

'Unframing' Byzantine ivories: painterliness, reliefs, and the place of Byzantine art in early twentieth-century German scholarship

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Introduction¹

'On the third floor there was a grand salon, from where one could have a superb view of Rome [...]; there were preserved objects in gold and silver, the medals, the bronzes, the Greek vases and the Renaissance maiolicas, the Byzantine ivories and the Rhine enamels, and the most precious paintings, a Beato Angelico, a Pinturicchio, a van der Weyden, a Quentin Metsys, and on a wall a large sixteenth-century Flemish tapestry depicting an allegory of the Vices and Virtues'.²

The grand salon of Grigorij Sergeevich Stroganoff's residence in Rome, where the Russian count lived between 1888 and 1910, was a display room for the owner's most treasured possessions. Among the antique, medieval, and Renaissance works, a selection of late Roman and Byzantine ivories was prominently shown with the collector's pride. The assortment included ivory reliefs of secular and sacred subjects, dated from the sixth to the fifteenth century. Although Stroganoff's Russian background was perhaps, in part, a reason for his interest in Byzantine art, the count's appreciation for Eastern medieval ivories was unexceptional at his time. A nineteenth-century fascination with Byzantine cream-white reliefs can be traced through European collection patterns.³ Exemplary is the itinerary of the plaquette

¹ I am grateful to the reader of this paper, Margaret Olin, for the constructive criticisms, and to David Y. Kim and Ivan Drpić for commenting on earlier versions of this essay. I thank, moreover, ANAMED Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations for the hospitality during the writing of this article. Unless otherwise stated, all English translations are my own.

² Antonio Muñoz, *Figure romane*, Rome: Staderini, 1944, 148: 'Al terzo piano c'era un grande salone da cui si godeva di una vista superba di Roma, [...]; lì erano conservati gli oggetti d'oro e d'argento, le medaglie, i bronzi, i vasi greci e le maioliche del Rinascimento, gli avorii bizantini e gli smalti renani, e i dipinti più preziosi, un Beato Angelico, un Pinturicchio, un van der Weiden, un Quentin Metsys, e su una parete un grande arazzo fiammingo del Cinquecento con una scena allegorica di Vizii e Virtù'.

³ Studies on ivory collections in modern Europe are still nascent, on the topic of which see Giovanni Gasbarri, 'Lo studio degli avori bizantini in Italia tra '800 e '900 attraverso l' "Arte" di Adolfo Venturi', *TeCLA - Rivista di temi di critica e letteratura artistica*, 1, 2010, 30–57. Giovanni Gasbarri, 'Gli avori bizantini del Museo Civico Medievale di Bologna. Arte, collezionismo e

with the enthroned Virgin and Christ Child, now at the Cleveland Museum of Art.⁴ The ivory belonged to the Parisian count August de Bastard d'Estang and was acquired by Stroganoff in the late nineteenth century. At the Russian collector's death (1910), by mediation of antiquarian Giorgio Sangiorgi, the small icon was sold to another private collector, Jephtha H. Wade II, who in 1925, donated it to the Cleveland Museum for public enjoyment.⁵

The Western admiration for Byzantine ivories, however, has a longer history. Material evidence suggests that since the beginning of the ivory carving tradition in Byzantium, the dentine carved in the medieval Eastern Roman Empire was coveted by its Western neighbours. Ottonian bookcases and medieval church treasures were enhanced with Byzantine ivories gifted, traded, or looted from the East.⁶ Their charm continued to seduce throughout the Early Modern period, when 'Greek' ivories were privately owned and displayed in *Kunstkammern*.⁷ Modern collection practices by art patrons, art lovers, and scholars further contributed to the exposure of the Byzantine material, which gradually reached the cases and storage rooms of museums across Western Europe and North America.⁸ Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art-historical studies on Byzantine ivories were essentially born out of the visibility that the material gained in the private and in public sphere. Whether exhibited in Stroganoff's or other collectors' houses, or in museums, Byzantine dentine reliefs were increasingly available to the eyes and minds of scholars and intellectuals.⁹

While recent years have witnessed a rising interest in the history and significance of collecting and art market trends for the advancement of Byzantine

imitazioni in stile', in *Vie per Bisanzio, Atti del VII Congresso Nazionale dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini, Venezia (25-28 novembre 2009)*, ed. Antonio Rigo, Andrea Babuin, and Michele Trizio, Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2013, 905-14.

⁴ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 49, cat.n.79.

⁵ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 49, cat.n.79 and Simona Moretti, *Roma bizantina. Opere d'arte dall'impero di Costantinopoli nelle collezioni romane*, Rome: Campisano Editore, 2014, 140.

⁶ Anthony Cutler, 'From Loot to Scholarship: Changing Modes in the Italian Response to Byzantine Artifacts, ca. 1200-1750', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49, 1995, 237-67. Barbara Zeitler, 'The Migrating Image: Uses and abuses of Byzantine icons in Western Europe', in *Icon and Word. The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James, Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2003, 185-204.

⁷ Cutler, 'From Loot to Scholarship', esp. 254-57. Cfr. also Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts: Reliefs*, Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934, 28 and 68, cat.n.s. 14 and 163. Hereafter: *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*.

⁸ Olga Etinhof, 'Pyotr Ivanovich Sevastianov and His Activity in Collecting Byzantine Objects in Russia', in *Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium through Byzantine Eyes. Papers from the Twenty-Ninth Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Robin Cormack and Elizabeth Jeffreys, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2000, 211-20. Moretti, *Roma bizantina*. Giovanni Gasbarri, *Riscoprire Bisanzio. Lo studio dell'arte bizantina a Roma e in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento*, Rome: Viella, 2015.

⁹ Moretti, *Roma bizantina*, 149.

studies, only a few discussions have been concerned with the intellectual frameworks that structured early approaches to the material.¹⁰ The assumptions and paradigms that shaped the research at the foundation of the discipline remain largely unexplored, but they tacitly continue to inform scholars' thinking in the present.¹¹ Building upon historiographic approaches to late nineteenth to early twentieth century German studies on Renaissance, Baroque, and Greco-Roman art, in this article I look at the 1934 study of Byzantine ivories by Adolf Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann to reveal its entanglement with contemporaneous art historical and art theoretical discourses.¹² I will first introduce the publication and a critical passage that will be examined through its language and concepts in three subsequent sections. These will touch on the how, what, and why of the ivory study. The tripartite analysis will bring to the foreground the authors' commitment to Heinrich Wölfflin's dialectical methodology and their engagement with the concept of relief as defined by Adolf von Hildebrand and Aloïs Riegl. Such contextual and critical approaches to the publication allow for a reconsideration of some of the criticisms directed towards it while further questioning the reliability of its analysis. Furthermore, the article demonstrates that the thinking of figures such as Wölfflin and Riegl, whose works profoundly influenced their respective fields, had wider implications than has been acknowledged to date. This study on Byzantine ivories contributes to the uncovering of the intellectual frameworks that shaped the

¹⁰ Jean-Michel Spieser, ed., *Présence de Byzance. Textes réunis par Jean Michel Spieser*, Paris: Infolio, 2007. Moretti, *Roma bizantina*. Gasbarri, *Riscoprire Bisanzio*. Ivan Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia. Nikodim Kondakov (1844-1925) and the Invention of the Icon*, Rome: Viella, 2017. See as well the exhibition held at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library in 2011: *Before the Blisses: Nineteenth Century Connoisseurship of the Byzantine Minor Arts*: <https://www.doaks.org/resources/online-exhibits/before-the-blisses> .

¹¹ This issue in Byzantine studies has been recently addressed in Benjamin Anderson and Ivanova, M., eds., *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline? Towards a Critical Historiography*, University Park: Penn State University Press, 2023.

¹² I am referring in particular to Alina Payne's and Geraldine Johnson's works: Alina Payne, 'Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53: 3, 1994, 322–42. Alina Payne, 'Architecture, Ornament and Pictorialism: Notes on the History of an Idea from Wölfflin to Le Corbusier', in *Architecture and Painting*, ed. Karen Koehler, London: Ashgate Press, 2001, 54–72. Alina Payne, 'Portable Ruins. The Pergamon Altar, Heinrich Wölfflin, and German Art History at the Fin de Siècle', *RES* 53/54, 2008, 169–89. Alina Payne, 'On Sculptural Relief: Malerisch, the Autonomy of Artistic Media and the Beginnings of Baroque Studies', in *Rethinking the Baroque*, London: Ashgate Press, 2011, 39–64. Geraldine Johnson, "'(Un)Richtige Aufnahme": Renaissance Sculpture and the Visual Historiography of Art History', *Art History*, 23: 1, 2012, 12–51. Geraldine Johnson, 'Photographing Sculpture, Sculpting Photography', in *Photography and Sculpture: The Art Object in Reproduction*, ed. Sarah Hamill and Megan R. Luke, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2017, 227–91.

discipline of art history at large.

Die malerische Gruppe

The first, and to date the only, comprehensive study of Byzantine icons in ivory is Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann's publication from 1934, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts: Reliefs*.¹³ The work is monumental not only in size (43x31 cm) but also in its endeavour. The oeuvre was the sequel of Weitzmann's doctoral work and the first publication on Byzantine ivory caskets; it gathered in less than a hundred pages and eighty plates all Byzantine ivory 'reliefs', or icons, known at the time.¹⁴ The volumes on the ivory chests and the icons complemented Goldschmidt's series on Carolingian, Ottonian, and Romanesque ivories that appeared between 1914 and 1926.¹⁵ Kurt Weitzmann, a native of Witzenhausen, had earned his education in art history and archaeology from institutions across Germany and Austria, before arriving in Berlin in 1926 to work on his doctoral thesis under Goldschmidt.¹⁶ At that time, Goldschmidt, Professor Ordinarius at the University of Berlin between 1912 and 1932, was a scholar of international reputation and among the very first professors to teach medieval art at the university level.¹⁷ His studies on ivory sculpture soon become a model for art historical corpora and were praised for their punctilious stylistic and iconographic

¹³ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*. In the following, I will refer to Weitzmann as the main author of the volume to avoid redundancy and confusion with Goldschmidt's other publications and to point to those concepts and intellectual frameworks that are absent from Goldschmidt's earlier studies on Western ivories.

¹⁴ Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts: Kästen*, Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1930.

¹⁵ Adolph Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser, VIII.-XI. Jahrhundert*, vols. 1-2, Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1914 and 1918. Adolph Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der romanischen Zeit, XI.-XIII. Jahrhundert*, vols. 3-4, Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1923 and 1926. The complementary nature of the Byzantine volumes is clearly stated by Weitzmann in his memoirs, see: Kurt Weitzmann, *Sailing with Byzantium from Europe to America. The Memoirs of an Art Historian*, Munich: Editio Maris, 1994, 59.

¹⁶ On Weitzmann and his education, informative is Weitzmann, *Sailing with Byzantium*, esp. 35-57. On his scholarship, Herbert L. Kessler, 'Kurt Weitzmann, 1904-1993 (Obituary)', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47, 1993, xix-xxiii. Ulrike Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil: Leben und Werk der unter dem Nationalsozialismus verfolgten und vertriebenen Wissenschaftler*, vol. 2, Munich: Saur, 1999, 733-42.

