Introduction

This book is about Roman portrait statues that all look the same. They
represented individual women but replicated the same body from the neck
down, recreating the same stance, the same gesture, the same elaborate
drapery folds, over and over again. Known collectively as the Large Her-
culaneum Woman statue type, reproductions of this clothed female body
were especially frequent in the second century CE. They were set up all over
the Roman Empire, from Syria to Spain, from the banks of the Danube
river to the North African seaboard; they stood mainly in city streets
and public spaces, but also in sanctuaries and cemeteries. They portrayed
adult women. Judging by the numbers, the Large Herculaneum Woman
was the most widely used body type for female portrait statues in the
Imperial period. Over 200 examples are known, and more continue to be
found.

This sameness is remarkable, especially in light of the enormous diversity
of the world in which these statues were made and seen. By the second
century CE, the Roman Empire encompassed thousands of square kilo-
meters and a range of political structures, experiences of conquest, local
cultural traditions, languages, and social relations. By contrast, its visual
art is striking for its repetitions. From imperial portraits to building types,
architectural ornaments, sarcophagi, pottery decoration, and many more
genres, the same visual types, styles, and motifs were employed over and
over again. In the second century CE, monumental forms of replication seem
to have been especially important in shaping the visual landscape. This is
the period of the "marble style" in Roman architecture in which city cen-
ters across the Empire came to share the same types of spectacular display
and ornamentation. Stock figures like the Large Herculaneum Woman were
reproduced in enormous numbers. What Ramsay MacMullen termed "the
epigraphic habit," the proliferation in the Imperial period of inscriptions
of all kinds, was at its height.

Within this world of sameness and difference, the so-called Large Her-
culaneum Woman portrait statues are a revealing case study for the ways in
which visual replication and social relations interacted. In the words of my
title, this book is about women and visual replication in Roman imperial art

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and culture, yet the statues also undermine that title. They represented only adult women, but not in any universal sense of what a Roman "woman" was or ought to be. They were far more exclusive than that: these were high-status, honorific portraits made for women with substantial wealth and elite family connections, and they took shape in close relationship to their subjects' public, civic generosity. Gender in these statues interwove notions of ideal femininity and social power. The concept of "visual replication" is equally contingent. These statues replicated the same figure over and over again, but each reproduction was also unique: the stock body was typically combined with an individualized head and an inscription naming the woman portrayed, installed in a particular context, and seen by diverse audiences there. In other words, this replication was about variation and difference as much as sameness, and in this it offered particular opportunities as well as limitations. Finally, these statues were part of the visual culture of the Roman Empire, but they do not behave in any straightforwardly "Roman" way. Their form originated in Greek sculptural practices of centuries earlier but was appropriated and reappropriated in a continually changing Roman Imperial present. These statues were frequent in some regions of the Empire but not seen at all in others. They belonged to an empire-wide culture but took meaning only within local situations and specific cultural contexts. In all these ways – as my title does not say – these statues did an exceptionally poor job of replicating women in the Roman Empire.

This is a fruitful paradox, and the following chapters explore it from several different perspectives. Throughout, a core assumption is that images do not simply reflect a reality created elsewhere and in other ways. Roman images, artifacts, and built spaces took form in response to political, social, cultural, and economic developments. They also shaped that world in turn by constructing experience, intervening in human relationships, engaging with existing concepts and expectations, and stimulating a range of reactions. In the images and spaces that people made and lived with, we see what they thought of their world, how they acted within it, and how they conceived of their own possibilities and constraints. For the Large Herculaneum Woman statues, which were made, selected, and lived with as replicated figures, this means asking how visual repetition shaped human experience, relationships, and meaning in a specific historical time. How did certain images work and signify *as multiples* in the second century CE? For whom, and in what ways, was this emphasis on visual sameness useful? How did this replication work within the larger visual landscape, and what significance did it have there? Why were the Large Herculaneum Woman

statues most frequently made and widely seen in the second century CE, and how did this phenomenon relate to contemporaneous social, political, and economic dynamics?

