

# ANTIQUE SCULPTURE IN PRINTS

(PLATES 58–60)

THIS brief study is not by any means intended to be comprehensive, but is just by way of commentary on some antique sculpture represented in prints and also on figures in prints which have been influenced by or directly derived from well-known ancient sculptures. For the most part only prints primarily created as works of art will be included, and not purely reproductive prints, interesting as some may be.

We begin with the fifteenth century, the first century of print-making when paper first became readily available in Europe and multiple original works of art were possible through the use of the ancient processes of relief blocks and incision. In Italy where many pieces of classical sculpture were scattered about, it was natural with the rising interest in Greek and Roman culture that artists should draw inspiration from what they saw close at hand. The great Italian artist of the fifteenth century Andrea Mantegna was much influenced by the classical past. He was also one of the very first of the Italian engravers. His two famous engravings of *The Battle of the Sea Gods* (Pl. 58, a) were, I believe, derived from Greek works of similar subjects,<sup>1</sup> possibly created by the fourth-century Greek sculptor Skopas. According to Pliny, this work, which unfortunately has not survived, was a large sculptural group with representations of sea monsters, including also Poseidon, together with Thetis, Achilles, and Nereids riding hippocamps and sea dragons. There were Tritons, also, and the train of Phorkys, besides fishes and other sea creatures. Pliny adds that this was the most highly esteemed of all the works of Skopas and a great achievement, “even were it the work of a lifetime.”<sup>2</sup> The group was finally set up in a temple probably built by Gnaeus Domitius in the Circus Flaminius in Rome. The base upon which it rested is still in existence. It was long believed that the work was originally set up in Asia Minor, where Skopas is thought to have worked, and where Domitius had been governor about 32 B.C. It could, however, have been an earlier Domitius; and then the transfer would have occurred toward the close of the second century B.C. In any case, it was in Rome for some time to be observed, studied and copied. A small figure of a Tritoness, found at Ostia, may be a Roman copy of a figure in this group.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of sea monsters—Tritons, hippocamps and sea dragons—is very ancient, and probably came to Greece from the Orient and was used to represent some of the minor sea deities, but not Poseidon, Amphitrite or the Nereids. The Nereids were

<sup>1</sup> A. M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, Part II, Vols. V–VII, Published for the the National Gallery of Art, Washington, London, 1948, p. 15, Nos. 5 and 6, pls. 494 and 495.

<sup>2</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXVI, 4, 26.

<sup>3</sup> J. D. Beazley and Bernard Ashmole, *Greek Sculpture and Painting to the End of the Hellenistic Period*, New York, Cambridge, 1932, p. 56, fig. 117.

frequently represented riding on the backs of dolphins or sea monsters and carrying the arms of Achilles. This motif occurs as early as the fifth century B.C.<sup>4</sup>

It has to be admitted, of course, that nothing positively of the work of Skopas survives. The Tegean heads are the most likely, and seem to fit the description of Pliny.<sup>5</sup> We can be sure, however, that there was another great and influential sculptor at work in the fourth century whose style was very different from Praxiteles, much more intense and deeply emotional. This was a spirit exemplified by the Tegean heads. The little Tritoness from Ostia with her yearning, upturned face would seem to be an example of the new trend. The sea centaur seen in Mantegna's work first appears in Greek monuments of the Hellenistic age, probably due to the influence of Skopas. The sea creatures have leafy girdles and fins and serpentine bodies with long coiling tails.

Possible literary sources connected with this subject have also been explored. There is a delightful description of an imaginary classical relief in the *Hypnerotomachia Polyphili* of Francesco Colonna of 1499, but it would be too late to have inspired Mantegna if the date on the plaque the old woman in the engraving is holding is correctly read 1493.<sup>6</sup> Richard Förster, mentioned by Hind, suggests that the subject is derived from the account of the "Ichthyophagi" in Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliothēke*, used by Mantegna as the background of an allegory on the power of Envy to move even those without feeling to strife.<sup>7</sup> It seems more reasonable, however, to consider that classical material such as sculpture which was *visible* to him would have had the greater impact on Mantegna.