¹⁷ On Goldschmidt's scholarly work, Kurt Weitzmann, 'Adolph Goldschmidt (Obituary)', *College Art Journal*, 4, 1944, 47-50. Kathryn Brush, *The Shaping of Art History. Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt, and the Study of Medieval Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 88-99. Kathryn Brush, 'Adolph Goldschmidt (1863-1944)', in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, vol. 3, New York: Garland, 2000, 345-58. Gunnar Brands and Heinrich Dilly, eds., *Adolph Goldschmidt (1863-1944): Normal Art History im 20 Jahrhundert*, Weimar: VDG, 2007.

analysis, and their impressive photographic documentation.¹⁸ While the volume on Byzantine ivory icons was a collaboration between the professor and his former student, Weitzmann was responsible for most of its preparation. Expanding Goldschmidt's personal archive of photographs and notes, he travelled across Europe to study and document Eastern medieval ivories in museums and private collections.¹⁹ He discerned originals from counterfeits and Byzantine from non-Byzantine works. The two hundred and thirty-five identified pieces were then divided into five stylistic groups and dated between the tenth and the thirteenth century to provide a history of the evolution of the art of ivory carving in the Byzantine Empire.²⁰

Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen's immediate positive reception in the field is evident in the lauding words of the 1935 reviewers for *The Art Bulletin*: '(...) the authors must be heartily thanked for the clearly marked division of the material. Their groups will undoubtedly become the permanent classification of Byzantine ivories'.²¹ The publication's relevance for later studies on Byzantine art is difficult to overstate. The asserted provenance and tentative chronology for the dentine images offered iconographic and stylistic bases for dating or furthering the analysis of Byzantine works in a variety of media. Ioli Kalavrezou, for instance, conceived her unsurpassed classification of Byzantine icons in steatite, published in 1985, in close conversation with Weitzmann's ivory analysis.²² A few decades earlier, studies on Byzantine marble figurative carving engaged with the dentine works' stylistic assessment to characterise the monumental reliefs. Significantly, the conclusions presented in these monographs are still considered valid by recent scholarship.²³

¹⁸ Ivory studies seem to have bloomed in Europe at that time. See Giovanni Gasbarri, 'Lo studio degli avori bizantini in Italia tra '800 e '900', 30–57. The studies were mostly collection based, while Goldschmidt's project adopted a historical approach that gathered artifacts from across collections. On the topic, see Brush, *The Shaping of Art History*, 132–54, esp. 132–134.

¹⁹ Weitzmann, *Sailing with Byzantium*, 60.

²⁰ The Byzantine empire has a longer history, for it continued to exist until 1453. However, as far as I could observe, in nineteenth- and twentieth-century German literature its end is identified with the sack of Constantinople by the West on occasion of the Fourth Crusade (1204). In current narratives of the Byzantine empire, the tenth to thirteenth centuries represent the middle period.

²¹ Andrew S. Keck and Charles R. Morey, 'Review of *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts: Reliefs* by Adolf Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann', *The Art Bulletin*, 17: 3, 1935, (397–406) 398.

²² Ioli Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, *Byzantine Icons in Steatite*, 2 vols., Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985.

²³ Reinhold Lange, *Die byzantinische Reliefikone*, Recklinghausen: A. Bongers, 1964. André Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du Moyen Âge (XIe – XIVe siècle)*, Paris: Picard, 1976. Grabar's conclusions are reiterated in Catherine Vanderheyde, *La sculpture byzantine du IXe au XVe siècle. Contexte - Mise en œuvre - Décor*, Paris: Picard, 2020. On the entanglement of ivories and marble carving, see also Kurt Weitzmann, 'Ivory Sculpture of the Macedonian Renaissance',

However, over the years, Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's publication has met with criticism for the inconsistent and arbitrary partition of the ivories among the five stylistic groups.²⁴ One group that has been particularly troublesome and that, for this reason, will be at the centre of the discussion to follow, is the first group presented in the volume, namely, *die malerische Gruppe*, or 'the painterly group'. This group stands out in the corpus for its denomination and the rationale behind its appellation. Two of the other clusters are titled after emperors whose names are inscribed in one of the group members. The second group was designated 'die Romanos Gruppe' from an ivory plaque with the portrait of emperor Romanos and empress Eudokia, who have been plausibly identified with Romanos II (959-63) and his consort.²⁵ Similarly, the fourth ivory group was named 'die Nikephoros Gruppe' after the inscription from the Cortona ivory reliquary, which mentions emperor Nikephoros, unanimously believed to be Nikephoros Phokas (r. 963-69).²⁶ The title for the two other clusters was chosen according to structural properties common to all members of the defined group. The Triptych Group owes its name to the tripartite format of its pieces and the Frame Group to the carved ornamental band gracing the upper and lower border of the ivory plaques.²⁷ The justification for the naming of the *Malerisch Gruppe* lies in altogether

in *Kolloquium über spätantike und frühmittelalterliche Skulptur, Heidelberg, II. 1970*, ed. V. Milošević, Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1971.

²⁴ I refer in particular to the criticisms by Anthony Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium (9th–11th Centuries)*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

²⁵ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 15 and 18, cat.n.34 and 77. The identity of emperor Romanos and Eudokia has been subject of debate in the literature, on which see Maria Parani, 'The Romanos Ivory and the New Tokalı Kilise: Imperial Costume as a Tool for Dating Byzantine Art', *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 49, 2001, (15–28) 17-20 for a summary of the contention. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann were the first to argue for an identification of Romanos II and his wife Eudokia, while previous scholars identified the imperial couple with Romanos IV and his consort Eudokia, see *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 15 for the points in favour of either identifications and an argument for Romanos II. Weitzmann's position was endorsed, among others, by Anthony Cutler, 'The Date and Significance of the Romanos Ivory', in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. Christopher Moss and Katherine Kiefer, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995, 605–14 and by Maria Parani, 'The Romanos Ivory and the New Tokalı Kilise', 17-25. Of a diverging opinion is Ioli Kalavrezou, 'Eudokia Makrembolitissa and the Romanos Ivory', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 31, 1977, 305–28.

²⁶ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 48-49, cat.n.77. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 213. Nicolas Oikonomides, 'The Concept of Holy War and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories', in *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis*, ed. Timothy Miller and John Nesbitt, Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995, 62–86.

²⁷ Particularly perplexing is Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's name choice for the *Triptychon Gruppe*, because the format is not unique to the group but appears also in other ivory clusters.

different principles honouring the stylistic and iconographic qualities of its ivories. The explanation is provided as follows:

The Painterly Group:

The denomination 'painterly' is attributed to this group because they depend on painted models in the choice and composition of their representations and the type of relief style. The frontal border (*Vordergrenze*) of the figures is a completely uniform, flat plane with the slight recession of each single figure. An impression of roundness is obtained through a deep undercutting, which often releases the figures from the background up to a minimal connection. An unmodelled sloping connects figures and ground, so that, with the exception of some heads, the actual modelling rarely exceeds the front face (*Vorderfläche*). At the same time, there are many overlaps of figures and objects, and through these, as well as through landscape and architectural background, and not least through the shadows cast by the undercut details and the free-worked domes and columns, the reliefs gain a strong spatial character. The figures have their feet in the air (cfr. nr.13) because in the paintings they take as example there is a continuous ground, which is omitted in the sculpture. The crossed nimbus of Christ is plain as in the paintings, while it is decorated with pearls in the sculptural groups. The lack of plastic modelling is compensated by a dense covering of the surface with incised wrinkles and strongly marked facial features, which gives the carving a more graphic than plastic character. Moreover, the practice to overrun the frame with parts of the composition (nr.4, 9, 10, 20) or let the wings of the angels overlap with the dome (nr.6, 26, 28) is derived from drawing practices. The technical peculiarity of the treatment of the garments (...) is also derived from painting (...). This technique is not used in all pieces, but those groups that have them exhibit an influence from the Painterly Group.

The relation with the painted prototype brings along a strong archaising element, which the models in their Renaissance movement adopted from classical antiquity. The architectural background as in nr.13 and 15 matches, for instance, the *Menologion* of Basil II from 1000, and is similar to images of the evangelists from the tenth century. In turn, they took these features from older paintings. The influence of antiquity is also present in the abundance and detailing of the garment motif, the wide variation of movements and gestures, the turning of the heads and the *contrapposto*, the execution of the anatomy, and the full faces.²⁸

²⁸ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 13: 'Die Malerische Gruppe: Die Bezeichnung "malerisch" kommt dieser Gruppe zu, weil sie durchaus von gemalten Vorbildern abhängig ist. Nicht nur in der Wahl und der Komposition ihrer Darstellungen, sondern auch in der Art ihres

Late twentieth-century criticisms of Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's rationale for assembling the cluster have relied chiefly on the first line of his definition. The group was named as such because its members depended on painted models, although the authors hesitated to provide specific examples for the *gemalte Vorbilder*. Almost fifty years after Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's publication, Ioli Kalavrezou attempted to qualify the German scholars' definition of the painterly cluster by providing further factual *comparanda* drawn from book illuminations.²⁹ Despite this attempt, contemporary Byzantine ivory specialists are still critical of the criteria for definition, because affinities between the ivory plaques and Byzantine paintings can be found across the corpus.³⁰ According to Anthony Cutler, it was a common artisanal practice to begin by sketching the figure or scene on the dentine tablet.³¹

Reliefstiles. Die Vordergrenze der Figuren ist eine völlig gleichmäßige flache Eben mit sehr geringer Vertiefung der Einzelformen. Eine scheinbare Rundplastik wird durch eine tiefe Unterschneidung bewirkt, welche die Figuren oft bis auf ganz geringe Verbindungen vom Hintergrund löst, zu dem sie durch eine unmodellierete Schräge hingeführt werden, so daß die eigentliche Modellierung selten, am ersten noch etwas an den Köpfen, über die Vorderfläche hinausgeht. Dabei finden viele Überschneidungen von Figuren und Gegenständen statt, und durch diese wie durch landschaftliche und architektonische Hintergründe und nicht zum mindesten durch die Schlagschatten der Unterschneidungen und freigearbeiteten Kuppeln und Säulen erhalten die Reliefs doch ein stark räumliches Gepräge. Die Figuren stehen zuweilen mit ihren Füßen in der Luft (vgl. Nr. 13), da die Vorbildliche Malerei eine kontinuierliche Bodenfläche zeigte, die in der Plastik fortfiel. Der Kreuznimbus Christi ist wie in der Malerei glatt, während die plastischen Gruppen ihn stets mit Perlenreihen schmücken. Die fehlende plastische Durchmodellierung wird ersetzt durch eine dichte Belebung der Oberfläche mittels eingeschnittener Faltenlinien und stark markierter Gesichtszüge, so daß das zeichnerische das plastische Element überwiegt. Auch die Gewohnheit, mit Teilen der Darstellung in den Rahmen einzudringen (Nr. 4, 9, 10, 20) oder die Flügel der Engel die Kuppel überschneiden zu lassen (Nr. 6, 26, 28), ist ein durchaus zeichnerischer Zug. Die technische Eigenart der Gewandbehandlung besteht darin (...) auch der Malerei entnommen ist (...). Nicht bei allen Stücken ist diese Technik durchgeführt, doch, wo sie bei Reliefs anderer Gruppen auftritt, kann man immer irgendwie einen Einfluß der malerischen Gruppe voraussetzen. Der Zusammenhang mit den Vorbildern der Malerei bringt aber auch ein starkes antikisierendes Element mit sich, das die Vorbilder in ihrer Renaissancebewegung aus dem klassischen Altertum übernommen hatten. Architekturhintergründe wie auf Nr. 13 und 15 finden sich ganz übereinstimmend z.B. im Menologion Basilios II um 1000 und ähnlich auf den Evangelistenbildern des 10. Jahrhunderts, die sie ihrerseits aus der antiken Malerei übernommen haben. Der antikische Einschlag besteht ferner in der Reichhaltigkeit und Detaillierung der Gewandmotive, in der Fülle abwechselnder Bewegungen und Gesten, Kopfwendungen und Kontraposte, in der durchgeführten Anatomie und den vollwangigen Köpfen.'

²⁹ Ioli Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 'A New Type of Icon: Ivories and Steatites', in *Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and His Age*, ed. Athanasios Markopoulos, Athens: Centre culturel européen de Delphes, 1989, 377–96.

³⁰ Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, passim.

³¹ Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 188–89.

