

# THE CULTURAL RECEPTION OF REPRODUCTION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CANOVA, PIRANESI AND THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR ORIGINAL CREATIONS

**Elena Merino Gómez<sup>1</sup>, Fernando Moral Andrés<sup>1</sup>, Chiara Casarin<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Universidad Nebrija

Departamento de Arquitectura

<sup>2</sup>Fondazione Canova Onlus, Scientific Committee

emerino@nebrija.es

## ESSAY 75/04

ORIGINALITY  
REPRODUCTION  
FACTUM ARTE  
ANTONIO CANOVA  
GIAMBATTISTA PIRANESI

The present work reflects on the possibilities that the technologies of data acquisition and three-dimensional reproduction of artistic objects offer for the generation of never built historical artworks. The research focuses on the scientific and manufacturing labours carried out by Factum Arte on the work of Canova and Piranesi. Through the

projects of materialization of some pieces that were not executed by the Veneto artists in their age, we reevaluate the changing consideration of the reproduction of the artistic work and we analyse the parameters that allow considering the originality in the creations of historical artefacts in our present time.

## INTRODUCTION

The reproduction and dissemination of images are emblematic of the spread of information in the 21<sup>th</sup> century. The replication of iconic elements nowadays, in a wide variety of media, and the possibilities of their immediate diffusion have suppressed the distances in the transmission of visual knowledge on a global scale. However, reproduced objects have experienced a very diverse reception throughout the cultural history of the West. 'Non-originality' has been considered in very unequal terms depending on the nature of the reproduced object and the historical moment of its reproduction. The emergence of serial production in the field of visual arts at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although it partially remedied the gaps in visual culture that burdened the 19<sup>th</sup> century, resulted in a progressive and almost definitive discredit of the reproduction.

Beyond the dissemination of reproductions for merely informative or mass consumer purposes, when it comes to delving into aspects related to the visual arts in their facets of research and dissemination of knowledge, reproduction has traditionally been oriented towards exhibitions, recontextualization, conservation and reintegration of lost or severely damaged originals. Through the study cases introduced in this paper, we intend to address the new possibilities that technology offers to overcome these traditional roles of reproduction and present novel aspects such as the physical fabrication of artistic objects that never materialized. The existence of graphic designs by Giambattista Piranesi as well as the survival of projects in plaster by Antonio Canova that, for different reasons, their authors did not execute in their final forms, provide us with new possibilities for research.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper employs for its discussion some materials belonging to the research and manufacturing works of Antonio

Canova and Giambattista Piranesi carried out by Factum Arte. The firm, founded in Madrid by Adam Lowe almost twenty years ago, has a multidisciplinary team that uses the most advanced techniques on data acquisition and physical materialization for the reproduction or production of artistic objects, whether historical or contemporary, emblematic for the world heritage.

Its enormous activity renews the debate about the 'original' in art, which began in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the then emerging technologies of reproduction "detached the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition" (Benjamin, 1935/2010, p. 14). The objective of the reproduction of historical pieces that Factum Arte executes does not focus, however, on the type of reproducibility that points to mass existence, that is, to the serial production to which Benjamin (1935/2010) alluded, but on the manufacture of unique objects with very specific purposes.

Beyond the unresolved controversy over the labile cultural reception of concepts such as double, counterfeiting, copying and other matters related to the duplication of artistic objects and their relationship with originality and authenticity (Casarin, 2015), this work will delve into the possibilities that new technologies offer for the materialization of historical designs whose visual documentation is preserved. The present manufacture of objects faithful to the projects and intentions of their no longer existing authors provides us with 'originals' that introduce elements for reflection on the potentials of disseminating and investigating artworks conceived in the past and materialized in the present.

Factum Arte has tackled the three-dimensional materialization of representative pieces of the production of Giambattista Piranesi and Antonio Canova that were never executed in their day. In the case of Piranesi, three-dimensional objects were modelled from two-dimensional representations for their display in two exhibitions: *The Arts of Piranesi: Architect, Engraver, Antiquarian, Vedutista, Designer and Diverse Maniere: Piranesi, Fantasy and Excess*. The first of them was held in Venice (2010), on the occasion of the 12<sup>th</sup>

*International Architecture Exhibition* (Pavanello, 2010) and later, successively, in Madrid (2012), Barcelona (2012) and at the Museum of Art of San Diego (2013). The second took place at Sir John Soane's Museum in London in 2014. Four objects among those published in *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini: ed ogni altra parte degli edificj desunte dall'architettura Egizia Etrusca e Greca* (Piranesi, 1769) –hereinafter cited as *Diverse maniere*– were manufactured by Factum Arte, as well as four others present in *Vasi, candelabri, cippi, sarcofagi, tripodi, lucerne ed ornamenti antichi* (Piranesi & Piranesi, 1778) –from here on cited as *Vasi, candelabri*.