The majority of other sea monsters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy would appear to be mostly decorative, with the exception of those of Girolamo Mocetto, whose two plates of "Triumph of Neptune" (Pl. 58, b) could have been inspired by Mantegna, as Hind suggests, or equally well be derived directly from Graeco-Roman reliefs, of which there are many in Italy.<sup>8</sup> Mocetto was archaeologically minded; that we know from the fact that he illustrated the work by Ambrosius Leo, *De Nola Opusculum*, Venice (Johannes Rubeus, Vercellensis), 1514, fol.<sup>9</sup> His four engraved plates show plans and views of the town of Nola. Another print which deserves to be mentioned is Jacopo dei Barbari's large woodcut, *View of Venice*, showing a representation of Neptune on a sea monster.<sup>10</sup>

Jacopo dei Barbari's greatest contribution to the development of art history is

<sup>4</sup> Jacobsthal, *Die Melischen Reliefs*, Berlin-Wilmersdorf, 1931, No. 21, pl. 11.

<sup>5</sup> G. M. A. Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks*, Revised edition, 1950, New Haven, figs. 690, 691, 692, 693.

<sup>6</sup> Fol. D II v.

<sup>7</sup> Hind, *op. cit.*, p. 15 and note 3.

<sup>8</sup> Hind, *op. cit.*, pp. 159, 169, pl. 733.

<sup>9</sup> Hind, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-171, Nos. 19-22, pls. 734, 735.

<sup>10</sup> E. Mongan, *Rosenwald Collection: An Exhibition of Recent Acquisitions (with foreword by Lessing J. Rosenwald)* National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1950, p. 16 and front endpaper.

his influence on Albrecht Dürer in introducing him to the study of human proportions. Barbari was born in Venice about 1450, or perhaps earlier. In 1500 he went north to Nuremberg to serve as portrait and miniature painter to the Emperor Maximilian. The remainder of his life was spent in Northern Europe working for various patrons, including the Archduchess Margaret, regent of the Netherlands. An inventory of her pictures made in 1515-1516 refers to Barbari as dead. When Dürer was in Venice, the older artist showed him some sketches in human proportions, which increased his desire to take up theoretical studies in this field. Barbari himself was not willing to communicate his own knowledge to the eager, gifted young artist. This did not deter Dürer, however, who went ahead on his own with the study of Vitruvius, whose writings deal with the subject, and from whom one learns something of Polykleitos' famous canon embodied in his statue of the Doryphoros.

It was about this time, the last decade of the fifteenth century, that the Apollo Belvedere was discovered at Anzio (Antium) on the seashore near Rome. The statue was in an excellent state of preservation, with little lacking except the left hand and the right forearm. It came to light just at the time when men were weary of the middle ages and turning back to the classical era. It was immediately hailed as a great piece of sculpture, and its influence on other works of art, including engravings, began promptly. The engraving by Nicoletto Roselli da Modena shows the god with the restorations which we know were carried out by Giovanni Montorsoli (Pl. 59, a), although the engraving cannot be later than 1507 when Nicoletto was known to have been in Rome, and 1507 was the year of Montorsoli's birth.<sup>11</sup> It appears to have been Nicoletto who conceived the restoration later carried out in Rome. There are also engravings of the Apollo by Agostino Veneziano dei Musi and a print dated 1552 in Lafreri's *Speculum Magnificentiae Romanae*. The influence of the pose is seen repeatedly in many early Italian engravings. The Apollo's popularity continued for several centuries. Benjamin West, seeing the statue in Rome, exclaimed, "How like he is to a Mohawk warrior!" Many years later, in 1801, West made some lithographs as a pioneer in this then new medium.<sup>12</sup> One of his prints shows a figure of St. John the Baptist, which is a very close copy of the Apollo Belvedere in reverse. To be sure, he has lost some of his slender elegance, and his beautiful hairstyle has been modified to suit the character portrayed (Pl. 59, b).

In the meantime, Dürer had been working on his study of human proportions, concentrating mostly on the female figure and using models from Jacopo dei Barbari's classicizing engravings. Next, he turned to the male figure. Panofsky argues convincingly for his use of the Apollo Belvedere as the principal model for Adam in the

<sup>11</sup> Hind, *op. cit.*, p. 121, pl. 659.

