

## BOOK REVIEW

*Reconstructing the Lansdowne Collection of Classical Marbles, Volume I: History.* By ELIZABETH ANGELICOUSSIS. Munich, DE.: Hirmer Verlag, 2017. Pp. xix + 170. Hardback, \$80.00. ISBN: 978-3-777-42817-8.

*Reconstructing the Lansdowne Collection of Classical Marbles, Volume II: Catalogue.* By ELIZABETH ANGELICOUSSIS. Munich, DE.: Hirmer Verlag, 2017. Pp. 534. Hardback, \$80.00. ISBN: 978-3-777-42817-8.

This is a spectacular two volume study of the most famous collection of classical sculptures ever gathered in Britain. It is also a portrait of the man who assembled it, William Petty-Maurice, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Lansdowne (1737-1805), the man Prime Minister John Stuart, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Bute (1713-1792) chose to broker the Peace of 1763 between Britain and France that ended the Seven Years War.

While neither scholar nor practicing artist (1. 8-9), Petty-Maurice had his own aesthetic sensibilities. He disliked portraits- his collection had very few- and in an age when deceptive restorations by unscrupulous dealers were common, he disapproved of sculpture that had “suffered from too much interference” (1.9; 2.10). With a natural eye, he could pick “a winner” as in the case of the “Wounded Amazon,” “one of his finest artistic legacies,” which is now held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1.57).

In the field finding items for his delectation were two antiquities dealers: Thomas Jenkins (1722-1798), from whom he purchased 55 pieces in 1771 (1.171) and Gavin Hamilton ((1723-1798), from whom he acquired many pieces from Hadrian’s villa at Tivoli and who was, according to Angelicoussis, the real force behind the collection. Petty-Maurice also added ancient works once owned by the architects Robert and James Adams to his collection (1.13;16). Hamilton and Jenkins, who were by various degrees both honest and dishonest, had “a clear understanding of what would excite buyers,” and “willfully modified or overlooked a sculpture’s features” to “enchant a patron” (1.168; 196). Nevertheless, as Angelicoussis points out these reconstructions provide strong “testimony

to the remarkable ability of 18<sup>th</sup> century restorers to create an accomplished composite statue” which could give “new worth to the unrelated remains of an average antiquity” (1.178). To this the author contrasts the modern removal of restorations which “reveal[s] post classical interference for what it is- a sterile, puerile affectation that abuses and destroys in its pursuit of ‘pure antiquity’” (1.171; 173).

These beautifully illustrated, painstakingly written and carefully edited volumes continue the author’s earlier work: *The Holkham Hall Collection of Classical Sculptures* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2001) and *The Woburn Abbey Collection of Classical Antiquities* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1992). The reader is provided with a meticulous assessment of each piece based upon many sources including the extensive correspondence between Petty-Maurice and Hamilton and various sales records. There is a comprehensive bibliography and a concordance of the earlier catalogues of collection which involved wading through “vague descriptions, contradictions, and confusing repetitions [that] make it impossible to identify with certainty which dealer sold exactly what sculptures” (1.23).

In a bravura performance, the author has brought the Lansdowne collection back to life. Dispersed at auction in 1930, the 117 pieces are now part of collections around the world. A few are unaccounted for today and those pieces that did not sell in 1930 reside at Bowood House, the family seat in Wiltshire. But Petty-Maurice left the world another legacy. As Prime Minister during the final months of the American Revolution (July, 1782-February, 1783), he supported American independence, and it was he who drafted the preliminary documents of peace between America and Britain. For this he was given the full length portrait of George Washington painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1796 which now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

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