The drawing would thus minimise the difference between the painterly and non-painterly pieces, disregarding their supposed *Vorbilder*. The shared origin of the pieces and a few other criticisms, addressed later in the paper, have pointed to the weaknesses of Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's analysis. Nevertheless, a contextualisation of their monumental opus in contemporaneous art historical discourses and practices redresses some of their problematic assessments, re-evaluates their endeavour, and situates their work in broader art history narratives.

How: The *malerisch* and style

'Painterly' was a fashionable term when the volume on Byzantine ivories was published. The adjective had been used in German art literature since the art historian Jacob Burckhardt introduced it in his guide to the art of Italy, *Der Cicerone* (1855), to deprecatingly describe Baroque sculpture and architecture.³² For Burckhardt, the unpleasant feature of post-Renaissance works was the animation of the surface through the effects of light and shadow in a manner more appropriate to painting than sculpture or architecture. The indelicate play of illuminated and dark areas blurred the neatness of a form's lines causing an overall unclarity of its composition.³³

Burckhardt's influential negative assessment of Baroque art was predicated on two assumptions based on the foundation of art theoretical and art historical discourses of his time. The first assumption was that the (re)creation of vivid light and shadow effects belonged to the art of painting – a precept inherited from Renaissance art treatises. According to the writings of Cennino Cennini, Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci, and Giorgio Vasari, the quality of a painting was proportional to the illusion of depth and projection suggested by its figures.³⁴

³² Jacob Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone: Eine Anleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens*, Basel: Schweighauser, 1855, passim. On Burckhardt's prejudices against Baroque art, see in particular Alina Payne, 'On Sculptural Relief: *Malerisch*, the Autonomy of Artistic Media and the Beginnings of Baroque Studies', in *Rethinking the Baroque*, London: Ashgate Press, 2011, 39–64.

³³ Payne, 'On Sculptural Relief', 38.

³⁴ Cennino Cennini, *Il Libro dell'Arte*. In *Cennino Cennini's Il Libro dell'Arte. A New English Translation and Commentary with Italian Transcription*, trans. Lara Broecke, London: Archetype Publications, 2015, chs.8, 9, 31, 62, 67, 71–72, 85, 145. Leon Battista Alberti, *Della pittura*, ed. Luigi Mallè, Florence: Sansoni, 1950, chs.30–31. Leonardo Da Vinci, *Trattato della pittura di Leonardo da Vinci condotto sul Cod. Vaticano Urbinato 1270 con prefazione di Marco Tabarrini*, Rome: Unione Cooperativa Editrice, 1890, chs.33, 36, 39, 121, 380 and passim. Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri. Nell'edizione per tipi di Lorenzo Torrentino, Firenze 1550*, ed. Luciano Bellosi and Aldo Rossi, Torino: Einaudi, 1986, chs.15, 21. Literature on the Renaissance use and conceptualization of light and shadow in art is extensive; the following represents only a small selection: Moshe Barasch, *Light and Color in the Italian Renaissance Theory of Art*, New York: New York University Press, 1978. Luba Freedman, "'Rilievo" as an Artistic Term in Renaissance Art Theory', *Rinascimento*, 29, 1989, 217–74.

The deception of volume, or *rilievo* as it came to be known in the Renaissance, was achieved by rendering the incidence of light on a three-dimensional object.³⁵ The illusory roundness of form was attained by grading a colour area through application of black and white pigments. The logic behind the tripartite scheme is elucidated by Cennino Cennini in his instructions on how to paint mountains in the distance, in which 'the darker elements in a landscape appear further back, while the brighter appear closer to the eye'.³⁶ Therefore, for figures in the foreground, the body parts projecting more prominently towards the viewer should be highlighted in white, while those receding in space should fade towards blackness.³⁷ The pivotal role of light and shadow effects in a painted image is clearly stated by Leonardo da Vinci. In his notes, posthumously published as the *Trattato della pittura* and translated into modern Italian, French, English, and German during the eighteenth century, he writes that '*rilievo* is the soul of painting'.³⁸ Although the jargon for the light-shadow effects of the painted image varied over time, throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries the illusion of surface animation remained a defining feature of the art of the easel.³⁹

Thomas Puttfarcken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition Theories of Visual Order in Painting, 1400-1800*, Yale University Press, 2000. Claudia Lehman, ed., *Chiaroscuro als ästhetisches Prinzip. Kunst und Theorie des Helldunkels 1300-1500*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018.

³⁵ Ironically, this effect was named *rilievo* because it imitated the plastic projection in a body and in a statue. Over time, however, and in particular through the opinion of Leonardo and Vasari in the Paragone contest, the feature that naturally belonged to sculpture came to independently define the light-shadow effects in a painting. On the origin of the term *rilievo* and its significance for Renaissance artists, see in particular: Freedman, "'Rilievo' as an Artistic Term". François Quivinger, 'Relief in the Mind: Observations on Renaissance Low Relief Sculpture', in *Depth of Field. Relief Sculpture in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Donal Cooper and Marika Leino, Bern: Peter Lang, 2007, 169–89. Christopher R. Lakey, *Sculptural Seeing: Relief, Optics, and the Rise of Perspective in Medieval Italy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018, esp. ch.5. Lakey disagrees with Freedman on the origin of the term.

³⁶ Cennini ch.85 "e quando hai a fare le montagne, che paiano più a lungi, più fai scuri i tuo' colori; e quando le fai dimostrare più appresso, fa' i colori più chiari."

³⁷ Cennini ch.8, 9, 31, 62 face, 67 face, 71 clothes, 72 clothes, 85 mountains, 145 stemperare colori.

³⁸ Leonardo, *Trattato della Pittura*, n.121. Engl. trans.: Leonardo Da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting (Codex Urbinatus Latinus 1270)*, trans. McMahon A. Philipp, 2 vols., Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956, 63 n.107. On the editions of Leonardo's *Trattato*, see in particular *The Fabrication of Leonardo da Vinci's Trattato della Pittura. With a Scholarly Edition of the Italian Editio Princeps (1651) and an Annotated English Translation*, ed. Claire Farago, Janis Bell, and Vecce, vol. 2, Brill, 2018, XVI-XIX. For the Italian text on which Leonardo's quotes in this article are based, see *Fabrication of Leonardo da Vinci's Trattato della Pittura*, 403. Vasari further elaborates on the criticality of the *chiaroscuro*, an alternative word to *rilievo*, in his famous definition of the 'modern way' of painting in opposition to the stiff and rough *maniera greca vecchia*. Vasari, *Le vite*, 'Proemio delle Vite', 'Andrea Taffi', and 'Giotto'.

³⁹ See for instance the influential work by Roger De Piles, *Abrégé de la vie des peintres*, Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1715, in which light and shadows are constantly presented as the essence of a

Burckhardt's second assumption was based on the philhellenic tradition of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Germany that had deified ancient Greek statuary.⁴⁰ Although the superior qualities of sculpture vis-à-vis painting are sparingly articulated in the literature of the time, it is clear that the statue was considered the paradigmatic art form.⁴¹ To cite the most eloquent exception to the otherwise silent custom, philosopher Johan Gottfried Herder in his short essay *Plastik* from 1778 identifies in sculpture the artistic language of essential truth. Painting, in contrast, was the art of appearances and deception.⁴² Moreover, Winckelmann's adage on the 'noble simplicity and quiet grandeur' of ancient Greek art and the classical ideal of perfection in architecture were still the touchstones of Western judgments on works from any era.⁴³ The painterly Baroque sculpture and

good painting. For context on De Piles' work: Thomas Puttfarcken, *Roger de Piles' Theory of Art*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. René Verbraeken, 'Roger de Piles et le vocabulaire artistique', in *Termes de couleur et lexicographie artistique: recueil d'essais suivi de quelques articles sur la critique d'art*, ed. René Verbraeken, Paris: Édition du Panthéon, 1997, 95–106. On the German translation of De Piles' oeuvre, see Anaïs Carvalho, 'Roger De Piles et l'Allemagne: la diffusion par la traduction', in *Lexicographie artistique: formes, usages et enjeux dans l'Europe moderne*, ed. Michèle-Caroline Heck, Montpellier: Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2018, 113–38. For an all-German example of light and shadow as an essential of painting, see *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste. 1: von A bis J*, ed. Johann Georg Sulzer, Leipzig: Weidmann und Reich, 1771, s.v. 'Grund' and 'Harmonie'. On Sulzer's dictionary, see Hans Joachim Dethlefs, 'Art Lexicography as Art Theory: On Pictorial Grounds in J. G. Sulzer's Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste (1771–1774)', in *Termes de couleur et lexicographie artistique*, 265–90.

⁴⁰ The following is essentially based on Payne's articles on the topic of Baroque art: Alina Payne, 'Architecture, Ornament and Pictorialism: Notes on the History of an Idea from Wölfflin to Le Corbusier', in *Architecture and Painting*, ed. Karen Koehler, London: Ashgate Press, 2001, 54–72. Alina Payne, 'Portable Ruins. The Pergamon Altar, Heinrich Wölfflin, and German Art History at the Fin de Siècle', *RES*, 53/54, 2008, 169–89. Alina Payne, 'On Sculptural Relief: Malerisch, the Autonomy of Artistic Media and the Beginnings of Baroque Studies', in *Rethinking the Baroque*, London: Ashgate Press, 2011, 39–64.

⁴¹ Rachel Zuckert, 'Sculpture and Touch: Herder's Aesthetics of Sculpture', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67: 3, 2009, (285–99) 285. On the changing status of sculpture vis-à-vis painting in the late nineteenth century, see Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, esp. 24–37. James Hall, *The World as Sculpture. The Changing Status of Sculpture from the Renaissance to the Present Day*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1999.

⁴² Johann G. Herder, *Plastik: Einige Wahrnehmungen über Form und Gestalt aus Pygmalions bildendem Traume*, Riga: Hartknoch, 1778. English translation by Jason Gaiger, *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002. The text is mostly known to art historians for its discussions on touch and sculpture. On Herder's original – albeit unsuccessful – theory on sculpture and touch as forms of truth, see Zuckert, 'Sculpture and Touch: Herder's Aesthetics of Sculpture', 285–99.

⁴³ Payne, 'On Sculptural Relief', 40. On the significance of Winckelmann's scholarship, see Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1994, esp. 11–33.

architecture diverged from the essence of their art and were the negative of Burckhardt and his contemporaries' aesthetic paradigm.

The unfavourable assessment of post-Renaissance architecture and sculpture, however, was soon questioned by Burckhardt's student Heinrich Wölfflin, who advocated for a more positive evaluation of Baroque art's *malerisch* qualities.⁴⁴ As brilliantly retraced by Alina Payne, the intellectual discourse that allowed Wölfflin to argue against his teacher's position was caused by the arrival in Berlin of the *Gigantomachy* relief of the Pergamon altar.⁴⁵

Fragments of the massive reliefs embellishing the Hellenistic monument's socle were discovered in the village of Bergama, Türkiye, in 1865 by Carl Humann while serving as a road engineer for the expansion of the Turkish railway network.⁴⁶ Humann, aware of the archaeological relevance of his discovery, urged for immediate intervention to save the remains. After negotiations with the Ottoman Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861-76), German archaeologists were authorised to pursue excavations at the site and export the ruins.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ On Heinrich Wölfflin's work, see among others Fritz Strich, *Zu Heinrich Wölfflins Gedächtnis, Rede an der Basler Feier seines zehnten Todestages*, Berlin: Francke, 1956. Meinhold Lurz, *Heinrich Wölfflin. Biographie einer Kunsttheorie*, Worm: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1981. Michael Podro, *The Critical Historian of Art*, Yale University Press, 1982, 98-151. Michael Podro, 'Wölfflin, Heinrich', in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane S. Turner, vol. 33, 34 vols., New York: Grove Dictionaries, 1996, 297-98 with further bibliography. Evonne Levy, 'The Political Project of Wölfflin's Early Formalism', *October*, 139 Winter, 2012, 39-58. Evonne Levy, 'Wölfflin's Principles of Art History (1915-2015): A Prolegomenon for its Second Century', in Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of Development of Style in Early Modern Art*, trans. Jonathan Blower, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2015, 1-46.