<sup>12</sup> Felix H. Man, "Lithography in England (1801-1810)," *Prints, Thirteen Illustrated Essays on the Art of the Print, Selected for the Print Council of America by Carl Zigrosser*, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, 1962, pp. 127-128.

*Fall of Man* (Pl. 59, d) engraved in 1504, making use also of a figure of a Bacchant in Mantegna's *Bacchanal with the Winepress*.<sup>13</sup> The two classical figures of Adam and Eve are shown standing in a German thicket in the company of various animals who seem to emerge gradually from the background under the eyes of the spectator. The general opinion is that Dürer never saw the actual statue known as the Apollo Belvedere, but depended on some unknown Italian drawing. A German scholar has recently published a brief article suggesting that Dürer did actually go to Rome. He believes he is able to read the letters "ROM" on one of Dürer's paintings.<sup>14</sup> It is, however, a matter requiring further study.

Dürer did not publish his work on human proportions for another 24 years after engraving the *Fall of Man* in 1504. There is no evidence, however, that he changed his opinions very much in the meantime. Since Dürer's time, the tendency for art to become more subjective has caused human proportions to become much less important than in the days of Polykleitos or in Dürer's time.

We turn now to another statue presently housed in the Belvedere Court of the Vatican, the famous Torso Belvedere. This statue bears the inscription: "Apollonios the son of Nestor, the Athenian made me," and is considered to be an original Greek statue of the Neo-Attic School of the middle of the first century B.C. An engraving in Hind's Catalogue, Vol. II, pp. 42-43, No. 19 (Pl. 59, c) appears to be a representation of this statue in reverse. The artist was Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, a follower of Mantegna, probably born about 1461, but there is no proof of his birth date. The engraving shows some variations from the statue, but most of these could be attributed to the whims of the engraver. More of the chest remains, and the legs are complete. Hind calls attention to a painting by Bernardino Licinio of his brother's family in the Borghese Gallery, Rome, which may show an in-between stage with one leg.<sup>14a</sup> The painting is probably to be dated about 1524 because of its similarity to a painting by Licinio at Hampton Court bearing this date. If the relation to the Belvedere Torso is accepted, the Brescia engraving would have to be prior to 1524, which seems to be stylistically probable. We know that the Torso was in the Colonna Palace before it passed to the Vatican. It is quite possible that the removal took place about 1527, when the devastation of the Villa Madama by Pompeo Colonna could have caused the confiscation of his property. The inscription on the engraving "in monte

<sup>13</sup> E. Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, No. 6: "Dürer and Classical Antiquity," Garden City, New York, 1955, especially pp. 249-255. See also No. 2 in the same publication: "The History of the Theory of Human Proportions as a Reflection of the History of Styles."

<sup>14</sup> E. Winzinger, "Albrecht Dürer in Rom," *Pantheon*, XXIV, September/October, 1966, pp. 283-287, figs. 4, 5, 6. This article was called to my attention by my colleague, Miss H. Diane Russell.

<sup>14a</sup> Paola della Pergola, *Galleria Borghese, I Dipinti*, Vol. I, Rome, 1955, p. 116, fig. 207. The date of Bernardino Licinio's death is given incorrectly in this catalogue. Berensen in his *Pictures of the Italian Renaissance: Venetian School*, Phaidon Press, London, 1957, gives Licinio's dates as 1489-about 1560. Many of his paintings have dates on them later than 1516.

cavallo" is of some interest and importance since the Colonna Palace was in the vicinity of the Quirinal. Fulvius speaks of the *Antiquae aedes D. Columnensium sub monte nunc Caballo* (*Antiquitat. Rom.*, 1527, fol. lxix, b).<sup>14b</sup>

As early as 1907, this torso was shown to be probably a satyr, due to a hole in the back for the attachment of a tail, rather than Herakles, the name given to it no doubt because of its heavy proportions resembling somewhat the Farnese Herakles, and the animal's skin assumed to be that of a lion as shown in our print.<sup>15</sup> Rhys Carpenter has suggested that the large rough area at the neck and chest is due to a beard, which was of the same block as the head. In the same article, he proposes that this statue is a particular satyr, Marsyas, and has ingeniously found an Apollo who might go with him.<sup>16</sup>