Answering these questions calls for a different approach from aesthetic judgment, typological classification, or the study of sculptural developments in isolation. A century ago, statues like these were dismissed as Roman copies of Greek originals, having no interest or meaning beyond what they might tell us about the lost masterpieces of a much earlier time. In the second half of the twentieth century, scholarly interest shifted to the way these statues illuminated sculptural developments within the Roman period, still with a focus on purely formal aspects of replication. From the 1970s on, the explosion of contextual studies in Roman art history made this material revealing in a new way. Individual portraits could now answer questions about the characterization of public spaces like theaters or baths, or the civic role and self-representation of prominent women. Meanwhile, the relationship of Roman art to Greek precedents was being fundamentally reevaluated. (Chapter 1 explores these and related developments.)

All this now allows what might be termed a relational aesthetics. By this I mean a way to continue to treat these statues seriously as *visual* images, with effects and meanings as such, but which operated in and through their relationships to the physical, social, spatial, and conceptual world in which they were produced and seen. As used here, the term "aesthetics" does not imply universal judgments about a statue's quality or value. Nor is the aesthetic domain considered the opposite, a field of infinite possible meanings and personal responses, and hence irretrievable in the ancient record. Modern western thought has often treated aesthetics in isolation, divorced from conditions of place, time, or meaning, but this is a culturally specific understanding. Aesthetic ideas and practices have complex and knowable relationships to particular times and places; they show how cultural creations operate and what they have to do with people's lives.[1]

The relational aspect of aesthetics can illuminate frightening power. Events of the twentieth century highlighted the danger and subjectivity of aesthetics in the service of political and military agendas – the manipulation of Roman Imperial imagery by the fascist governments of Germany and Italy in the 1930s and 40s is just one example. Partly in response, art historical and archaeological studies in the mid-twentieth century moved

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[1] On western aesthetics as culturally specific, Bourdieu 1984. On aesthetics in relation to particular historical situations, e.g. Hölscher 1987, 2004; Bloch 1995; Appiah 1997; Gell 1998; Shanks 1999.

away from aesthetic questions, emptying out any perceived subjectivity in favor of observable, scientific practice.[2] In the study of Roman visual culture, one trend was accordingly a focus on understanding formal developments and constructing typologies. Since the later twentieth century turn toward a social and political Roman art history, another trend has been to interpret images as proxies for something else, such as political ideology, social relations, or religious experience. The challenge is to integrate these, to consider the aesthetic in terms of its relationships to historical situations, ideas, space, agency, and reception in a way that continues to illuminate the complex and powerful relationships between people and their visual cultures. The sensory impact of many images and shapes, the excess of attention and effect that takes their impact far beyond the purely functional, their carefully constructed nature and power to evoke powerful responses or construct reality – these are revealing parts of human experience.

Visual replication, for example, was desirable, sought out, and employed in a range of ways to construct meaning and experience in the Roman world. This was an aesthetics of sameness, documenting a pleasure and desire activated by a recognizable, formulaic code. It also related powerfully to historical conditions of production, economic dynamics, a peculiar blend of cultural diversity and hierarchical political control, and the construction and maintenance of complex social relations. In this book, I explore these interconnections through the case of the Large Herculaneum Woman statues, looking at human interactions with their production, ways of portraying a person, and viewing. This analysis builds on recent scholarship by problematizing the relationship to a presumed Greek original, by evaluating these replicas in terms of their portrayed subjects, patrons, spatial contexts, and the ways in which they were seen, and by treating this extensive visual replication as a historical phenomenon in its own right. The goal is to show how these images were part of embodied experiences of the visual, how they were tied into social relations and human experience through the physicality of human actions in regard to material things. Several themes accordingly emerge as central.

Visual replication is historically situated. Visual forms and ideas are replicated in all periods, but it is crucial to situate specific replications within their political, economic, and practical contexts. The Large Herculaneum Woman statues were most widely made and seen in the second century CE; most of this book will therefore concentrate on the circumstances and possibilities of this period as the most significant phase, the "main event,"

[2] Härke 1995.

in the history of this particular figure. In this case, the replication of a given form had a great deal to do with the second century CE's possibilities of production and trade (Chapter 2), art making and patronage, viewing and reception, and practices of elite social identity, including constructions of gender (Chapters 3, 4, 5). Moreover, the role and meanings of these statues in the cities of the Greek east, where they were most often and most strictly replicated, were very different from their role and meanings in isolated settings elsewhere, or, for example, in the military foundations of the lower Danube (Chapter 6).