⁴⁵ Payne, 'Portable Ruins', 169-89. Further intellectual, artistic, and scientific changes that may have contributed to the shift in opinion are explored by Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 61-102.

⁴⁶ Max Kunze and Volker Kästner, *Antikensammlung 2 Der Altar von Pergamon. Hellenistische und römische Architektur*, Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1985, 30.

⁴⁷ Kunze and Volker Kästner, *Antikensammlung 2 Der Altar von Pergamon*, 30. The moving of the Pergamon Altar to Berlin was not without nationalistic interests on the side of the Germans, who aimed at increasing the reputation of the newly formed nation through antiquities that could rival with the Elgin marbles. Payne, 'On Sculptural Relief', 48 and footnotes 29-30. See as well, Thomas Gaetgens, *Die Berliner Museuminsel im deutschen Kaiserreich*, Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1992, 80. Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archeology and Philhellenism in Germany 1750-1970*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996, 73. Anke Bohne and Manuel Baumbach, 'Rezeption des Pergamonaltars im deutschen Bürgertum', in *Tradita et Inventa: Beiträge zur Rezeption der Antike*, Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2000, 441-58. Lionel Gossman, 'Imperial Icon: The Pergamon Altar in Wilhelmine Germany', *The Journal of Modern History*, 78, 2006, 551-87.

The revealing of the altar's Gigantomachy frieze in Berlin to a small audience of scholars and artists in 1879 caused great commotion among the spectators.⁴⁸ At that time, *das Relief* was certainly considered a sculptural work.⁴⁹ However, the play of light and shadow created by the gestural emphasis and imbricated forms of the Pergamon reliefs quickly earned the frieze the adjective *malerisch*.⁵⁰ Yet, the depreciative connotations of 'painterliness' ill-suited the *Gigantomachy* reliefs. According to some scholars, the frieze surpassed the beauty of the acclaimed Parthenon marbles. They called into question the Winkelmannian claim of the superiority of classical sculpture's restrained and calm *ethos* over the *pathos* of Hellenistic art.⁵¹ Moreover, the Pergamon finds challenged the reputation of the Laocoön group as the pinnacle of Hellenistic sculpture and demanded a reconsideration of the 'evolution' of post-Classical art.⁵² Although the sensibility of the time dictated that the Pergamon frieze's painterly features undermined its sculptural purity, the relief could hardly be described as an artwork of lesser quality.

The initial enthusiasm for the Pergamon findings was followed by a heated debate on the ontological status of the reliefs. Emblematic of the diverging opinions on the question are the views of archaeologist Alexander Conze and Munich professor Heinrich von Brunn. Conze, director of the sculpture collection of the Berlin Antikensammlung, postulated that relief art was considered a branch of painting in ancient Greece and that the painterliness of the carved frieze should be evaluated accordingly.⁵³ Von Brunn, on the contrary, assigned the reliefs to the category of architecture, arguing that their elaborate composition was expression of the tectonic structure to which they belonged.⁵⁴ The impossibility to reach consensus on the status of the Pergamon relief among the three arts showed the pretentiousness of their ontological boundaries. On this ground, Wölfflin was in a favourable position to postulate that painterliness failed to define the essence of painting and Baroque art, as Burckhardt presupposed by following Renaissance precepts. He instead suggested that *malerisch* was a quality best expressed through

⁴⁸ Payne, 'Portable Ruins', 170 footnote 8 for details. For incredulous reactions to the Pergamon reliefs, see Payne, 'Portable Ruins', 171-72. Gossman, 'Imperial Icon', 551-552.

⁴⁹ Johann Hübner, ed., *Curieuses Natur-Kunst-Gewerck- und Handlungs-Lexicon*, Leipzig: Verlegts Johann Friedrich Gleditsch und Sohn, 1712, s.v. 'Relief': 'Relief wird die erhobene gieß. grav. und geschnitz. Arbeit genennet. *Demi ou bas-relief*, halb erhoben Arbeit'. Trans.: Relief is called a mould, graven, or carved work in relief. *Demi ou bas-relief*, half raised work.

⁵⁰ Payne, 'Portable Ruins', 174.

⁵¹ Payne, 'Portable Ruins', 178-79 on the debate about this aspect of the reliefs.

⁵² Payne, 'Portable Ruins', 174-76 with details on the discussion.

⁵³ Alexander Conze, 'Über das Relief der Griechen', *Sitzungsberichte der königlichen preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 26, 1882. Engl. Trans.: Karl Johns, trans., 'Alexander Conze, "Greek Relief Sculpture,"' *Journal of Art Historiography*, 7, 2012, 1-14.

⁵⁴ Heinrich von Brunn, 'Über die kunstgeschichtliche Stellung der pergamenischen Gigantomachie', *Jahrbuch der königlichen preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 5, 1884, 231-92.

the brush but also found in architecture and sculpture, a point he illustrated through the example of the Pergamon reliefs.⁵⁵

Wölfflin first formulated the idea in his publication *Renaissance und Barock* from 1888 and revised and expanded his theory in a later work, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1914).⁵⁶ A *malerisch* work was defined by the impression of movement. Lines overlap; contours are blurred; forms are continuous, spiralling, and foreshortened; and light-shadow effects create the illusion of projection and recession on the picture plane.⁵⁷ The painterly style emphasises a body's mass and the confusion of individual forms, whereas its antipodal style, which Wölfflin names *linear* or *zeichnerisch* or *plastisch*, and considers more germane to sculpture, accentuates contours and the figure's isolation.⁵⁸ Its closed, finite, and straight lines generate individually defined forms that neatly stand out against their background.⁵⁹

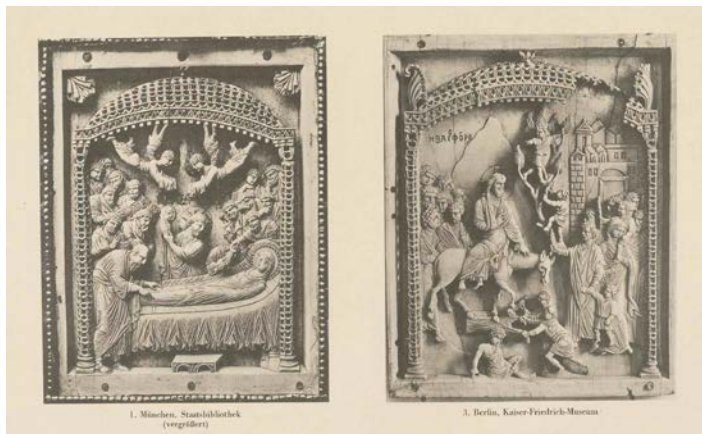


Fig.1 Plate I from Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts: Reliefs* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934) illustrating the Dormition of the Virgin (left) and the Entry into Jerusalem (right) from the Painterly Group. Photo <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/goldschmidt1934bd2/0103/image.info>

⁵⁵ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock. Eine Untersuchung über Wesen und Entstehung des Barockstils in Italien*, Munich: F. Bruckmann A.-G., 1888, 21. Eng. trans.: Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, trans. Kathrin Simon, Basel: Benno Schwabe & Co., 1961, 36. Hereafter: Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, page number in the German text followed by page number in the English translation.

⁵⁶ On the effects of the Pergamon Altar on studies on Baroque art, see Payne's articles above cited. Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, 15-21. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst*, Munich: F. Bruckmann A.-G., 1915, 20-79. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of Development of Style in Early Modern Art*, trans. Jonathan Blower, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2015, 100-55. Hereafter: Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, page number in the German text followed by page number in the English translation.

⁵⁷ Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, 15-21/30-34.

⁵⁸ Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, 21-22/35-36.

⁵⁹ Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, 17/31. Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 20-22/18-21.

Wölfflin's positive re-evaluation of *malerisch* and his definition of the painterly style provide a basis for better grasping Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's characterization of the eponymous ivory group. The significant overlaying of objects and figures in the chiselled images and the shadows cast by openwork details are features expected from a *malerisch* work.⁶⁰ Moreover, the overlapping and dark areas create the 'illusion of round forms' and a 'sense of space' animating the 'flat surface' of the reliefs.⁶¹ The two painterly ivories opening the *Die Byzantinische Elfenbeinskulpturen*'s catalogue of illustrations are a perfect case in point (fig.1). The crowds attending the Dormition of the Virgin and Christ's Entry into Jerusalem are arranged on multiple layers, suggesting the effect of depth, while dark shadows bring closer to the foreground the undercut elements. The painterly qualities of the *Malerische Gruppe* thus transcend the mimicry of a painted model. As the authors clarify in the second line of their description, the ivories are *malerisch* in the 'style of their relief'. Those features copied from actual paintings, such as the haloes' plainness, the lack of a ground line, and the specific way of rendering the folding of garments, are corroborating yet distinct reasons to name the group *malerische*.

Echoes of Wölfflin's theory of style are not confined to the definition of the Painterly Group. Their reverberation throughout the ivories' analysis can help clarify one of the criticised aspects of Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's taxonomic work. The German scholars' adoption of *plastisch* as an analytical term to classify the reliefs has been discredited because of the apparent vagueness of the word.⁶² However, although 'plastic' and sculpture have not received the same extensive considerations of painterly and painting in art theories, a perusal of *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen* demonstrates that the term *plastisch* was used consistently with two specific connotations.⁶³ First, it engaged with Wölfflin's definition of the linear style in opposition to the painterly. Second, it referred to the formal qualities of a sculptural work characterised by roundness and projection. A comparison of Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's analysis of the Romanos Group's defining features with the description of the Liverpool triptych from the *Triptychon Gruppe* can illustrate the difference. The Romanos ivories are the quintessence of Wölfflin's *linear, plastisch Stil*. Their carved forms are demarcated by rigorous, straight lines and stand clear against their background, while a balanced composition replaces the confusion of the masses observed in the Painterly Group.⁶⁴ For instance, a peculiarity of the Romanos ivories, of which the Harbaville Triptych

⁶⁰ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 13.

⁶¹ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 13.

⁶² Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 190-91.

⁶³ On this indefiniteness and lack of theorisations, see Denis Mahon, *Studies in Seicento Art and Theory*, London: The Warburg Institute, 1947, 8; and Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 24-37.

⁶⁴ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 14.

from the Louvre Museum offers an accomplished example (fig.2-3), is the string of pearls around the haloes' edges, which neatly delimits the nimbus' round form from the ground.⁶⁵ Moreover, the spacing between the figures gives the impression of restrained and composite gestures further reinforced by the delicate lines that delineate the vertical falling of the garments' folds. In the scholars' words, the Romanos ivories' features are so sublimely plastic that they represent 'the Middle Byzantine plastic style at its purest'.⁶⁶



Fig.2 Detail of plate XIII from Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts: Reliefs* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934) illustrating the Harbaville triptych from the Romanos Group. Photo <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/goldschmidt1934bd2/0127/image/info>

Fig.3 Side view of the lower register of the Harbaville triptych's central panel, mid-tenth century. Ivory, central panel 24.2x14.2x1.2 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo by the author, with kind permission of the Musée du Louvre.

⁶⁵ Selective bibliography on the Harbaville triptych: *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, cat.nr.33. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 211, 221, 249. Jannic Durand, ed., *Byzance: L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1992, cat.nr.149. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, eds., *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997, cat.nr.80. Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, Daniel Alcouffe, and Marie-Cécile Baroz, eds., *Ivoires médiévaux: Ve–XVe siècle: catalogue*, Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2003, cat.nr.16 with further bibliography. Antony Eastmond, 'The Heavenly Court, Courtly Ceremony, and the Great Byzantine Ivory Triptychs of the Tenth Century', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 69, 2015, 71-114, esp. 84 and 86.