Certain statues, famous landmarks in Rome, dear both to the native and the tourist, were also represented in early Italian and later engravings and etchings. For instance, the gilded bronze statue of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius was originally set up in the Forum near the Arch of Septimius Severus, and stood there for years through many vicissitudes of troubled times, so troubled that the very name of the Emperor was forgotten; the common belief was that it represented Constantine the Great, although the names of some other emperors were also attached to it. This is generally believed to account for its preservation until it was moved and set up near the Church of St. John Lateran, where it stood for many years during the middle ages and early Renaissance. In 1538 Michelangelo supervised its transfer to the Capitol Piazza. By that time, there were scholars who could prove it was Marcus Aurelius and not Constantine. A number of prints show this statue. One by the artist Nicoletto Roselli da Modena is engraved in an imaginary interior, with the statue in strict profile to the left. This print has a decorative quality and delicacy characteristic of the artist. An inscription indicates that the work stands near the Church of St. John (Pl. 60, a).<sup>17</sup> Another engraving by the painter Marcello Fogolino is more like a sketch in which the Emperor rides from the left forward, with his head turned as if exhorting his soldiers. This print is extremely rare; Hind mentions only one impression, now in Dresden (Pl. 60, c).<sup>18</sup>

There is a very unusual composition in a drypoint by an anonymous artist, known as the Master of 1515 from a date on one of his works. From some peculiarities of orthography he uses, he is believed to be a Northern European drawn to Italy by

<sup>14b</sup> Amelung, *Die Sculpturen des Vaticanischen Museums*, Vol. II, Berlin, 1908, pp. 13 ff. mentions the painting in his discussion of the Belvedere Torso, but also other works which show the problem of its history to be fairly complicated and not easily settled. See also Emanuel Loewy, "Zur Geschichte des Torso von Belvedere," *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst*, XXIII, 1888, pp. 74 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Hadaczek, *Jahreshefte*, X, 1907, pp. 312-317.

<sup>16</sup> Rhys Carpenter, *M.A.A.R.*, XVIII, 1941, pp. 84-91, pl. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Hind, *op. cit.*, p. 120, No. 31, pl. 656.

<sup>18</sup> Hind, *op. cit.*, p. 218, No. 3, pl. 802.

the fascination of the antique (Pl. 60, b).<sup>19</sup> Here the artist has created a capriccio which might be the dream of an antiquarian. The center of interest focuses on an equestrian statue, the pose of which is obviously taken from the Marcus Aurelius. Immediately behind the statue, which stands on a high base decorated with seraphim, is the dome of the Pantheon. In addition to an obelisk and one of the monumental columns with spiral frieze other odd bits of unidentifiable later architecture are shown at the sides; and below, there are two unexplained figures, probably allegorical. The dark shadows add to the rather sinister effect. In an engraving of 1565 from Lafreri's *Speculum* showing the Capitol Piazza, we see the statue standing in the foreground on its pedestal, believed to have been constructed by Michelangelo. In accordance with a plan of his known from a contemporary engraving, an ornamental pavement was laid around the statue so that it now seems to rise from a star as it continues to cast its legendary spell over the city.

Other favorite sculptures well known to visitors illustrated in engravings also are the Dioscuri, or Horse Tamers, of the Quirinal, who are inscribed respectively, Opus Fidiaie and Opus Praxitelis (Pl. 58, c). Like other Roman monuments from the past, they have gathered many legends around them and attracted the attention of literary and artistic travelers and antiquarians over the centuries. It has been pointed out that they are copies twice life size of a figure in the East Pediment of the Parthenon.<sup>20</sup>

A statue which has been famous ever since its discovery in 1506 is the Laokoön. Recognized immediately as the statue described by Pliny, it was hailed as a very great work and admired by Michelangelo. It made a deep impression on all who saw it, and engravers started immediately to reproduce it. Best known are early engravings by Marcantonio Raimondi and his pupil, Marco da Ravenna. Most of the engravings are published in Miss Bieber's monograph on the group and its influence since its discovery.<sup>21</sup> One which may be the earliest is by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, done very shortly after its discovery (Pl. 59, e).<sup>22</sup> It is not a great work and appears a bit disconcerting because of the reversed composition. It was done before Montorsoli's restoration of the arm of the younger son. The power and horror of Laokoön, not surprisingly, fascinated the British genius William Blake (1757-1827), who copied it at the time he had joined a group of students at the Royal Academy in London about 1818; later he made an extraordinary engraving in which Laokoön becomes Jehovah, and his sons, Adam and Satan, in the coils of the Serpents, Good

<sup>19</sup> Hind, *op. cit.*, p. 285, No. 16, pl. 869. Impression from the Rosenwald Collection published in E. Mongan, *Selections from the Rosenwald Collection*, with foreword by Lessing J. Rosenwald, Washington, 1943, pp. 44, 45.

