

Buntmarmor und ethnische Repräsentation in der römischen Skulptur um 1600

Abstract

In the wake of the *material turn* in art history, marble is currently receiving increased attention from researchers. While previous research has shed more light on the use of polychrome marble in relation to architecture and individual sculptural commissions in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Rome, the relationship between the polychrome material and body images has not yet been systematically examined.

The article takes this relationship as its starting point and, based especially on two sculptures made of polychrome marble – Nicolas Cordier’s so-called *Moro* (1607–1612) and Francesco Caporale’s funerary bust of the Congolese envoy Antonio Emanuele Ne Vunda in the papal basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (1608 and 1629) – investigates the visual representation and staging of non-European people, particularly Africans, in sculpture in Rome around 1600.

The focus of the article is two-fold. First, material-specific questions are addressed: What sculptural materials were used and what meaning was attributed to them by contemporaries? To what extent can a connection to ancient material practices be identified in this regard? What attitudes towards the “foreign other” are expressed in the appropriation, handling, and staging of the material and in the contemporary perception of the statues?

Secondly, attention is given to the historical contextualization of both works. What were the possible motives that led to the representation of two Africans in early Seicento Rome? And what kinds of associations were generated by both sculptures? While Nicolas Cordier’s so-called *Moro* will be analyzed in the context of other works made of polychrome marble in the Borghese art collection and reflections will be offered on a possible interpretation of the figure as a servant or slave, the bust of Antonio Emanuele Ne Vunda will be discussed against the backdrop of global missionary efforts in post-Tridentine Rome, which form an important horizon of understanding for the genesis of the work. In line with more recent perspectives in art history, the article thus also contributes to our understanding of how Italian art of the early modern period was situated in its diverse global contexts.