Visual replication is an act in the present. Reproduction occurs in and for its own time, and can be explained only in terms of contemporaneous interests and circumstances. Even if the reproduction of a past artwork is the desired goal of visual replication, it is an act in its own present, including the desire, situation, possibilities, technology, and reception of that act. Nor can we know *a priori* what the relationship is between a replica and the past that it may appear to replicate faithfully. In the case of the Large Herculaneum Woman statues, no original survives, but the known examples show a great deal of attention paid to replicating a form that best matches Greek sculptural developments of the late fourth century BCE. At the same time, there is no evidence that the replicas referred directly to an original made in that period, or to fourth-century sculpture more broadly, or even to a consciously classicizing ethos. Their reasons and meanings have to be sought elsewhere.

The same form can look and signify differently in different times and places. The Large Herculaneum Woman maintained not only its form over several centuries, but also its function as a ceremonial way of representing mortal women. At the same time, it was made, selected, employed, and seen very differently in changed historical situations and in varying cultural landscapes. In the second century CE, the statues interacted with practices of visual cliché, frontality, multiplicity, and a replicative visual context in ways that replicas made and seen in other times and places did not. Every new statue interacted with the contemporaneous workings and connotations of the statue type as a whole; it then gained additional meaning and effect within the particular context in which it was installed and seen. The loss of this particular historical context then helps explain why the wide replication of this figure ended after the second century CE (Chapter 7).

Visual replication accomplishes certain things for certain people. For much of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, anything smacking of copying and seriation was dismissed as dull or empty of meaning. It is more productive to look at how visual replication worked, what it did, and

for whom. Casting certain ideas into recognizable, consistent, and often-repeated shapes made them visual touchstones, a valuable means of tapping into certain ideas and connotations. Large Herculaneum Woman bodies, like other frequently used portrait statue types, were authoritative clichés, valued for their well-established and desirable connotations. These bodies associated their subjects with known social and symbolic categories. Since they were restricted almost entirely to the portraiture of civic elites, these statue bodies played an important role in configuring the known world and social relations within it. They helped construct and constrain the experience of viewers in a hierarchical representation of social value and possibility.

Visual replication has its own workings and momentum. Figures that were made, chosen, installed, and seen as replicas of a well-known type had meanings and possibilities different from those of a singular or one-time form. This multiplicity could drive further replication, as when a form was reproduced and installed in public precisely because of its existing value as an authoritative cliché. The widespread replication of the Large Herculaneum Woman in the second century CE had its own momentum. New replicas reproduced – and added to – the current valence and popularity of the form. This shaped the end of this statue type's replication as well. Without the perception that reproducing this figure was a successful and widely accepted way to accomplish certain things, there was reduced incentive to continue employing the Large Herculaneum Woman type by making new exemplars. This loss of momentum interacted with other factors shaping the end of this statue type (Chapter 7).

With these central themes in mind, the following chapters explore the material from seven different perspectives: origins, production, replication, portraiture, space, difference, and endings. Each perspective stresses the relationships between these statues and aspects of the world in which they were made, selected, and seen. Throughout, visual replication is treated as a lens through which we can see a series of dynamic tensions at work: between a specific statue and the type as a whole, between individual people's actions and the larger world in which they took form, between constructions of femininity and practices of social power, between the Empire as a whole and the individual people and places that constituted it.