⁶⁶ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 14: 'In diesen Reliefs besitzen wir am reinsten den plastischen abgeklärten mittelbyzantinischen Stil'.



Fig.4 Detail of plate LIV from Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts: Reliefs* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934) illustrating the Crucifixion triptych from the Triptych Group. Photo <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/goldschmidt1934bd2/0209/image/info>

Fig.5 Side view of the Crucifixion triptych's central panel, late tenth century. Ivory, central panel 16.2x13x0.7 cm. Liverpool, National Museums Liverpool. Photo @National Museums Liverpool (World Museum, antiquities department).

The Liverpool triptych (fig.4-5) belongs to the *Triptychon Gruppe*, which chronologically followed the Romanos group and was artistically affiliated to it, albeit qualitatively inferior.⁶⁷ It shows a Crucifixion scene in the characteristically Middle Byzantine composition, flanked by busts of overseeing angels and saints (fig.4). The single figures' silhouette is neat against the ground, and the distribution of forms is balanced and clear. However, the foreshortening and undercutting of the figures lead Goldschmidt and Weitzmann to approximate the Liverpool piece to the painterly cluster.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, they notice that the triptych has a greater *plastisch* strength than the Romanos Group.⁶⁹ In this context, *plastisch* should be understood as the adjectival form of the German word for sculpture: *Plastik*. The figures' greater plasticity consists in the higher projection of their relief (fig.5) compared to the more 'carefully balanced bas-reliefs' of the Romanos ivories (fig.3).⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 18. On the ivory, see: *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, cat.nr.155. Margaret Gibson, ed., *The Liverpool ivories. Late antique and medieval ivory and bone carving in Liverpool Museum and the Walker Art Gallery*, London: HMSO, 1994, 47-49.

⁶⁸ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 18.

⁶⁹ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 18.

⁷⁰ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 18: 'sorgfältig abgewogenen Flachrelief'. It is important to note, however, that in the Romanos ivories the projection of the relief is greater than Weitzmann is willing to acknowledge. The observation is driven by his argument of

Plastisch in its double connotation returns in the description of the *Malerisch* Group quoted above. The plain nimbi that distinguish the painterly figures from the plastic ones lack the immediacy of form conveyed by the pearled haloes, while the painterly reliefs' overall flat surface deprives the carving of a sculptural, projecting modelling. The terminology adopted by Goldschmidt and Weitzmann was thus consistent in itself and conformed to the linguistic conventions of their time.

The two scholars were aware of Wölfflin's ideas when they worked on *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, if only because Goldschmidt had built his earlier analysis of Carolingian and Ottonian ivories upon Wölfflin's stylistic dichotomy. The two stylistic ivory groups opening Goldschmidt's study, the Ada Group and the Lothar Group, are defined by contrasting features that follow Wölfflin's characterization of the linear and painterly styles. The Ada cluster has 'clear outlines and peaceful modelling', while the Lothar pieces show a 'painterly interlocking of forms, brisk expressive movements and strong light and shadow contrasts'.⁷¹

The crossing of stylistic categories in the analysis of Western and Byzantine works may be an expected consequence of the collaborative nature of the later volume. However, further similarities between the Carolingian and Byzantine ivory examination and Wölfflin's theory of style suggest that the corpora's analysis engaged with broader art historical conversations at the time. The narratives framing the investigation of the Frankish and Eastern pieces follow a strikingly similar path. A first set, strongly sculptural or painterly in style, is superseded by a group that is stylistically opposed. The following clusters are affiliated to the latter group, although their stylistic features are increasingly nuanced by elements from the former set of ivories. Thus, for instance, the boldly *malerisch* Painterly Group and the purely plastic Romanos Group are followed by the mildly plastic Triptych and Nikephoros clusters, whose ivories show openwork canopies and columns of clear painterly derivation. The last and latest group of the corpus is the Frame Group, an outgrowth of the Nikephoros Group but with stronger painterly features. Some figures are deeply undercut; the treatment of the drapery is more graphic in the richness of lines, and the movement is freer than the restrained gestures of the more *plastisch* ivories.⁷²

resemblance between the Romanos Group and ancient sculpture more than by the reality of the reliefs.

⁷¹ Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser*, vol.1, 1914, 23: 'Nicht wie bei den Werken der Adagruppe ist es ihm um eine klare Umrißzeichnung und glatte Modellierung zu tun, sondern um ein malerisches Ineinandergreifen der Gestalt, um flotte ausdrucksvolle Bewegungen, um starken Licht- und Schattenwechsel'.

⁷² *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 20-21.

The overall dynamic of opposition between the styles of the following eras was a common framing device in art historical analysis of the time.⁷³ Wölfflin was the main proponent of a dialectical and cyclical nature of the process. The two styles defined in his essay on Renaissance and Baroque art were to follow one another in alternate phases, as the comparison between any two artworks from contiguous eras can demonstrate.⁷⁴ The scholar had developed the comparative study into a pedagogic and scientific method.⁷⁵ In *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, pictures of works of opposing style are consistently paired throughout the pages, visually training and persuading the readers of the binary analysis.⁷⁶ Goldschmidt and Weitzmann seem to have adopted and adjusted Wölfflin's methodological frame to their ivory examination.⁷⁷ The oeuvre on the Byzantine dentine reliefs, therefore, calls for a reconsideration in its stylistic and chronological assessments. This is because the evaluations depended on early twentieth century aesthetic and on abstract, analytical frameworks extraneous to the Byzantine works.

What: *Das Relief* and photography

The late nineteenth and early twentieth-century theories of style and their evolution over time are insufficient to elucidate Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's approach to the relief of the Painterly Group ivories. In the following sections, I will suggest that the writings of Adolf von Hildebrand and Alois Riegl, whose work centred on *das Relief*, further informed their analysis by offering a framework for approaching the Byzantine reliefs.

Artist Adolf von Hildebrand became a highly celebrated theorist when his treatise *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* was published in 1893 and rapidly reprinted in seven editions and translated into foreign languages by the turn of the century.⁷⁸ The essay provides a theory for the making of artistic form deeply

⁷³ For a summary of the range of theories that tried to explain the reasons for a style change, see Walter Passarge, *Die Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte in der Gegenwart*, Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1930.

⁷⁴ Ernst H. Gombrich, *Norm and Form*, London: Phaidon Press, 1966, 89-98. Gombrich's essay is, moreover, valuable for a critique of the limits of Wölfflin's approach.

⁷⁵ Gombrich, *Norm and Form*, 89-90. Levy, 'Wölfflin's Principles of Art History (1915-2015)', 4.

⁷⁶ Levy, 'Wölfflin's Principles of Art History (1915-2015)', 4.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Sears, 'Eye Training: Goldschmidt/Wölfflin', in *Adolph Goldschmidt (1863-1944): Normal Art History im 20. Jahrhundert*, Weimar: VDG, 2007, 275-94. *Stilkritik* was the main art history analytical tool, on which see Brush, *The Shaping of Art History*, 134-140.

⁷⁸ Adolf von Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst*, Strasbourg: Heitz & Mündel, 1893. Eng. trans.: Adolf von Hildebrand, 'The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts,' in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994, 227-79. Hereafter: Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, page number in the German text followed by page number in the English translation. On Hildebrand's theory and work, see

conditioned by the painterly aesthetic of the time and reliant on contemporaneous conceptions of human vision.⁷⁹ As the author explains in the introduction to the treatise, the eyes perceive reality through parallel, two-dimensional planes, while form's three-dimensionality is mentally reconstructed by the experience of the real world. Cues such as shadows and the overlying of objects signal spatial depth.⁸⁰ The grasping of the difference between reality and the optical impression is crucial for the artists who in their works are concerned with the recreation of the strata through which an object is apprehended.⁸¹ The theory of the parallel planes is obviously construed in favour of painting, although Hildebrand, as a practicing sculptor, was motivated to extend its logic to sculpture.⁸² The possibility to assimilate the three-dimensional art to the planar vision theory was arguably inspired by contemporaneous discussions on the ontological ambiguity of the Pergamon carvings and articulated through the concept of the relief, *die Reliefauffassung*.⁸³ The relief, sharing features with painting, sculpture, and architecture, provided the model for a theory encompassing all artistic expressions.

While Hildebrand's ideas were nurtured by conversations on the Hellenistic reliefs, in his essay he illustrates the artistic concept through the Parthenon marbles, of which he possessed a small collection of casts in his Florentine villa.⁸⁴ The shallow classical reliefs were the perfect artistic translation of the planar stratum through which reality is optically apprehended: artistically, the visual plane should be conceived of as two parallel glass planes defining the relief's front (*vordere Fläche*) and rear surface (*Grundfläche*). The figures appear inside the space of uniform depth defined by the planes. The front plane is the most important for the artist as the relief's highest points lie on this surface, which demarcates the threshold between the fictional and the real space.⁸⁵ From the front plane, the form

Sigrid Esche-Braunfels, *Adolf von Hildebrand (1847–1921)*, Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1993. Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 124-29. Sigrid Esche-Braunfels, ed., *Adolf von Hildebrand – Ein Bildhauer über Kunst. Kritische Aufsätze zu architektonischen, städtebaulichen und allgemein kulturellen und künstlerischen Fragen*, Munich: Edition Monacensia, 2010. And relevant essays in Andrea M. Kluxen, ed., *Ästhetische Probleme der Plastik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Nürnberg: Aleph Verlag, 2001. Hildebrand's writings are collected in Adolf von Hildebrand, *Gesammelt Schriften zur Kunst*, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1969.

⁷⁹ Podro, *The Critical Historian of Art*, 73. Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 125. On the superiority of painting and the consequences of this supremacy for sculpture, see in particular Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination* and Hall, *The World as Sculpture*.

⁸⁰ Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, 39-40/241.

⁸¹ Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, 45-49/244-245 and 65/252.

⁸² Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 61-62.

⁸³ Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, 67-68/253. Payne, 'Portable Ruins', 173.

⁸⁴ Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, 65-66/252. On Hildebrand's villa and collection Felicitas Ehrhardt, *Ästhetisches Utopia. Adolf von Hildebrand und sein Künstlerhaus San Francesco di Paola in Florenz*, Regensburg: Schnell+Steiner, 2018.

⁸⁵ Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, 72/254.

should then develop in depth, receding away from the viewer. Any suggestion of forward movement or any transgression of the front plane is to be avoided.⁸⁶ The optical, two-dimensional apprehension of figures and their reading in depth is further facilitated by smooth foreshortening, as if the form was spreading in the space in between the front plane and the background.⁸⁷ While in the case of a flat painting, the concept of the relief is achieved through colours and lines, sculpture, on the other hand, must proceed through the unification of parallel, relief-like planes, providing the figure's total volume.⁸⁸

The emphasis on the front plane of the relief, its development in depth, and the notion of a uniform space defined by anterior and rear surfaces, were the most appraised and readily assimilated concepts of Hildebrand's theory by his contemporaries. Wölfflin, for instance, in his review of *Das Problem der Form* for the German newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung*, writes that these were 'the most beautiful and most clear' words written on the topic of classical reliefs.⁸⁹ The art historian's enthusiasm is reiterated in his expanded and revised work on the painterly and linear styles from 1914, in which he applies Hildebrand's concepts to the analysis of Renaissance and Baroque paintings.⁹⁰ Alois Riegl also contemplated Hildebrand's theory when he conceptualised his *Spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, a point to which the article will return.

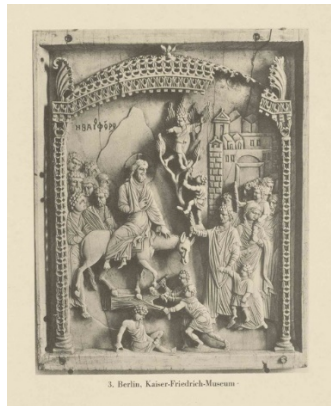


Fig.6 Detail of plate I from Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts: Reliefs* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934) illustrating the Entry into Jerusalem relief from the Painterly Group. Photo <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/goldschmidt1934bd2/0103/image.info>

⁸⁶ Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, 64-65/251-252.