In the case of Canova, the opportunity to cast a new colossal bronze from well-defined two and three-dimensional historical documentation will be discussed. The surviving drawings and plasters will be the basis on which, in a near future, a new Canovian sculpture will be displayed in a public space in Bassano del Grappa.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The visual part of the unorthodox *Diverse maniere* appears as a sort of pattern book of interior design pieces and various utensils distributed in sixty-six plates, which complete an unusual milestone in Piranesi's graphic production (Dixon, 1993, p. 76). The few objects that were executed from this work can be identified thanks to the existing captions in the only seven plates in which their author claims to have brought them to completion in whole or in part. The faithful coincidence of the graphics with the executed pieces shows that they were probably manufactured prior to the incisions (Wilton-Ely, 2010, p. 69) and were later included in the book along with the rest of the plates, which mainly show non executed designs. From that meager production, only two of the three fireplaces executed by Piranesi's workshop (Figures 1 and 2) are preserved nowadays, as well as two versions of the 'tavolino' designed for Giovanni Battista Rezzonico (Figure 3).

**Fig. 1** From left to right: Giovanni Battista Piranesi. *Fireplace for Lord Exeter in Burghley*. (Piranesi, 1769, Tab. 1); *Fireplace executed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*. Burghley House, Lincolnshire, UK. Retrieved August 15, 2020 from <https://www.antiquariditalia.it/en/gazzetta/articolo/1/144/le-diverse-maniere-di-acquistare-un-camino>



**Fig. 2** From left to right: Giovanni Battista Piranesi. *Fireplace for John Hope*. (Piranesi, 1769, Tab. 2); *Fireplace executed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, NL. Retrieved August 15, 2020 from <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/BK-15449>



If it is difficult to determine the presence of Piranesi's hand in the objects within *Diverse maniere*, beyond graphic design, the question of his intervention is further diluted when it comes to addressing the production of the pieces published in *Vasi, candelabri*. The work comes out as an inventory of one hundred and eighteen etchings that, in addition to some renowned archaeological objects (Udy, 1978, p. 823), collects faithful representations of '*antichi ornamenti*'. The Piranesian 'antiquities', produced in his Roman workshop in Palazzo Tomati, consist of a series of artefacts bordering the limits of restoration, sculpture and creative work, especially feverish in the cases of those pieces based on those archaeological remains found in a more fragmentary state.

The engravings of *Vasi, candelabri* were conceived to contribute to the commercial success of the 'antiquities' among the select clientele of the Grand Tour. Francesco Piranesi, the son of Giambattista, collected and edited in two volumes, shortly after the death of his father, the etchings of the pieces, some of whom had been circulating in single pages since 1755 (Reali, 2018, p. 75) in order to disseminate



**Fig. 3** From top to bottom:  
Giovambattista Piranesi. *Side table for Giovanni Battista Rezzonico*. (Piranesi, 1769, Tab. 63);  
18<sup>th</sup> century version of Piranesi's side table. Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Retrieved August 15, 2020 from <https://collections.artsmia.org/art/8023/pier-table-giovanni-battista-piranesi>; 18<sup>th</sup> century version of Piranesi's side table. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, NL. Retrieved August 15, 2020 from <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/BK-1971-14>

**Fig. 4** From left to right:  
Giovambattista Piranesi. *Tripode antico di bronzo*. (Piranesi, 1778, Vol. 1, Tab. 44); Factum Arte. (2010). *Isis tripod*. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from <https://www.factum-arte.com/pag/1217/>

and publicize the production of Piranesi's workshop at Via Sistina. The deliberately ambiguous wording of the captions that accompanies the images, in addition to making it difficult to trace the authenticity of the archaeological fragments, prevents from identifying the specific intervention of Piranesi in each one of the artefacts, if it ever took place in any of them.