<sup>20</sup> Rhys Carpenter, *Greek Sculpture, A Critical Review*, Chicago, 1960, p. 44, pl. XLVII, B.

<sup>21</sup> *Laocoön, The Influence of the Group Since Its Rediscovery*, New York, 1942.

<sup>22</sup> Hind, *op. cit.*, p. 43, No. 20, pl. 540.

and Evil; and the plate is filled with texts.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, this print is very rare, with only two known impressions, one of which is in very poor condition.

The freshness and youthful quality of these early Renaissance prints give them a special charm. The very freedom they often used in adapting their subjects makes them more appealing, even though they may lack greatness as works of art. Marcantonio, after all, in spite of his great skill and talent, was mostly a reproductive artist, and something of a copyist. Later prints with sculpture do not have the same quality. How different they can be is seen in a book of 100 etchings of Italian sculptures (*Segmenta Nobilium Signorum et Statuarum*, Rome, 1638) by François Perrier, a French artist, who settled in Rome in the seventeenth century. These prints, not without a certain interest, show the old favorites—the Apollo Belvedere, the Laokoön with restoration, the Belvedere Torso, the Antinous of the Vatican (Pl. 60, d), Marcus Aurelius on his horse, the Horse Tamers, and many others, like the Farnese Herakles, the dying Gaul, the Knife Grinder, and various types of Venus (Pl. 60, e). The approach is very different. It is really the equivalent of a modern book of photographic studies for students and tourists to take home for their libraries. Many of the statues are shown in more than one view. Many must have decorated the gardens and villas of wealthy Romans. To make them more attractive, the artist has etched in backgrounds with landscapes. There are a few large compositions, like the slaying of the Niobids, in which the artist has exercised some imagination. It is an important record, tastefully done in the form of a seventeenth century period piece.

As is well known, William Hogarth, the British artist, published in 1753 by subscription “a short Tract in Quarto, called *The Analysis of Beauty*. Wherein Objects are considered in a new Light, both as to color and form (Written with a View to fix the fluctuating Ideas of Taste) To which will be added, Two Explanatory Prints, serious and comical engraved on large Copper-Plates, fit to frame for Furniture.” These plates were *The Statuary’s Yard* (Pl. I) and *The Country Dance* (Pl. II). *The Statuary’s Yard* has justly become famous (Pl. 58, d). The main panel of the print depicts a statuary’s yard, doubtless a copy of John Cheere’s yard adjoining Hyde Park and Piccadilly. On page 34 of the *Analysis* Hogarth refers to it as the source of inferior leaden imitations of ancient statues. Cheere was evidently a prosperous business man, dealing in the most fashionable and popular sculptures of the day. We recognize our old friends again—the Apollo Belvedere, the Torso, the Laokoön, the Farnese Herakles, the Medici Venus and others, all reversed compositions. The panel is surrounded with diagrams all having some significance. In the center above the picture is the serpentine line coiled about a cone, echoes of which we see in the snakes of the Laokoön group and the snake wound around the stump behind

<sup>23</sup> G. Keynes, *Engravings by William Blake, The Separate Plates, A Catalogue Raisonné*, Dublin, 1956, p. 56, pl. 37 (in Sir Geoffrey Keynes’ own collection).

Venus. Everything in the print has some meaning and nearly all are explained in the text.<sup>24</sup> No. 1 is a satire on connoisseurship—a copy of a print by Pier Leone Ghezzi showing a bear or a dog being led by a tutor. Hogarth is proposing a more empirical approach to art than seeing only through the eyes of fashion or of the old masters. The stance of the Antinous is more beautiful than the stiff attitude of the French dancing master who is correcting him. The book (No. 55) represents works on proportions by Dürer and Giampolo Lomazzo. Dürer, “who drew mathematically, never so much as deviated into grace” (p. 9).