⁸⁷ Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, 52-53/246.

⁸⁸ Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, 65/251.

⁸⁹ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kleine Schriften (1886-1933)*, ed. Joseph Gantner, Basel: Benno Schwabe & Co., 1946, (75-89) 87-88: '[...] ist wohl das Schönste und Klarste, was je über diesen Gegenstand geschrieben wurde'. The review was originally published in *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1893 11 July.

⁹⁰ Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 20-79/73-123. See Levy, 'Wölfflin's Principles of Art History (1915-2015)', 11-13 on Wölfflin's engagement with Hildebrand's as well as Riegl's works.



Fig.7 Lower right corner of the Entry into Jerusalem relief, tenth century. Ivory, 18.4x14.7x1.2 cm. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst. Photo by the author, with kind permission of the Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst.



Fig.8 Side view of the Entry into Jerusalem relief, tenth century. Ivory, 18.4x14.7x1.2 cm. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst. Photo by the author, with kind permission of the Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst.

Hildebrand's popular and widely accepted formulation of the relief appears to have guided Weitzmann's approach to the carved ivories. For instance, one characteristic of the painterly group is that a 'front boundary' defines the 'uniform flat surface of the figures', the modelling of which 'does not exceed the front plane'. In the literature engaging with Weitzmann's definition of the group, the *Vordergrenze* and the limitation of the modelling to the front have been understood to describe the relief's overall flat surface, whose forms do not project beyond the picture frame.⁹¹ The impression is suggestively offered by a side view of the ivory

⁹¹ Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 189.

with Entry into Jerusalem at the Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, formerly known as the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, in Berlin (fig.6-8).⁹² The scene, delimited by the perforated canopy distinctive of the Painterly Group, shows Christ, seated on a donkey, being welcomed by a festive crowd at the gates of Jerusalem. While the even and shallow surface of the carved figures at first confirms the above reading of Weitzmann's passage, the lack of projecting details is a property shared by many more pieces across the ivory corpus.⁹³ However, Weitzmann's definition assumes a meaning specific to the Entry into Jerusalem and other painterly ivories if read against Hildebrand's concept of the relief. According to the theorist, the relief by definition develops behind a glass plane which is touched only by the carving's most projecting parts. The Byzantine ivory group is thus peculiar because most of the figures' surface seems to lean on the front boundary. Moreover, following Hildebrand's idea of the relief unfolding into depth, the constriction of the ivory modelling to the *Vorderfläche*, the front surface, must refer to the lack of details in the depth of the figures. Depth was the only possible direction for the relief to develop from the front plane. The oblique view of the painterly ivory with the Entry into Jerusalem confirms such a reading of Weitzmann's comment (fig.8). Whereas the faces receive a treatment in the round, the rich lines suggestive of the folding of the garments stop at the relief's edge, leaving the surface just around the *Vorderfläche* unmodelled. The only other ivories to share this specificity are the group stylistically closest to the Painterly, namely the Frame Group.⁹⁴

Beyond the question of the glass planes, Hildebrand's teachings on the legibility of artistic form seem to have been integrated into Weitzmann's text in the discussion of the Romanos Group, the purely sculptural group of the corpus. The figures' postures, which in line with their plastic style avoid foreshortening, are described to develop parallel to the picture plane and 'to become as evident as possible'.⁹⁵ When Weitzmann wrote this sentence, he was probably thinking of the three-quarter figures in ivories from the Romano Group such as the Palazzo Venezia triptych (fig.9).⁹⁶ The Virgin Mary and Saint John to the left and right of Christ

⁹² Selected bibliography on the Entry into Jerusalem ivory: *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, cat.nr.2. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 21-28. Evans and Wixom, eds., *The Glory of Byzantium*, cat.nr.99 with further bibliography. Carolyn L. Connor, *The Color of Ivory. Polychromy on Byzantine Ivories*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, 21-22.

⁹³ Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 189.

⁹⁴ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 21.

⁹⁵ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 14: 'Zugleich werden Verkürzungen möglichst vermieden und die Handlung der Figuren und ihre Beziehung zueinander möglichst augenscheinlich werden'.

⁹⁶ Selective bibliography on the Palazzo Venezia triptych: *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, cat.nr.31. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 91-104. Moretti, *Roma bizantina*, 197-203. Gianni Pittiglio, 'Trittico Casanatense', in *Cipro e l'Italia al tempo di Bisanzio. L'Icona Grande di San Nicola tis Stégis*

expand the intercessory gesture of their hands to a greater degree than their half-profile posture would require. While the description evocatively translates into words the three-quarter figures' adjustments to the relatively shallow depth of the

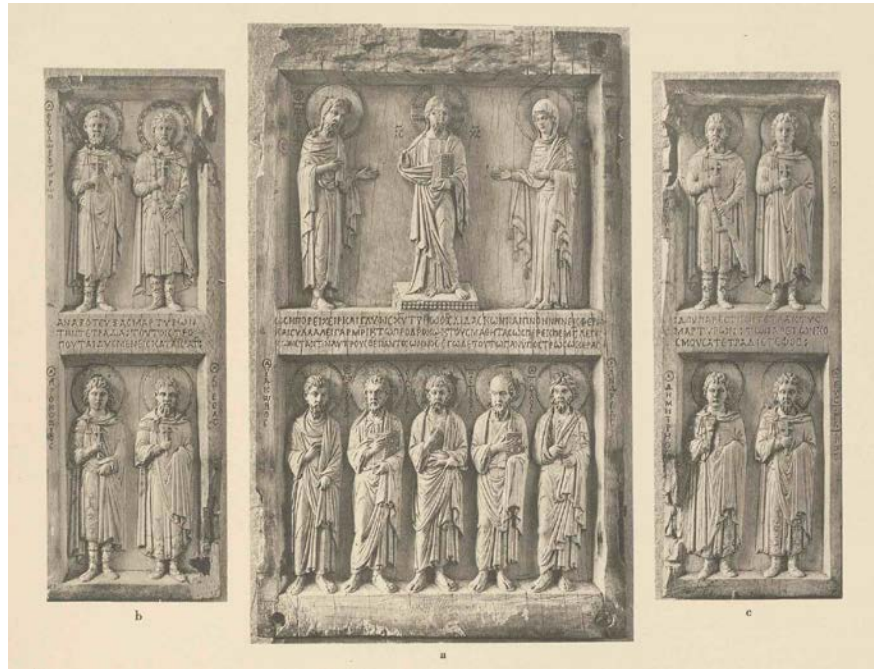


Fig.9 Detail of plate X from Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts: Reliefs* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934) illustrating the Palazzo Venezia triptych with Deesis and Saints from the Romanos Group.

relief, the casual remark on the immediacy of their gestures is coherent with Hildebrand's planes of vision. By spreading out on the plane, the three-dimensional form is readily intelligible because it approximates the two-dimensional impressions received by the retina.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, the interpretation of Weitzmann's description of the ivory reliefs in light of Hildebrand's theory does not fully justify the partition of some pieces among the stylistic clusters. For instance, Anthony Cutler's objections to including the icon with the Dormition of the Virgin, now on the cover of Otto III's Gospels (Cm 4453) at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (fig.10-11), into the Painterly Group remains valid even according to the proposed new reading of

del XIII secolo restaurata a Roma, ed. Ioannis A. Eliades, Nicosia: Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, 2009, 227-31 with exhaustive bibliography until 2009.

Antony Eastmond, 'The Heavenly Court', 71-114.

⁹⁷ Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, 52-53/246.



Fig.10 Detail of plate I from Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts: Reliefs* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934) illustrating the Dormition of the Virgin from the Painterly Group.

Fig.11 Side view of the Dormition of the Virgin relief from the book cover of Otto III's Gospels (Clm 4453), tenth century. Ivory, 14.5 x 11 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Photo: <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb00107517?page=1>

Weitzmann's text.⁹⁸ The icon's relief surface is articulated into several planes of depth, and the figures' modelling continues on their sides (fig.11). The sense of space and attention to volumes in the Munich plaquette is significantly different from the frontal and flattened surface of the Entry into Jerusalem icon in Berlin (fig.7-8).⁹⁹

However, it is possible that Weitzmann never saw the luxurious Gospel book cover in person. Although in his biography he declares that in preparation for the publication, he travelled widely across Europe to study first-hand the objects, it should not be assumed that he visited all sixty-seven cities scattered from the United States to Georgia and England to Southern Italy.¹⁰⁰ Weitzmann, for instance, admits that he never saw the pieces from museums in North America until after the publication of the volume.¹⁰¹ Their analysis relied on Goldschmidt's study of the Byzantine ivories on the occasion of one of his transatlantic travels.¹⁰² Within

⁹⁸ Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 190. Bibliography on the ivory with the Dormition: *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, cat.nr.1. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 135-37, 190-92.

⁹⁹ Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 190.

¹⁰⁰ Weitzmann, *Sailing with Byzantium*, 60. First-hand observation was a staple of Goldschmidt's methodology see Brush, *The Shaping of Art History*, 92.

¹⁰¹ Weitzmann, *Sailing with Byzantium*, 60.

¹⁰² Weitzmann, *Sailing with Byzantium*, 60. Brush, 'Adolf Goldschmidt (1863-1944)', 254-55.

Europe, mobility was relatively easy and fast through the extensive railroad network produced by the same nineteenth-century railway fever that had brought about the discovery of the Pergamon reliefs. Despite the devastating events of the 1914-18 war, the early twentieth-century railway works continued to create ambitious projects, such as the extension of the Orient Express to include northern Italy and the Balkans on the route from Paris to Istanbul.¹⁰³ However, the Great Depression caused by the collapse of the American economy in 1929 dramatically changed the reality of life and touring prospects within Europe.¹⁰⁴ Travelling became an increasingly expensive activity that must have put to the test the tight budget on which Weitzmann was living.¹⁰⁵ It thus stands to reason that the young scholar expended his resources to visit those places not yet explored by Goldschmidt; for the remainder, he could rely on the professor's archive of photographs, on his notes, and on his experience.

If the above speculations reflect the conditions under which Weitzmann worked on the volume, the scholar was possibly relying on a photograph when he assigned the Dormition ivory from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek to the Painterly Group. Goldschmidt had surely studied the Byzantine plaque while visiting the Munich library to study its rich collection of Western medieval ivories. In the publications on Carolingian and Ottonian material, a photograph of the Byzantine dentine icon features as a *comparandum* to the Western pieces' ornamental motifs (fig.12). The same photograph was used in the illustration catalogue of the Byzantine ivories.¹⁰⁶ Goldschmidt's works were praised by his contemporaries for the precision of their photographic documentation, which in the early twentieth century had just superseded engraving as new means of illustration for art historical publications.¹⁰⁷ Monochrome daguerreotypes were acclaimed for the superior

¹⁰³ Weitzmann took great advantage of the railway travel opportunities within Germany and nearby countries in the twenties, Weitzmann, *Sailing with Byzantium*, 35-57. On the railway fever and its aftermath, see Thomas Beaumont, *Fellow Travelers. Communist Trade Unionism and Industrial Relations on the French Railways, 1914-1939*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019, (137-60)137-139. For a testimony to the improvements achieved in the early twentieth century, see Maurice Pardé, 'Changements et perfectionnements ferroviaires dans le monde', *Annales de géographie*, 274, 1939, 396-99.

¹⁰⁴ Dieter Petzina, 'Germany and the Great Depression', *Journal of Contemporary History* 4: 4, 1969, 59-74.

¹⁰⁵ Beaumont, *Fellow Travelers*, 163-64. Weitzmann, *Sailing with Byzantium*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser*, vol. 1 fig. 4 and vol. 2 fig. 25. In the bibliography on the ivory icon cited by Weitzmann, Goldschmidt's second volume is the most recent publication but the first one to offer a photograph and not an engraving of the ivory.