Unlike the limited materialization of the proposals that illustrate *Diverse maniere*, the many pieces that are still preserved in different European collections attest that the objects published in *Vasi, candelabri* were indeed manufactured, as the associated texts refer. The most numerous inventories are located in the United Kingdom, Rome and Stockholm. Thirty-five works are identified in British collections (Wilton-Ely, 2010, p. 85), thirty-three in Roman collections, as well as the great amount of pieces sold to the Crown of Sweden (Panza, 2013). Many other pieces scattered among various public and private collections all over the world have also been identified.

The choice of the Piranesi's pieces that Factum Arte recreates for the exhibitions is determined by the purposes of the two graphic works in which they were published. While





the eminently propositional nature of *Diverse maniere* makes it possible to decide from a wide inventory of designs never carried out, the *Vasi, candelabri* condition of a catalogue of already materialised pieces, etched *a posteriori*, greatly restricts the possibilities of selection when it comes to manufacturing non created objects. Consequently, the designs selected for their manufacture will be chosen among those presenting major traits of originality, as will be discussed later on.

The Piranesian *acquaforte* of Vincenzo Brenna's drawing of the 'tripode antico di bronzo' (Figure 4) from the temple of Isis in Pompeii (Piranesi & Piranesi, 1778) offers only an approximate version of the original tripod exhibited in the *Museo Archeologico Nazionale* in Naples (Lowe, 2010, p. 170). The two etchings of the 'altare antico di marmo' (Piranesi & Piranesi, 1978), whose original fragments are preserved in the Hadrian's Villa (Adembri, 2015, p. 27), present two different versions designed from the same scarce remains. The preservation of the archaeological vestiges in the Hadrian's Villa along with the two designs based on an only set of remains allow us to venture that they were never used to fabricate any 'antiquity' in the *Settecento*. Therefore, both artefacts, the 'tripode antico' and the 'antico altare di marmo', consist of the materialization of objects from graphic versions with a real reference. The outcomes result in the birth of two original pieces based on drawings that represent approximate or non-existing realities (Figures 4 and 5).



**Fig. 5** From left to right: Giovanni Battista Piranesi. *Altare antico di marmo*. (Piranesi, 1778, Vol. 1, Tab. 32); Factum Arte. (2014). *Altar with vase*. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from <https://www.factum-arte.com/pag/1207/>



**Fig. 6** From left to right: Giovambattista Piranesi. *Camino*. (Piranesi, 1769, Tab. 3); Factum Arte. (2010). *Fireplace*. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from <https://www.factum-arte.com/pag/1215/>



**Fig. 7** From left to right: Giovambattista Piranesi. *Helix Tripod*. (Piranesi, 1769, Tab.57); Factum Arte. (2010). *Helix tripod*. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from <https://www.factum-arte.com/pag/1219/Helix-Tripod>

The other two pieces from *Vasi, candelabri* recreated by Factum Arte, the '*vaso con tre teste di grifone*' and the '*candelabro antico di marmo*' (Piranesi & Piranesi, 1778) would instead be recreations of pieces that were executed, if we give credit to the attached captions, although nothing is known of their present location nor is there absolute evidence that they ever came to exist in another support different from that of the etching itself (Lowe, 2012, p. 208, 2010, p. 196).

The independence that Piranesi displays in his designs from *Vasi, candelabri* was sometimes limited by the archaeological objects that inspired them and by the antiquarian pretensions of his customers. However, deprived of the restrictions imposed by the dictatorship of the archaeological specimen, Piranesi's work of pure design in *Diverse maniere* unfolds with complete freedom. The miscellany of objects offered in the publication are left practically indeterminate in regards to their materials and their manufacturing methods. The lack of definition in the illustrations as well as, once again, in the captions, will allow the introduction of material interpretations and alterations in the craftsmanship methods employed for the fabrication of the selected objects: a fireplace embedded in a Pompeian-style background (Figure 6), a tripod with a helical support (Figure 7), a coffee pot and a chair (Figure 8).

In the descriptions of two of the three chimneys that were executed in the Piranesi workshop, it is reported that 'ancient' elements were used for their composition (Piranesi, 1769, Tabs. 1 and 2), while nothing is indicated about the origin of

the materials used in the third one (Piranesi, 1769, Tab. 13), which possibly reveals that it is a work completely composed of marbles sculpted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Something analogous happens with the wooden objects in *Diverse maniere*, of whose species there are no data, and with the metallic objects, undefined to the point that only in one of the captions appears a generic indication: “eseguito in metallo dorato” (Piranesi, 1769, Tab. 64). Factum Arte will inherit the freedom that the lack of definition of the materials allows for the conformations of the chosen pieces: marble composite in the case of the fireplace, synthetic wood resin to cast the chair and silver and bronze for the coffee maker and the helical tripod respectively.

