation, evident in the choice of theme (*prothesis* scene) and in the contexts in which they were found.

It is above all in the red-figure production that we find exciting iconographies: an egg shape vase attributed to the manner of the Painter of Eretria, a vase-painter who lived in the second half of the 5th century B.C. and was considered a follower of the Meidias Painter (Figure 2), is decorated with the theme of Helen abducted by Paris (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1971.258.3; Ghali-Kahil, 1988, pp. 498-563; Lezzi Hafter, 1988). The choice of form, in this case, and of the mythological subject is firmly connected. Helen, the Queen of Sparta and King Manelaos' wife, is born from the egg generated from the union of Zeus and Nemesis. The divine nature of the protagonist and her condition as the most beautiful of all women, a gift from Aphrodite to the Trojan prince Paris, make her one of the mythical paradigms of the passage from childhood to female sexual maturity. A second document, dated around 440 B.C., is decorated with a scene in which the protagonist is Aphrodite, who, flanked by Eros, wins —in a sort of game of skill— her mother and initiates a young girl towards her future husband.

In both cases, there is an apparent reference to a ritual of the passage of status: in a nuptial perspective, the choice of the form may well symbolise the fertility desired for the new union.

If compared to what is known from the bibliography of reference, from the beginning, what has made doubtful the originality of our artefact is related primarily to its size. While almost all Attic documents are characterised by small dimensions, ranging between 6 and 10 cm, our eggs measure about 21 cm. Of smaller dimensions are also the ostrich eggs found in tomb contexts of Etruria starting from the 7th century BC (perhaps a natural model of reference), with examples, whole cut to three quarters or half-height, decorated with red painting or

engraved, to which our exemplar would approach for the presence of the hole of evacuation. Painted ostrich eggs have been found in Tarquinia, in high-level tombs, while other fragments of cut eggs with painted decoration come from the emporic sanctuary of Gravisca (Colivicchi, 2007, p. 217).

The Paduan *oon* differs from other products known up to now also for its thematic choice: here, we find the struggle of Heracles against the Pygmies arranged in a frieze that runs around the entire surface. As is well known, this is a minor episode in the myth of Heracles, linked to the struggle with the giant Antaeus. The Pygmies, a race of tiny men living on the borders of Egypt and Libya, sought revenge against Heracles since they were, like Antaeus, children of the Earth, and mourned the death of their brother.

Attacking the hero in his sleep, they attempted to kill him. Heracles awoke, laughed, and, seizing with one hand all the Pygmies, enclosed them in his lion's skin and brought them to Eurystheus (Dasen, 1994, pp. 594-601).

The theme is not unknown to the imagery of the ancient world: we know that *Philostratus* in the *Imagines* (2, 22) describes a painting with Heracles fighting with the Pygmies (comic); however, in the vase production —both Attic and southern Italy— no example with such iconographic solution seems to be documented at the moment.

Serious doubts also arise about the decoration at the end of the frieze: attributable to the series of offerings to the stele, the Paduan *oon,* contrary to what is attested in Apulian pottery production, shows the traditional offerers as they move away from the funerary marker, turning their backs on it rather than, as is usual, approaching it to bring offerings to the tomb.

We think that this solution is perhaps attributable to a misunderstanding of the forger for the theme.

The study of this vase proves that a sort of 'protocol' based on archaeological analysis is a proficient means for the authentication of pseudo-Greek and South-Italian vases that aimed to imitate the ancient style.

CONCLUSIONS

As has been analysed above, the falsely created object, as a consumer product, is linked –both in the past and to-day– essentially to the economic law of supply and demand and responds to the desire to possess something one loves to achieve personal satisfaction and recognition, typical of collectors of all times. In a recent in-depth analysis of the contemporary art market, Georgina Adam (2017) argues that fakes are first and foremost

"a supply that corresponds to a demand, the ever-chang-ing reflection of human desires" and that they "do not only harm the rich as they pollute and debase the infor-mation we have about art history, which undermines our culture and hurts us all" (Adam, 2017, pp. 121-143).

These considerations are borne out, for example, by the situation in Italy where, between 2015 and 2019, the Carabin-ieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage reported 935 for counterfeiting cultural goods, leading to the seizure of almost 48,000 fake objects that if placed on the market would have resulted in economic damage of over €4 billion, without mentioning the intrinsic offence to Culture and History.

This is also the opinion of the MemO Project team, which can photograph the situation of archaeological collecting in Veneto thanks to the capillary work in museums, with pri-vate collectors and with the Soprintendenza: in this respect, an essential tool is the open-access database of the MemO Project (https://memo.beniculturali.unipd.it).

This contribution sought to analyse the role of ar-chaeological (historical, artistic) forgery in contemporary society and, at the same time, the part of the university in preparing its students for the challenges presented by that society.

In conclusion, fake objects can provide different levels of in-formation. They can demonstrate the historical/social/cultural/ economic value of the authentic object or reflect the image of the society that produced it (deals, ideas). At the same time,

they can talk about the technical manifestation of the progress of studies on material culture, or they can indicate their authors (knowledge, skills). Furthermore, fake objects answer a question/request (therefore an image of an economic situation) and express a particular social context (status, self-representation). In the end, fake objects allow us to understand the contemporary vision of the past and its transformations.

These objects, then, are used in Paduan school of archaeology for multiple purposes, from a better study of the authentic material (manufacturing technique, technical tricks) to an analysis of the reception of the ancient world in the Modern and Contemporary Age; from the study of the extent and spread of the phenomenon of collecting (and the related art market) to refine investigation techniques for the analysis of authentic material (and therefore of fakes). Furthermore, the fake objects can train students to recognise the contrasting of illegal phenomena on cultural heritage. They can provide society with the tools necessary for the dissemination of lawful conduct.

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