The theme was apparently suggested to Hogarth by some passages in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, translated for him by his friend, Dr. Thomas Morell, a classical scholar.<sup>25</sup> The three sheets of translation are bound in with some miscellaneous papers in the Hogarth material at the British Museum. One passage in the *Memorabilia* describes a visit by Socrates to the yard of his friend Kleiton, a statuary.<sup>26</sup> The idea so appealed to Hogarth that he proceeded to make his own yard filled with material of his own choice. He found Socrates' unconventional ideas of beauty very congenial. Socrates' follower Aristippos in one passage asks: “Is a dung basket beautiful?” Socrates replies: “Of course and a golden shield is ugly if the one is well made for its special work, and the other badly.”<sup>27</sup> Hogarth was delighted at this conversation and his first chapter in the book was called “Of Fitness.” In this chapter Hogarth develops the relation of the parts to the whole and its great importance. He was particularly interested in the human form and took his cue from Xenophon.

Here we must leave our statues still in their glory, apparently secure in their supremacy, praised not only by the fashionable clientele of the statuary's yard, but highly esteemed by the great intellectuals of the century—Winckelmann, Lessing, Goethe and others. In a few years, however, this group will have to give way to the Parthenon sculptures, and presently, the Kouroi and Korai will take over. But time never stands still. Hellenistic baroque seems to be coming into its own again.

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<sup>24</sup> The diagrams are briefly explained in R. Paulson's catalogue raisonné, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, 2 vols., New Haven, 1965, pp. 219 ff.; see also pls. 253, 210-212.

<sup>25</sup> J. T. A. Burke, “A Classical Aspect of Hogarth's Theory of Art,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1943, pp. 151-153.

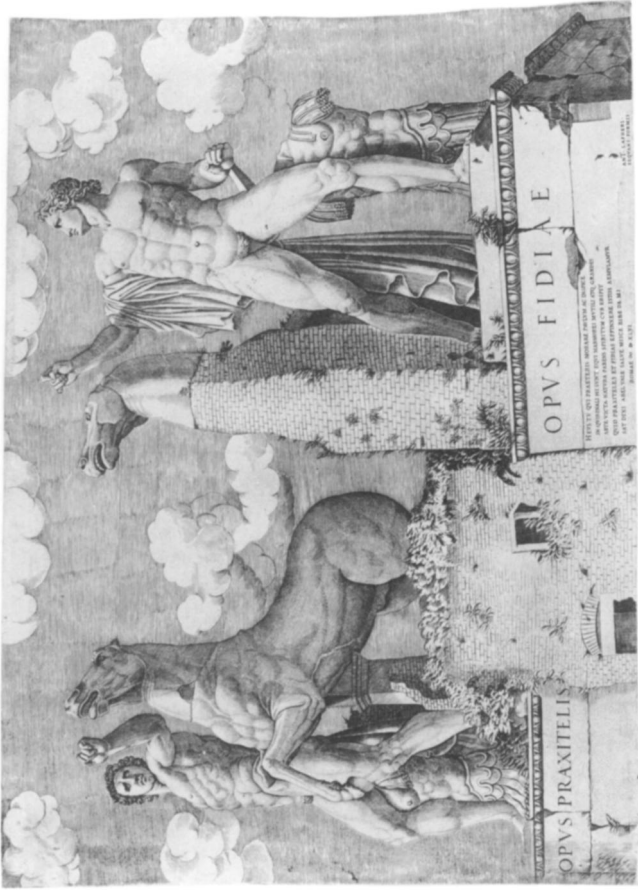
<sup>26</sup> III, x.

<sup>27</sup> III, viii (in part), Loeb translation.