The material non-existence of the Piranesian objects, beyond their presence in the engravings, allows us to discuss the original condition of the present creations. Although from the benevolent biography of Jacques-Guillaume Legrand (Bevilacqua, Glendening, & Minor, 2006, p. 15) it could be deduced that Piranesi himself had sufficient competence to recompose and sculpt with his own hand (Miraglia, 1994, p. 221) the *all'antica* objects that were produced in his workshop, the truth is that he surrounded himself with a large group of highly talented sculptors and experienced restorers to shape his designs. Piranesi's participation in the materialization process would have been limited to controlling the execution of the objects produced at Palazzo Tomati. The absence of scale, dimensions or exhaustive definition of views prevents Piranesi's designs from being considered as true industrial execution projects. Undoubtedly, his permanent presence and his guidance in the in situ definition of unresolved details in the designs were indispensable for the successful completion of the objects. However, it is also true that the designs published in *Diverse maniere*, without being properly representations that contain all the data necessary for their manufacture, are conceived to be executed in the absence of their author (Lowe, 2010, p. 180). The serial features that the production process would achieve under Francesco's leadership (Bosso, 2016, p. 318) confirm that the materialization of pieces could



**Fig. 8** On the left: Giovambattista Piranesi. In this etching, in addition to the helical tripod, a coffee pot is depicted on the top left and a chair below it. (Piranesi, 1769, Tab. 57). On the right, from top to bottom: Factum Arte. (2010). *Silver coffeepot*; Factum Arte. (2010). *Golden Chair*. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from <https://www.factum-arte.com/pag/1211/> and <https://www.factum-arte.com/pag/1213/>

continue for a certain period with relative success even after Piranesi's death. The fundamental differences that mediate between the present productions of the Piranesian designs from the past are fundamentally chronological in nature. In the absence of the author, 21<sup>th</sup> century technological resources are used for the extraction of all possible details that tend to minimize the spaces of indeterminacy (Ingarden, 1973; Iser, 1978) existing between the two-dimensional representations of historical designs and the three-dimensional conceptions from Piranesi's mind. The realization of many of the pieces manufactured today with techniques and materials used in the *Settecento*, contribute to provide attributes of originality two hundred and fifty years later.

The studies aimed at establishing the degree of intervention of Piranesi in the objects delivered from his workshop pale in comparison with the enormous literature published on the same subject about Canova. The negative consideration of his work as a succession of mechanically produced artefacts instead of autograph works (Honour, 1972a, p. 146) is constantly redefined in the research carried out in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To conclude, with his many detractors, that his intervention in the intermediate phases of the execution was non-existent and that his handprint could only be traced in his famous '*ultima mano*' (Cicognara, 1823, p. 253) is equivalent to mistakenly assuming that the production process was always identical to itself. Although we do not know exactly what his presence was, if it occurred regularly, in each of the intermediate phases of his work, the germ stages of many of his sculptures are well known from drawings and, fundamentally, from '*modelletti in creta e in gesso*' (Sartori-Canova, 1837, p. 47) shaped exclusively by Canova himself. Generally, from the small scale of these three-dimensional sketches, full-size plasters were subsequently cast, on which the marble sculptures and the final bronzes were based (Ferando, 2015, p. 117).

The unexpected death of Canova in 1822 (d'Este, 1864, p. 463) leaves behind it the sad consideration of how many unfinished works, or even in embryonic state, could have been