¹⁰⁷ Geraldine Johnson, "'(Un)Richtige Aufnahme'", 12-51. On the topic of sculpture and photography, and on the relevance of photography for early art history studies, see in particular Geraldine Johnson, *Sculpture and Photography Envisioning the Third Dimension*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Megan R. Luke, 'The Photographic Reproduction of Space

precision and faithfulness of details they could achieve, while giving a more objective and scientific tone to art historical analysis.¹⁰⁸ The neutrality of photography, however, was being unconsciously counteracted by the acknowledged need to carefully stage the objects to capture their salient features. Wölfflin, for instance, writing on the subject on three occasions for the *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, contended that the shot's lighting and angle should reflect the style of the artwork.¹⁰⁹

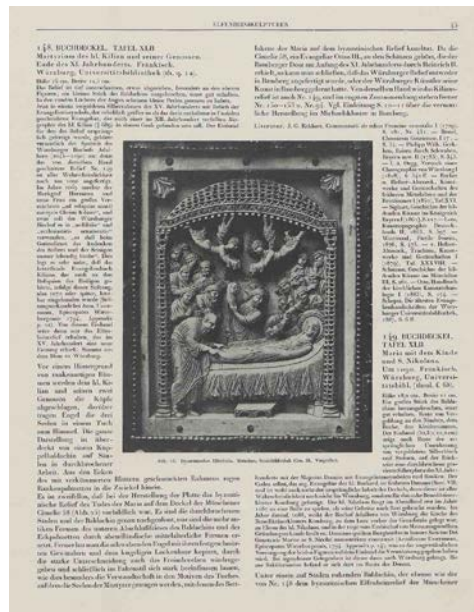


Fig.12 Page 45 from Adolph Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der Karolingischen und Sächsischen Kaiser, VIII.–XI. Jahrhundert*, vol.2 (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1918) with illustration of the Byzantine ivory of the Dormition of the Virgin. Photo https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/goldschmidt1918bd2/0055/image_info

The extent to which Wölfflin's precepts were observed in contemporaneous photographic practices is hard to gauge. However, a close look at the black-and-white illustration of the Byzantine icon suggests that the light shining from the top-left corner was staged to ensure the legibility of the composition (fig.10). The cast shadows fall close to the undercut details and within the à-jour worked canopy framing the scene without obscuring the carving of the figures. For instance, the pool of darkness underneath the right angel takes up the space in between the winged body and the mourning crowd below without overshadowing it.

Wölfflin, Panofsky, Kracauer', *RES*, 57/58, 2010, 339–43. Geraldine Johnson, 'Photographing Sculpture, Sculpting Photography', in *Photography and Sculpture: The Art Object in Reproduction*, ed. Sarah Hamill and Megan R. Luke, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2017, 277–91.
¹⁰⁸ Johnson, 'Photographing Sculpture', 279.
¹⁰⁹ The three publications have been translated into English by Geraldine Johnson. See Geraldine Johnson, 'How One Should Photograph Sculpture Heinrich Wölfflin', trans. Geraldine Johnson, *Art History*, 36: 1, 2012, 52–71.

Furthermore, it may be suggested that the lighting staged for the Dormition ivory valorises the *malerische* qualities of the carving by accentuating the cast shadows and the garments' deep lines. However, it does not allow for an appreciation of the layers of depth with which the side figures are distributed because it brings the bright areas of the photographed relief to an apparent equality of height, nor does it deem possible an observation of the roundness of forms from the head-on view offered by the picture. Moreover, in the illustration catalogue of the Byzantine ivories complementing the analytical text, the juxtaposition of the Dormition of the Virgin and the Entry into Jerusalem reveals the degree of apparent similarity that could be deduced from a comparison of the black and white images (fig.1). This consideration may excuse Weitzmann's inappropriate inclusion of the Dormition ivory in the Painterly Group and could justify other questionable attributions throughout the study. However, it also acts as a warning that the scholar's analysis of the ivories was as much a scrupulous scrutiny of their photographs.¹¹⁰

Why: *Raum, Vorbilder*, and the place of Byzantine art

There is little doubt that during Weitzmann's formative years at universities in Germany and Vienna, the young scholar was exposed to one of Alois Riegl's major and long-lasting contributions to the field of art history, namely, *Spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, first published in 1901.¹¹¹ The study became immediately successful amongst German-speaking audiences and contributed to establishing a new academic discipline.¹¹² Liberating Late Antique art from its ancillary role of bearer of

¹¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that on two occasions Goldschmidt reflects on the lack of verisimilitude between the photographs and the reality of the reliefs: Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser*, vol. 1, 3, and 47 cat.n.84.

¹¹¹ Alois Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie nach den Funden in Österreich-Ungarn im Zusammenhange mit der Gesamtentwicklung der bildenden Künste bei den Mittelmeervölkern*, Wien: Österreich. Staatsdruckerei, 1901. Eng. trans.: Alois Riegl, *Late Roman Art Industry*, trans. Rolf Winkes, Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, 1985. Hereafter: Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, page number in the German text is followed by page number in the English translation. On this work by Riegl, Podro, *The Critical Historian*, 71-97. Olin, *Forms of Representation*, 129-54. Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History*, 71-80.

¹¹² On the relevance of *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie* for the study of Late Antique art, see Jaś Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901', *Art History* 25: 3, 2002, 358-79 with further bibliography. On Riegl's work and its legacy, see: Podro, *The Critical Historian*, 71-97. Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992. Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993. Margaret Olin, 'Alois Riegl (1858-1905)', in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, vol.3, New York: Garland, 2000, 231-44.

ancient forms for posterity, it was a reappraisal of Late Antiquity as a period with a style of its own, but without which modern art could not have come into being.¹¹³

Riegl's analysis was founded on contemporaneous theories of vision, and, as often noted in the literature, was in conversation with Hildebrand's theoretical treatise.¹¹⁴ Most emblematic of the intellectual obligation to *Das Problem der Form* is the pivotal role played by *das Relief* in the Viennese scholar's analysis. For Hildebrand, the relief was the artistic principle defining all arts. According to Riegl, the sculptural relief was the ideal medium for art historical investigation and the place where 'the *Kunstwollen* of antiquity [...] can be seen very immediately and clearly'.¹¹⁵

In Late Roman art, the *Kunstwollen*, the driving force behind artistic change, was the liberation of the individual form.¹¹⁶ In the relief, the striving for formal emancipation was manifested in the gradual detachment of figures from their ground and the ensuing creation of 'space'. Riegl's analysis of the frieze narrating Constantine's battle against Maxentius in the Arch of Constantine illustrates the new spatial transformation brought about by the *Kunstwollen*.¹¹⁷ The deeply undercut contours outlining the individual forms sever the relation between forms and background, characteristic of earlier reliefs. Riegl continues to argue that the gap between the visible front face of the figures (*sichtbare Vorderfläche*) and the ground, becomes a free sphere of space to be inhabited, or a niche.¹¹⁸ The articulation of the carved frieze as a space defined by front and back surfaces is reminiscent of the Hildebrandian plane-enclosed relief. For Riegl, however, the *sichtbare Vorderfläche* clarifies that the space-defining element is the object and is standing in opposition to the ground. The visible front face of the figures implies an invisible back side that would not exist if the form was contiguous with the rear

¹¹³ Cfr. Riegl's introduction to *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*.

¹¹⁴ Similarly to the German art theorist Adolf von Hildebrand, the Viennese scholar embraced the post-Herbartian conceptualization of vision through planes. Riegl explicitly mentions the planes of vision in *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, 18/23. On this and other shared characteristic of the two scholars, see Podro, *The Critical Historian*, 71-97. Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation*, 134-35. Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History*, 74-75.

¹¹⁵ Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, 51 footnote 1: 'Die Kunstwollen des Alterthums [...] lässt sich daher an Werken der Reliefkunst am unmittelbarsten und deutlichsten demonstrieren.'/58 footnote 15.

¹¹⁶ Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, 47/52.

¹¹⁷ Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, 47-48/52-54. Bibliography on the Arch of Constantine is extensive; a recent study of its reliefs accompanied by historiographic considerations can be found in Brian Rose, 'Reconsidering the frieze on the Arch of Constantine', *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 2021:1, 1-36.

¹¹⁸ Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, 47: 'Zwischen die sichtbare Vorderfläche der Figuren und die Grundebene hat sich eine freie Raumsphäre, gleichsam eine Nische, eingeschoben: nur so tief, um die Figuren darin raumfüllend und freiraumumflossen, und somit noch immer nach größter Möglichkeit der Ebene angenähert erscheinen zu lassen'./53.

surface. This is the first and only instance in which Riegl uses *Vorderfläche*, which in the original text must be distinguished from *Oberfläche*, the carved surface of a figure. It should also be distinguished from *Ebene*, a general surface.¹¹⁹ The stringency of the argument is conveyed by the strength of the unusual term.

It is too empirical to draw a connection between *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen* and Riegl's work solely on the basis of their similar use of *Vorderfläche* in the analysis of their respective reliefs.¹²⁰ Weitzmann employs the word twice and only to define the modelled surface of the deeply undercut forms of the Painterly and the Frame Groups. As noted above, the figures' sides are left unshaped by the chisel. The *Vorderfläche*, as in Riegl's work, emphasises the visible and modelled surfaces in opposition to the carved but unmodelled sides not visible from a frontal view of the relief.

However, a few of Weitzmann's observations on the Romanos Group corroborate the suggestion that the younger scholar was in part reacting to Riegl's text. The connection between object and ground is a defining feature of the Romanos ivories (fig.3) and sets them in opposition to the painterly reliefs' undercut and detached forms (fig.7).¹²¹ Weitzmann's conclusion that the prototypes for the plastic group must have been ancient relief sculptures is in line with Riegl's definition of relief art from before the time of Constantine, when the emancipation of form and ground had yet to be achieved.¹²² Furthermore, the qualification of the space created in the Romanos ivories' pictures is indebted to the Late Roman reliefs' analysis by the Viennese scholar. The ivory scenes' background is free from any framing devices and left 'indefinite' by an absence of any suggestion of landscape.¹²³ Moreover, the composition is finely balanced, symmetry is accentuated, and the baldachins are avoided, so as not to trouble the 'ideal impression of space' (*ideellen Raumeindruck*).¹²⁴ Indefiniteness, the ideal impression of space, and *Räumlichkeit* are the words used by Riegl to characterise the new role of ground in Late Roman reliefs after it lost connection with the figures.¹²⁵ According to the scholar's teleological view, art moved from a planar relation between figures and ground – exemplified by the Egyptian low reliefs – to a spatial dimension characteristic of

¹¹⁹ The nuance between these terms is barely possible to convey in English translation.

¹²⁰ It should be mentioned that the word does not occur in Goldschmidt's four volumes on Western ivories. Nor does it in Wölfflin's publications, to my knowledge.

¹²¹ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 14: 'Der Romanos-Stil unterschneidet die Figuren nicht, sondern setzt die Modellierung derselben fort bis zur Berührung des Grundes, mit dem sie in fester Fühlung stehen'.

¹²² *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 14: '(...) sondern nehmen den antiken Reliefstil auf'.

¹²³ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 14.

¹²⁴ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 14: 'Die Komposition ist feinfühlig abgewogen, die Symmetrie betont und die Anbringung von Baldachinen völlig vermieden, um den ideellen Raumeindruck nicht zu stören'.

¹²⁵ Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, 8, 83, 115, 131, 145, 177 and *passim*.

modern art.¹²⁶ The ground's full transformation into space was accomplished through the invention of linear perspective in Western art, for which the emptied ground of Late Roman artworks would be a needed intermediary step. Whereas in the West, the further change was already in place in medieval times, in Byzantine art, the Late Roman *Kunstwollen* remained unaffected until the end of the empire. Riegl illustrates this point through the example of the gold expanses characteristic of Byzantine mosaics.¹²⁷ Weitzmann was thus adhering to Riegl's ideas on the shared treatment of space between Late Roman and Byzantine artworks in his definition of the Romanos ivories' empty and ideal background.