Chapter 1 turns on the problem of what a meaningful concept of origins might be for a statue type like the Large Herculaneum Woman. These origins have been assumed to lie in a Greek sculptural masterwork of the late fourth century BCE, one whose aesthetic value and importance motivated the figure's later repetitions. For the purposes of this book, however, the

extensive replication of these statues in the second century CE is treated as the most significant part of the type's history. This means that its most important origins will lie not necessarily in the first appearance of the form but in the processes by which an existing figure became interesting and available in new ways at a particular period. With this in mind, I first comment on the role of the modern history of these statues and the ways in which the eponymous Large Herculaneum Woman, discovered at Herculaneum in the early eighteenth century, became the object of a very modern replication that in some ways supplanted the ancient. The Roman history of these statues was different. Perhaps already in the late Hellenistic period (the evidence is disputed), this draped, female form existed as a reproducible, classicizing body for the ceremonial representation of women. This figure, with these functions, was then appropriated in the Augustan period to meet new representational needs in the context of the establishment of the Principate. Against this long-term background, the type's replication in the second century CE emerges as a distinctive phenomenon, characterized by a jump in the number of statues, their increasingly broad geographic distribution, and their use above all for the honorific portraiture of elite women in the cities of the Empire.

To explain this distinctive second-century CE history, in Chapter 2 I explore the role of that period's characteristic forms of marble production. To what extent was the replication of the Large Herculaneum Woman statues part of the expansion of the marble trade in the Imperial period, with its new emphasis on mass production, standard forms, and prefabrication at the quarries? This question can be addressed by a reconstruction of these statues' production from the quarries to the destination workshops. The extensive and interconnected aspects of this system undermine any notion of a singular agent or motive driving the replication of the Large Herculaneum Women. This in turn has significant implications for process, agency, and reception during the statues' making. In sum, developments in production and trade significantly shaped this sculptural replication and what it meant. It becomes clear that this phenomenon was equally driven by desires and meanings on the demand side.

All this raises the question of what, exactly, is meant by replication. The existing scholarly terminology grew out of the attempt to reconstruct lost Greek originals; statues were defined as copies or variants depending on their perceived closeness or distance from that presumed original. In Chapter 3, definitions and practices of replication are explored as historically specific. I continue to reconstruct production processes, but now at the stages of distribution and final carving in destination workshops. What constituted

an acceptable replica was different in different periods, for reasons of pro-
duction, patronage, and viewing. The Large Herculaneum Woman replicas
show a wide range of formal relationships to one another: overall, faith-
fulness to a centuries-old original was always less important than creating
a statue that belonged to the contemporaneous understanding of the fig-
ure. This has implications for how the Large Herculaneum Woman type
was defined in its own time, what was considered to be a successful replica
or not, where recognizability lay, and how it was created. Replication, like
origins and production, was multiple and relational, as well as historically
situated.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the workings of the Large Herculaneum Woman
body within a performative, assemblage portraiture. These statues were
employed primarily in portraits of women belonging to local and regional
elites; they belonged to the system of civic beneficence and its honorific
rewards called euergetism. Stock bodies were combined with heads that
were sometimes lifelike and mimetic, sometimes classically idealizing, and
often shaped by local, regional, and other differentiations. The whole figure
was then normally set onto an inscribed base that identified the woman
portrayed. These inscriptions, too, combined individualizing and formulaic
elements; text and image worked in relationship to one another. This manner
of putting together a portrait statue allowed for different kinds of interplay
between the individual and the collective, the specific and the generic. In
this way, through the use of formula and repetition, public identity could
usefully be extended beyond a single portrait statue along multiple figural
and epigraphic axes.

Chapter 5 continues exploring the performative aspects of this portraiture
by focusing on space: sculptural associations, settings, and receptions. Each
of these, too, was made up of interchangeable parts that relied for their
effects on formula, recognizability, convention, and repetition. These statues
were usually installed and seen in the most public spaces of cities in the
Empire, especially in the Greek east. They typically stood at nodal junctures
and in amenities and spaces devoted to collective, public life: city gates,
colonnaded streets, baths, nymphaea, temple precincts. There, they received
an unscripted and repeated mass viewing. They were not objects of aesthetic
contemplation but formed a backdrop for public activities, framing viewers'
understandings and lived experience. Women of high status were thus made
promiscuously visible in a way very different from their actual or legal
presence in public space. This was useful for the people portrayed. In these
sculptural groups, local and regional elite families were depicted as timeless

embodiments of civic virtue and essential mediators between a given city and the Empire. This in turn has implications for the workings of a normative civic culture and for imperial cultural cohesion.