provided with the '*alito di vita*' (Teotochi Albrizzi & Cicognara, 1824, p. 101) by the Veneto sculptor. According to Cicognara (1823) "scolpì oltre cento statue di tutto tondo nelle 176 opere di scultura che non uscirono del suo studio senza essere da lui perfezionate; [...] non conteggiandosi l'immenso numero di studj, disegni, modelli che sono raccolti nel suo gabinetto" [he sculpted over a hundred freestanding statues from the 176 works of sculpture that were not delivered from his workshop without having been perfected by himself; [...] regardless of the immense number of sketches, designs and models found in his office] (p. 271). The survival of a large part of the Canovian *modelletti*, some of which never carried out, opens up to the discourse about the possibilities of creation of new 'originals'. The discussion takes on special importance when the particularities of his bronze works are examined. Canova, in a letter addressed to Quatremère de Quincy in November 1815, expresses his disaffection with bronze in favour of marble sculpture. The metal, in addition to preventing him from the application of his perfecting finishing hand, lacks the necessary qualities that marbles do possess to convey "la carnosità, perché sono sempre gli uomini stati composti di carne flessibile, e non di bronzo" [the likeness of flesh, because men have always been made up of flexible flesh, and not bronze] (Missirini, 1825, p. 156). When it came to casting bronze, Canova delegated the operations to specialized craftsmen. Although he sometimes emphasizes that the process would be supervised by himself anyway (Missirini, 1825, p. 8) and there is news that, indeed, such supervisions were carried out (Piscopo & Tolfo, 2019, p. 165), his chances to intervene during the forging operations would have been practically non-existent.

The high project definition of some of the works not carried out by Canova allowed their materialization shortly after his disappearance. The bronze casting of *La Pietà*, whose plaster model for its translation into marble was completely finished before his death, was commissioned to Bartolomeo Ferrari in 1827 for its location in the Canovian temple of Possagno (Catra & Mampieri, 2015, p. 133), where it remains

**Fig. 9** Canova. Plaster model of the colossal horse before its dismemberment in 1969. *Museo Civico di Bassano del Grappa*. 1950. (Casarin, 2019, p. 175). Courtesy *Musei Civici di Bassano del Grappa*.



since then. In the cases in which the absence of the 'last hand' is inconsequential insofar as it would not anyway have been present during the artist's life, it is worth questioning the authenticity of the objects (Casarin, 2020, p. 156) that could continue to be created, even in the present, from well-defined three-dimensional documentation.

The reflection on the new creation in the 21<sup>th</sup> century of historically documented pieces finds in the case study of the colossal horse by Canova one of its most relevant exponents. Since 2016, under the initiative of Chiara Casarin, then director of the *Museo Civico di Bassano del Grappa*, the bronze casting project of a highly defined horse by the hand of Canova is being developed. The museum safeguards the fragments of what was a full-scale plaster model (Figure 9) in addition to various autograph preparatory drawings (Pavanello, 1976, p. 121; Piscopo & Tolfo, 2019) of a 4,5 meters high horse. The work, related to the equestrian group of Carlos III and Fernando IV for Piazza del Plebiscito in Naples, is revealed after recent investigations as a third piece never cast in bronze (Casarin, 2020, p. 151). The documentation, both graphic and three-dimensional, generated by Canova at the beginning of the

**Fig. 10** Factum Arte. (2019). 1:10 reduced scale cast in bronze of the *Colossal Horse*. Retrieved September 7, 2020 from <https://www.factum-arte.com/pag/1481/estatua-ecuestre-de-canova>



19<sup>th</sup> century was the usual one in his procedure for bronze sculpture and has been conserved practically complete. The only missing phase would be that of the commissioning of the definitive cast and the only different parameter in the production process would be the execution time frame.

The availability of data from a three-dimensional model of the horse at 1:1 scale seems to offer a much more favourable documentary starting point than the one approached for the embodiment of Piranesi's two-dimensional designs. In the case of the Veneto etcher, it was necessary to fill in information gaps regarding scales, specific materials, production techniques or details not visible in the etchings. In the case of Canova's colossal model, we face spaces of indeterminacy of much less entity, mainly due to the deterioration of the plaster. The damages caused by the dismemberment of the model in 1969, the subsequent poor storage conditions of the fragments and the successive relocations (Piscopo & Tolfo, 2019, p. 178) have required a meticulous digitization of the remains and a digital reconstruction carried out by Factum Arte.

The digitized fragments have allowed, in the first instance, the virtual reconstitution of the model, which has been useful



**Fig. 11** From left to right. Comparison between the plaster model by Antonio Canova (c. 1810) and the digital restitution by Factum Arte (2018). Courtesy *Musei Civici di Bassano del Grappa*. Retrieved September 7, 2020 from <https://www.factum-arte.com/pag/1480/>



**Fig. 12** From left to right. Comparison between the plaster model by Antonio Canova (c. 1810) and the digital restitution by Factum Arte (2018). Courtesy *Musei Civici di Bassano del Grappa*. Retrieved September 7, 2020 from <https://www.factum-arte.com/pag/1480/>



for the precise identification of the existing gaps. Those gaps become expressively evident after the elaboration of a first 1:10 scale bronze model (Figure 10) now on exhibition at *The Materiality of the Aura. New Technologies for Preservation* –Palazzo Fava, Bologna 2020-2021. In a successive phase, work is carried out on the completion operations, based on the geometry of the immediate surroundings of the blanks, on the preparatory Canovian drawings and on the data provided by the 19<sup>th</sup> century bronze pieces in Piazza del Plebiscito.