Moreover, it is tempting to find in Riegl's work a justification for Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's presupposition of *antike Vorbilder*, not only for the plastic, but also for the Painterly Group. Although Byzantine art after Iconoclasm (ninth century) was beyond the chronological scope of Riegl's study, the author offers a few insights on the subject. He claims that the stability of the ideal space in the art of Byzantium allowed its artists to draw from earlier examples without undermining the teleological evolution of art. The art historian concludes by wishing for a future study that could demonstrate the links between Byzantine art, archaic classical Greek art (read: sculpture), and paintings from the Roman empire.¹²⁸ Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's publication seems to respond to Riegl's request. While the connection between figures and ground in the Romanos ivories bespeaks of their ancient sculptural prototypes, the Painterly Group's antique models differ. They instead are mediated by mediation tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantine book illustrations known for their classicising motifs, such as the detailing of the garments, the architectural elements, and the anatomy of the bodies.¹²⁹

A fundamental methodological difference, however, must be drawn between the Viennese and the German scholar. Riegl posited in art itself the causes of change. The possibility to define Late Antiquity as an independent art historical field was argued for by demonstrating that it represented a new phase in the evolutionary scheme of art. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, on the contrary, searched in historical circumstances the reasons for art's peculiarities. The ivories' initial adoption of painterly motifs is justified by the Byzantines' alleged resistance to 'purely plastic representations' (read: statues), of pagan cult images at the time of

¹²⁶ Riegl's teleological approach is clearly stated in his introduction, *Die spätrömische Kunst-Industrie*, 5/9.

¹²⁷ Riegl, *Die spätrömische Kunst-Industrie*, 8/12, and 118/125.

¹²⁸ Riegl, *Die spätrömische Kunst-Industrie*, 118/125.

¹²⁹ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 12.

Iconoclasm (eighth and ninth century). The copying of sculptural models could occur only at a later moment, when the fear of idolatry had diminished.¹³⁰

Moreover, it is wiser to suppose that the authors of the *Spätrömische Kunst-Industrie* and *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen* were all engaging with a prickly issue that had occupied scholars on Medieval and Byzantine art for nearly a century, namely *die byzantinische Frage*. The Byzantine Question was a scholarly debate over the standing of Byzantine art in the narrative of change and evolution of the Western world from ancient to medieval and into modern.¹³¹ On German soil, the question was not devoid of nationalistic interests since the marriage between the Byzantine princess Theophano and Emperor Otto II in 972 historically proved a strong and lasting tie between the Byzantines and the 'medieval German people'. The questionable reputation of Byzantium, however, posed a challenge to national pride and needed to be redressed.¹³² The disrepute of the Byzantine world was heritage of a millenary tradition of rivalry between the Eastern and Western medieval empires, epitomised by the infamous account penned by Liutprand the Bishop of Cremona, on their immoral customs.¹³³ Next to Liutprand's text, often-quoted in nineteenth century scholarship, Lorenzo Ghiberti's negative assessment of Byzantine art and Giorgio Vasari's notorious elaborations thereupon bolstered the prejudice. The stiff and rough *maniera greca vecchia* was the antithesis of the Vasarian 'modern way' of painting defined by a harmonic composition and accurate application of lights and shadow on the surface.¹³⁴ The bridging function of

¹³⁰ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 14: 'Es ist auch anzunehmen, daß der Ikonoklasmus die an heidnische Statuen erinnernden plastischen Gottesbilder energischer bekämpfte als die gemalten Erzählungen, und daß es nach dem Ende der Bilderverfolgung länger dauerte, bis man zur rein plastischen Darstellung solcher Kultbilder als bis zur plastischen Wiedergabe der gemalten Historien schritt'.

¹³¹ On the topic: Holger A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz. Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004, 1-18. Armin F. Bergmeier, 'Linien und Umwegen. Byzanz, Nation und der Kanon der Kunstgeschichte im deutschsprachigen Raum', 21: *Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual. Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und visuellen Kultur* 2: 2, 2021, 73-95.

¹³² Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*, 6. On the negative value attributed to Byzantine art, informative are also Ernst Kitzinger, 'The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 20, 1966, 25-47. Gabriele Blickendorf, "'Maniera Greca" - Wahrnehmung und Verdrängung der byzantinischen Kunst in der italienischen Kunstliteratur seit Vasari', ed. Semra Ögel and Gregor Wedekind, *Okzident und Orient (Sanat Tarihi Defterli)*, 6, 2002, 113-25.

¹³³ Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*, 6.

¹³⁴ Vasari, *Le vite*, 'Proemio delle Vite', 'Andrea Taffi', and 'Giotto'. On the 'maniera greca vecchia,' see Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari. Art and History*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1995, 249-50 and 287-320. Ennio Concina, 'Giorgio Vasari, Francesco Sansovino e la "Maniera Greca"', in *Hadriatica. Attorno a Venezia e al Medioevo tra arti, storia e storiografia. scritti in onore di Wladimiro Dorigo*, ed. Ennio Concina, Giordana Trovabene, and Michela Agazzi, Padua:

Byzantium between the glorified ancient world and the West was slowly and laboriously emerging in scholarship as an argument to re-evaluate the art of the empire of the east and its place in art historical narratives. However, it risked transforming Byzantine art into a mere repository of antiquity.¹³⁵

Riegl explicitly addresses the *byzantinische Frage* in the concluding paragraphs of the chapter on sculpture, but despite his innovative approach he reaches rather conventional conclusions.¹³⁶ In Byzantine art, the presence of archaizing elements was a result of its unchanged *Kunstwollen* since ancient times. The permanence of the 'art's will' hindered Byzantium from any contributions to artistic developments in the West.¹³⁷ In Riegl's teleological narrative, Byzantine art was a side show and a dead end.

Some thirty years later, when Goldschmidt and Weitzmann worked on their joint publication, the *Frage* was experiencing a moment of intellectual stasis.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, in their discussion the authors engage with the latest developments of the debate, cementing in history the worth and merits of Byzantine art:¹³⁹

Very obviously[,] the question is what artistic significance these Byzantine sculptures have to claim. If one only considers the negative properties, such as the lack of liveliness and variety, the little freedom and the limitation of independent invention, the esteem is very low. But one must look at the positive sides: the memorability of what is considered representative and the transformation of antiquity that was handed to the Western Middle Ages. (The motifs) are taken from Greco-Roman and Early Christian sculpture. Statues, sarcophagi, and pure reliefs equally contributed to the Byzantine production, and in the fusion of the impressions lies an independent creation and is not a mere copy. [...] Byzantine art owes its fertilization of Western art to the easily teachable and memorable of the selection and simplification of the antique design, which is alive in itself. In the representation of the human body, the uneducated medieval artist was not capable of easily receiving classic art, as it was possible for him in the forms prepared from

Il Poligrafo, 2002, 89–96. Grazyna Jurkowlaniec, 'West and East Perspectives on the 'Greek Manner' in the Early Modern Period', *Ikonotheka*, 22, 2009, 71–91.

¹³⁵ Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*, 7-9. On contemporaneous reevaluation of Byzantine art in an Italian context, see Moretti, *Roma bizantina*, 177-92.

¹³⁶ Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, 119-123/127-131.

¹³⁷ Riegl, *Die spätromische Kunst-Industrie*, 121/129.

¹³⁸ Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz*, 10.

¹³⁹ See for instance Georg Graf Vitzhum von Eckstädt's lecture delivered at the University of Leipzig in 1910 and published in the journal *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* the following year: Georg Graf Vitzhum von Eckstädt, 'Résumé der Antrittsvorlesung an der Universität Leipzig am 19. November 1910', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 20, 1911, 352-54.

Byzantium. Byzantium gave to the western artist an easier feeling for the pure and close to nature inventions of ancient times.¹⁴⁰

The paragraph offers a concise summary of the *byzantinische Frage* and a solution to its dilemma, elaborating on Byzantine art's intermediary role between Antiquity and the West. The connection between Byzantium and the *Abendland* had been demonstrated by Goldschmidt in his earlier publications on Western ivories, in which Byzantine elements are identified in pieces from all periods, with particular frequency in Ottonian times.¹⁴¹ The ties between the Byzantine ivories and the past are in turn illustrated throughout the analysis of *Die byzantinische Elfenbeinskulpturen*, in which emphasis is placed on ancient paintings and sculptures as *Vorbilder* for the style of the eastern reliefs. Motifs were chosen, simplified, recomposed, and presented to an 'uneducated' West that could not have understood the complex forms of classical art. Byzantium had preserved what was important from antiquity and handed it to the West in original elaborations.

Whether the authors of *Die byzantinische Elfenbeinskulpturen* were committed to contributing to the Byzantine Question or were reproducing an intellectual convention of their time is unclear. *Malerisch*, however, is a striking choice for the name of the first of the Byzantine ivory groups. The denomination stands out among the other clusters' names. It engages with a critical term that had determined the fall and rise of Baroque art and that had allowed for a reconsideration of the artistic assessment of Hellenistic sculpture. Besides demonstrating the intellectual modernity of the authors, the choice possibly aspired to relaunch an interest in the value of Byzantium through its ivories.

¹⁴⁰ *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 12-13: 'Sehr naheliegend ist die Frage, welche künstlerische Bedeutung diese byzantinische Plastik zu beanspruchen hat. Zieht man nur die negativen Eigenschaften in Betracht, wie den Mangel an Lebendigkeit und Vielseitigkeit, die geringe Freiheit und die Beschränkung selbständiger Erfindung, so sinkt die Wertschätzung auf einen sehr niedrigen Grad. Man muß dagegen das Positive ins Auge fassen, die Einprägsamkeit des Repräsentativen und die dem abendländischen Mittelalter vermittelnde Umgestaltung der Antike. (Die Motive) sind der griechisch-römischen und der altchristlichen Skulptur entnommen. Freifigur, Sarkophagplastik und reines Relief waren gleichmäßig an der byzantinischen Gestaltung mitwirkend, und in der Verschmelzung der Eindrücke liegt eine selbständige Schöpfung und keine bloße Kopie. [...] Der Auslese und Vereinfachung der an sich lebendigen antiken Gestaltungen, dem leicht Lehrbaren und Einprägsamen verdankt die byzantinische Kunst ihre Befruchtung der abendländischen. Der in der Darstellung des Menschen unerzogene mittelalterliche Künstler wäre nicht fähig gewesen, die klassische Kunst direkt so leicht aufzunehmen, wie es ihm in der von Byzanz präparierten Form möglich war. Sie bot ihm ein schnelleres Nachempfinden der reichen und naturnahen Erfindungen des Altertums'.

¹⁴¹ Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen* vols 1-4, passim. In vol 2, on Ottonian works, over a quarter of the text images for comparative material illustrates Byzantine ivories.

Conclusions

Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's study of Byzantine ivories is monumental in its endeavour to collect, present, and find a place for Byzantine art within contemporaneous Western-centric conversations. It is a testament to the need to categorize Byzantium in relation to dominant conversations on the Antique, the Renaissance, and Baroque art and in relation to art historical narratives preoccupied with a dialectical examination of works. Therefore, it is problematic to rely on the authors' analysis for further assessments of Byzantine artworks without considering the intellectual ground that informed their observations. Nevertheless, Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's ivory study remains seminal insofar as it demonstrates that the younger and often neglected fields of Byzantine and Medieval studies have much to offer to a history of the discipline. Entangled with contemporaneous art theories and art discourses, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen* reveals that the thinking of figures such as Adolf von Hildebrand, Heinrich Wölfflin, and Alois Riegl informed examinations of artworks beyond the canonical West. It thus invites a careful reconsideration of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century foundational studies across the discipline.

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