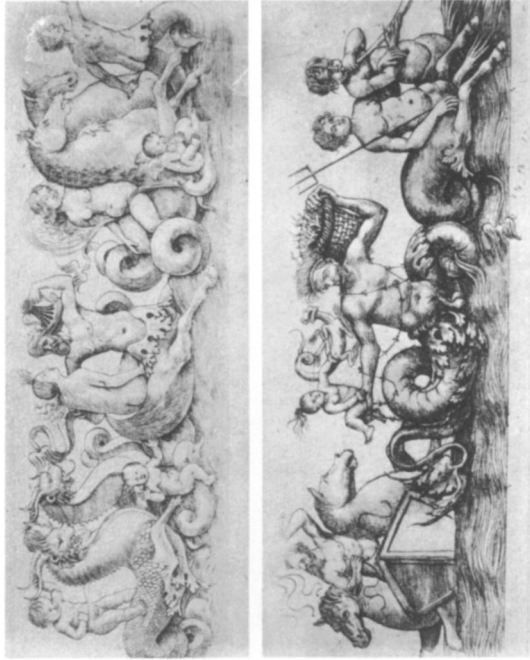




a. Andrea Mantegna, Battle of Sea Gods (left half) . National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Rosenwald Collection



c. Lafreri, *Speculum Magnificentiae Romanae*, The Horse Tamers. Metropolitan Museum of Art



b. Girolamo Mocetto. The Triumph of Neptune (Hind, Pl. 733, Nos. 17 and 18)



d. William Hogarth, The Statuary's Yard (Analysis of Beauty, Plate 1). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Rosenwald Collection



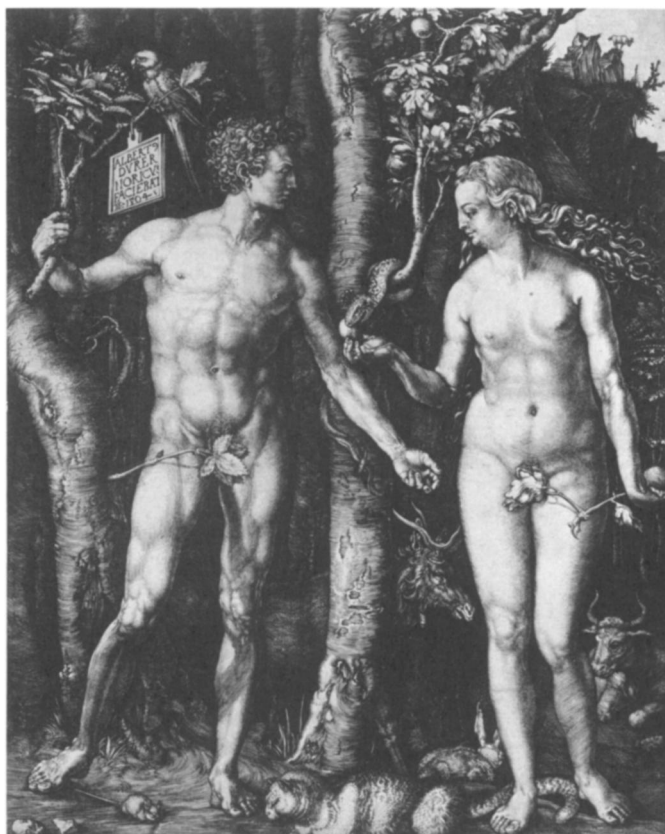
a. Nicoletto Rosex da Modena, Apollo: after the Antique. (Hind, Pl. 659, No. 34)



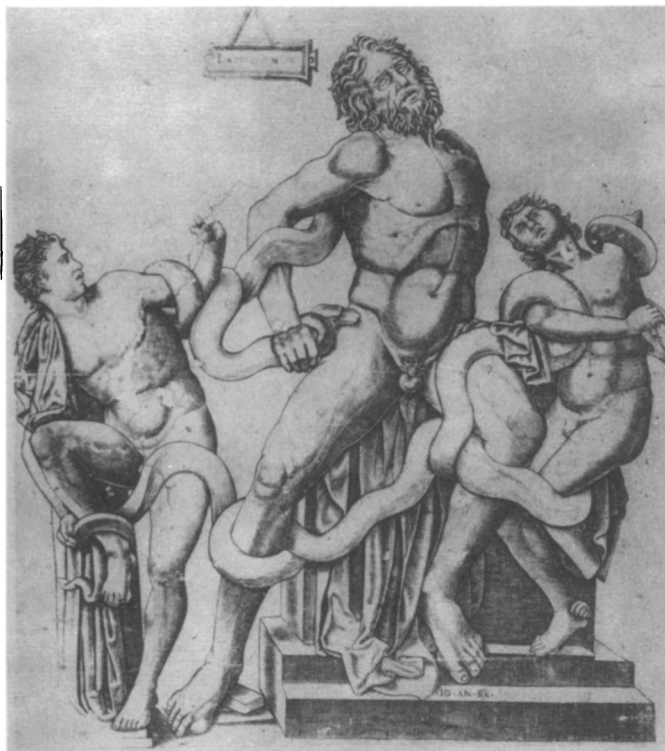
b. Benjamin West, St. John the Baptist. New York Public Library, Pennell Collection



c. Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, Torso: after the Antique. (Hind, Pl. 539, No. 19)



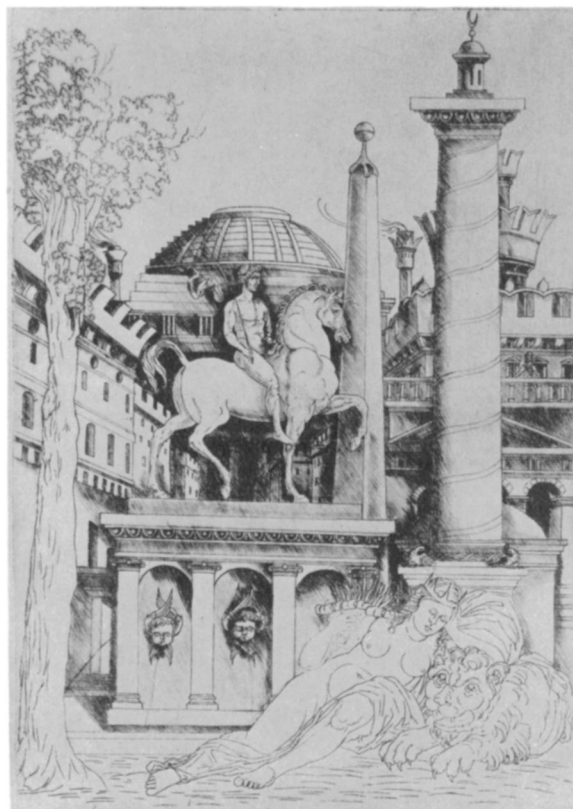
d. Albrecht Dürer, The Fall of Man. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Rosenwald Collection



e. Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, Laocoön. (Hind. Pl. 540, No. 20)



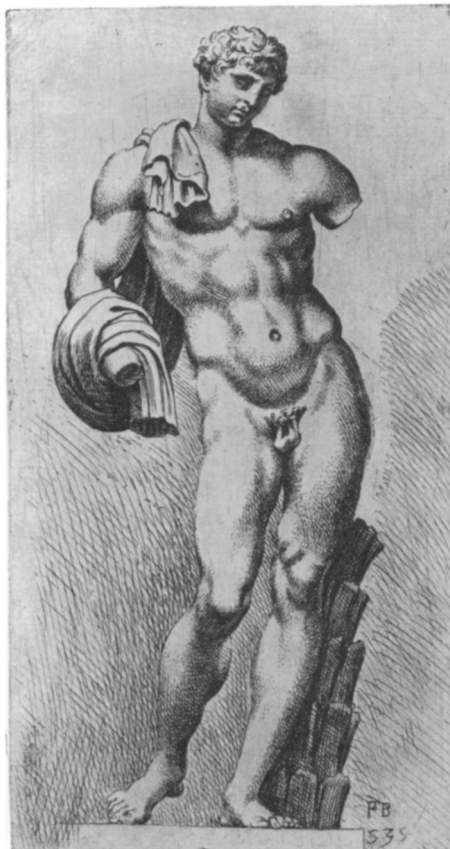
a. Nicoletto Roselli da Modena, Marcus Aurelius.  
(Hind, Pl. 656, No. 31)



b. Master of 1515, Equestrian Statue. National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C., Rosenwald Collection



c. Marcello Fogolino, Marcus Aurelius.  
(Hind, Pl. 802, No. 3)



d. François Perrier, Antinous (in reverse).  
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



e. François Perrier, Venus de Medici (in  
reverse). Library of Congress,  
Washington, D.C.