The resulting digital model provides an extraordinary approximation to the original Canovian project (Figures 11 and 12) that will allow its casting in bronze in the near future. The materialization of the colossal horse does not foresee reinterpretations of the materials or the production methods,

as we have identified in the case of Piranesi; its construction will only consist of the completion of an unfinished process by infusing the definitive '*alito di vita*' required for the birth of a 19<sup>th</sup> century original in the 21<sup>th</sup> century.

## CONCLUSIONS

Both in Canova's and Piranesi's production, serial and modular features are identified (Bosso, 2006, p. 226), with high work specialization, which are related to industrial processes in a quasi-contemporary sense. Their direct intervention is ensured only in the creative aspects and it is very limited in the manufacturing phases of the artistic pieces, which would have allowed a certain productive continuity as long as autograph projects by the artists remained without materializing. However, despite the fact that the Piranesi workshop was at the height of its activity in 1768, the immediate inventory of goods and the onset in 1782 of the sales transactions operated by Francesco demonstrate the willingness to dismantle the prosperous Palazzo Tomati workshop, shortly after the death of the Veneto architect (Panza, 2013, 2018). There is also evidence of a dramatic decrease in the prices requested for the posthumous sale of some Canova sculptures estimated on his level of intervention on them before his death (Honour, 1972b, p. 217). To the different economic vicissitudes of the legal and artistic heirs that led to the abrupt or progressive dissolution of the production processes, a gradual consolidation in the negative reception of some aspects of the Canovian and Piranesian work in later generations was added. The principles of archaeological rigor (Wilton-Ely, 2010, p. 91), increasingly rooted in Winckelmann's wake, as well as the prevailing enlightened empiricism, would contribute to a rapid devaluation of the fantasy work reflected in *Diverse maniere* and in *Vasi, cippi* (Bosso, 2016, p. 303). The rigors of criticism, although due to different reasons, were also suffered by the reception of Canovian production. Already in the author's

lifetime, in addition to the attacks attributed to his inferiority in the *genere forte* (Johns, 1998, p. 37) and to other issues of style, his limited intervention on the finished pieces is subject to frequent discussion and censorship. This will be worsened, after his death, by the controversial reception of the *Passagno Gipsoteca* (Myssok, 2011), which would unexpectedly contribute to highlighting the serial production over Canova's sculptural skills and to emphasizing the possibilities of replicating pieces from the dotted plasters employing the '*macchinette di punta*'.

The secondary role of both authors in the materialization of their works would have justified the continuation of a coherent industry around their ideations, at least as long as their intellectual source could continue to be demonstrated, however, it is difficult to escape the component exerted by their physical presence in the concepts of originality and authenticity. Although the intervention of the authors in the materialization of the artistic object would have been non-existent or very limited in their time, their absence in a synchronous mode while that materialization is taking place, raises problems regarding the considerations of authorship, also closely linked particularly to the sense of authenticity. Changes of mind in the artists before outlining the definitive versions of their works (Myssok, 2010, p. 278), and even destructive impulses, dominated them from time to time, in a way that makes it impossible to guarantee in any case that the artwork would have been made exactly with the characteristics awarded in the present if it had counted with the participation of its authors. Despite this obvious limitation, research on manufacturing techniques and 18<sup>th</sup> century materials, along with the labours developed in close connection with the physical places of creation, approximate the results of the pieces presented in this work to their origins. In the absence of the author's hand or opinion, the distance is observed only in terms of the moment of generation of the object (Casarin, 2015, p. 42). The current materialization of previously unborn works of art reveals them in the first instance as primal, unique objects, not copied, with the stamp of originality in terms of new pieces, never before executed or reproduced. However,

it is that same technical possibility of production that reveals them as replicable objects from the very moment in which they are manufactured. If Benjamin (1935/2010, p. 27) proposes that the uniqueness of some artistic pieces from Antiquity is due to the technical limitations of their age, the extraordinary technological possibilities offered by the 21<sup>th</sup> century easily blur the boundaries of uniqueness.