Outside its most normative practices and places, the Large Herculaneum Woman statue type was characterized by difference as much as sameness, linking Empire-wide aspects of Roman Imperial culture with very local cultural acts and understandings. In Chapter 6, examples from as far apart as Carmo in southern Spain and Panticapaion on the Crimean peninsula, outside the Empire proper, show how local portrait subjects and patrons could draw on this form of portraiture to depict and legitimate their own positions. The same sculptural form worked visually in very different ways in each place, depending on local cultural traditions and how these statues were employed in relation to them. Developments in the later second century are particularly interesting, with a new popularity for this figure in the heavily militarized settlements along the lower Danube river and in Dacia. Differences in the statues' patronage, setting, and presentation show dynamic tensions between interregional cultural forms, regional specificities, and local decisions. These cases suggest that the Empire's *koine* visual culture was useful not because it erased local differences or required homogeneous participation in Empire-wide norms, but because it was able to mediate between cultural sameness and difference, and to allow for different kinds of highly localized participation in much broader cultural developments.

The final chapter is a pendant to the first, now exploring the individual and collective endings of the Large Herculaneum Woman's replication rather than its beginnings. How things fall apart is revealing. Individual statues could be reinstalled, deinstalled, reused to portray someone else, or deliberately damaged. During the second century, these individual endings highlighted the strength of this representational practice as a whole. They shed light on what can be termed the prestige body, a set of ideas and practices that linked honorific portraiture to concepts of gendered inviolability, rhetorical practice, and developments in penal law, among others. The overall endings of this replication are a different matter. Large Herculaneum Woman statues stopped being made altogether in the early third century CE, just one element of much larger transformations in civic culture in the Empire. These marked a permanent change in the visual and material relationship between elites and cities, a change that has been explained in various ways. In Chapter 7, I propose that this overall ending took the form it did in part because of the nature of these statues' replication in the second

century CE. Disruptions to so diffuse, decentralized, and interconnected a system will have had a disproportionately large and permanent impact, shaping longer-term outcomes in certain ways.

There are serious limitations to the evidence studied here. Almost all the Large Herculaneum Woman statues are fragments – some survive literally in pieces, and all were originally parts of much larger ensembles whose parts are mostly lost. Each body was combined with a head, often an inscription, and sometimes other sculptures, and it was always seen in a particular setting and in a particular place – this evidence survives only in a few cases. Each statue was also produced as part of social relationships among the woman portrayed, the patron of the statue, the city or group controlling the space in which it was installed, elite families who made benefactions to a given city and were rewarded with this kind of statue, and the different people and groups within a city who saw these statues and responded to them. In the nineteen centuries since the heyday of this type, most of the statues have lost their heads, inscriptions, and original settings, let alone their most important social relationships. Some of this loss is due to manmade or natural damage in subsequent centuries. Many of the statues became parts of modern collections long before any notion of careful excavation and documentation existed. Some still circulate on the art market with no modern or ancient provenance information; the most likely explanation for this lack of information is that these objects were illegally excavated in recent decades and smuggled out of the countries in which they were found.[3]

In all these cases, there is no way to connect a statue to its original setting and its effects, meanings, and significance there. In response to this fragmentation, I work back and forth from specific instances to larger patterns, from detailed evidence to more scanty traces or none.[4] This means that a great deal of weight will rest on a few examples for which there is comparatively rich contextual evidence, and those key examples will appear again and again in this book. Sometimes this means developing likely interpretations or suggestions that cannot be proven; I have tried to

[3] On archaeological looting, Gill and Chippindale 1993, 2006; Chippindale and Gill 2000; Brodie *et al.* 2006. This is the case for at least one Large Herculaneum Woman statue (no. **73** in the Catalogue, with bibliography), a portrait statue of the empress Sabina in Boston since 1979. It was recently documented as part of the illegal excavation, buying, and selling activities of the art dealer Giacomo Medici and has been returned to Italy, but its original archaeological context is irretrievably lost.

[4] I am inspired here by Susan Alcock's synthetic analysis of different qualities of survey evidence (Alcock 1993).