The decline of the aura due to temporal factors and the possibilities of replication and, therefore, loss of uniqueness, are not enough to nullify the cultural and scientific values provided by the execution of pieces that were once conceived to get materialized. The circumstances that determined their non-conclusion deprived them of their existence, their main condition. The embodiment of unmade historical projects thanks to the opportunities offered by the 21<sup>th</sup> century technologies unfolds new environments for reflection on the concept of artistic originality.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the extremely useful scientific and technical information provided by Carlos Bayod Lucini, Guendalina Damone and Belén Jiménez Fernández-Palacios, from Factum Arte, for the elaboration of this research. This article is written in the context of the investigations of the National Plan Art, *Architecture and Heritage in the processes of construction of the image of the new cultural spaces* financed by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of the Government of Spain.

#### REFERENCES

- Adembri, B. (2015). *Villa Adriana*. Milano, IT: Electa.
- Benjamin, W., & Jennings, M. W. (2010). The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility. *Grey Room*, 39, 11-38 (original edition 1935).
- Bevilacqua, M., Glendening, P., & Minor, H. H. (2006). The Young Piranesi: the itineraries of his formation. *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes*, 13-53.
- Bosso, R. (2006). Alcune osservazioni su Piranesi restauratore e sui Vasi e Candelabri: il recupero dell'Antico tra eredità culturale ed attività imprenditoriale. *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, 20, 211-239.

- Bosso, R. (2016). Per un catalogo dei marmi piranesiani del Museo Gustavo III di Stoccolma: il caso di studio del candelabro con uccelli. *Studi sul Settecento Romano*, 32, 303-330.
- Casarin, C. (2015). *L'autenticità nell'arte contemporanea*. Treviso, IT: Zel Edizioni.
- Casarin, C. (Ed.). (2019). *Antonio Canova. Atelier*. Venezia, IT: Marsilio Editori.
- Casarin, C. (2020). Atelier Canova: A New Vision of Antonio Canova. In A. Lowe, E. Mitchell, N. Béliard, G. Fornaciari, T. Tomassini & G. Damone (Eds.), *The Aura in the Age of Digital Materiality. Rethinking preservation in the shadow of an uncertain future* (pp. 150-157). Cinisello Balsamo, IT: Silvana Editoriale.
- Catra, E., & Mampieri, A. (2015). La Pietà di Antonio Canova. *Arte Veneta*, 70(203), 129-155.
- Cicognara, L. (1823). *Storia della scultura dal suo risorgimento in Italia fino al secolo di Canova: fino al secolo di Canova del conte Leopoldo Cicognara* (vol. 7). Prato, IT: Frat. Giachetti.
- D'Este, A. (1864). *Memorie di Antonio Canova*. Firenze, IT: Felice Le Monnier.
- Dixon, S. M. (1993). Giovanni Battista Piranesi's Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini and Chimneypiece Design as a Vehicle for Polemic. *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, 1(1), 76-98.
- Ferando, C. (2015). "Plasmati dalle sue mani": Canova's Touch and the Gipsoteca of Possagno. In A. Graciano (Ed.), *Exhibiting outside the Academy, Salon and Biennial, 1755-1999: Alternative Venues: Artists' Solo Shows and Other Exhibits* (pp. 111-131). Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Honour, H. (1972a). Canova's studio practice-I: the early years. *The Burlington Magazine*, 114(828), 146-159.
- Honour, H. (1972b). Canova's studio practice-II: 1792-1822. *The Burlington Magazine*, 114(829), 214-229.
- Ingarden, R. (1973). *The Literary Work of Art*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Iser, W. (1978). *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Johns, C. (1998). *Antonio Canova and the politics of patronage in revolutionary and Napoleonic Europe*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lowe, A. (2010). Sei oggetti in cerca di artigiano. Una contaminazione del gusto: appunti su sei "ri-creazioni" piranesiane realizzate da Factum Arte. In G. Pavanello (Ed.), *Le Arti di Piranesi. Architetto, incisore, antiquario, vedutista, designer* (pp. 170-203). [Exhibition catalogue]. Venezia, IT: Marsilio Editori.
- Lowe, A. (2012). An atemporal approach to Piranesi and his designs. In M. de Lucchi, A. Lowe & G. Pavanello (Eds.), *The Arts of Piranesi. Architect, etcher, antiquarian, vedutista, designer* (pp.181-219). [Exhibition catalogue]. Barcelona, ES: Caixaforum.
- Lowe, A. et al. (Eds.). (2020). *The Aura in the Age of Digital Materiality. Rethinking preservation in the shadow of an uncertain future*. Milano, IT: Silvana Editoriale.
- Miraglia, L. (1994). Piranesi's Vasi, candelabri Reinterpreted. *Visual Resources*, 10(3), 221-233.
- Myssock, J. (2011). The Gipsoteca of Possagno: from artist's studio to mu-

- seum. In C. Marshall (Ed.), *Sculpture and the Museum* (pp. 15-38). London, UK: Routledge.
- Myssook, J. (2010). Modern Sculpture in the Making: Antonio Canova and Plaster Casts. In R. Friediksen and E. Marchand (Eds.), *Plaster Casts* (pp. 268-288). Berlin, DE: De Gruyter.
- Pavanello, G. (Ed.). (2010). *Le Arti di Piranesi. Architetto, incisore, antiquario, vedutista, designer*. [Exhibition catalogue]. Venezia, IT: Marsilio Editori.
- Pavanello, G. (1976). *L'opera completa del Canova*. Milano, IT: Rizzoli Editore.
- Panza, P. (2018). Calcografia, accademia, manifattura: l'antichità messa in opera da Francesco Piranesi. In G. Guzzo et al. (Eds.), *Ercolano e Pompei. Visioni di una scoperta* (pp. 2-13). Milano, IT: Skira.
- Panza, P. (2013). Sulla provenienza e il restauro di marmi antichi dal "Museo Piranesi". *Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell'Arte*, 37, 62-75.
- Piranesi, G.B. & Piranesi, F. (1778). *Vasi, candelabri, cippi, sarcofagi, tripodi, Ivcerne ed ornamenti antichi disegnati ed incisi dal Cavalier Giovanni Battista Piranesi* (Voll. 2). Roma, IT: s.n.
- Piranesi, G. B. (1769). *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini: ed ogni altra parte degli edificj desunte dall'architettura Egizia Etrusca, e Greca...* Roma, IT: Nella Stamperia di Generoso Salomoni.
- Piscopo, C., & Tolfo, D. (2019). Incompiuto. Tracce e deviazioni nella realizzazione di un Cavallo colossale. In C. Casarin (Ed.), *Antonio Canova. Atelier* (pp. 158-183). Venezia, IT: Marsilio Editori.
- Reali, M. (2018). Giovan Battista Piranesi: falsi epigrafici tra marmo e carta. *Gallo, Sartori*, 2018, 77-92.
- Sartori-Canova, G. (1837). *Cypsotheca canoviana eretta in Possagno*. Bassano, IT: Tipi Basilio Baseggio.
- Teotochi Albrizzi, I., & Cicognara, L. (1824). *Opere di scultura e di plastica di Antonio Canova descritte da Isabella Albrizzi*. Tomo 4. Pisa, IT: Nicolò Capurro.
- Udy, D. (1978). Piranesi's 'Vasi', the English Silversmith and His Patrons. *The Burlington Magazine*, 1978, 120(909), 820-837.
- Wilton-Ely, J. (2010). «Quella pazza libertà di lavorare a capriccio»: Piranesi e l'uso creativo della fantasia. In G. Pavanello (Ed.), *Le Arti di Piranesi. Architetto, incisore, antiquario, vedutista, designer* (pp. 32-93). [Exhibition catalogue]. Venezia, IT: Marsilio Editori.

#### Article available at

DOI: 10.6092/issn.2724-2463/12614

#### How to cite as article

Merino Gómez, E., Moral Andrés, F., & Casarin, C. (2021). The cultural reception of reproduction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Canova, Piranesi and the use of technology for original creations. *img journal*, 4, 204-223.

#### as contribution in book

Merino Gómez, E., Moral Andrés, F., & Casarin, C. (2021). The cultural reception of reproduction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Canova, Piranesi and the use of technology for original creations. In M. Ghizzoni, E. Musiani (Eds.), *img journal 04/2021 Copy / False / Fake* (pp. 204-223). Alghero, IT: Publica. ISBN 9788899586195



© 2021 The authors. The text of this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.