MIMETOFOBIA

a cura di Michele Di Monte, Benjamin Paul, Silvia Pedone

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BENTE KIILERICH

From Antique *Mimesis* to Contemporary Hyperrealism

The term *mimesis* (μίμησις) occurs for the first time around the middle of the 5th century BC. The etymology is related to the word *mimos* and the *mim-* compounds were originally used especially about performative art such as dancing and singing.[1] *Mimesis* can indicate both an act, e.g., performing, painting, sculpting, and the result of the act; a *mimema* (pl. *mimemata*) is the finished result, e.g., a painting or a sculpture.[2] In relation to art-historical questions, the term is often associated with notions of imitation and copying, although it may be taken in the more general sense of representation. A closer look at some ancient authors' use of the term and extant Greek and Roman artworks suggests that *mimesis* had multiple meanings.[3]

Mimesis as Neutral Representation

The earliest use of the noun *mimesis* is probably in Herodotus' History, composed around 450 BC. Herodotus reports that Cambyses visited an Egyptian temple and ridiculed a statue of Hephaistos, possibly an Egyptian god that looked somewhat like Hephaistos. Herodotus describes the image as a '*mimesis*' of a dwarf or pygmy: πυγμαίου ανδρος μίμησις εστί (3.37). He does not inform us

1 Among the numerous publications on *mimesis*, may be noted Halliwell 2002, with bibliography, 383-417. For a short survey, see Potolsky 2006.

2 Liddell & Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford 1976, 1134, *mimeomai*: imitate, represent, portray; *mimema*: anything imitated, counterfeit, copy; *mimesis*: imitation, reproduction by means of art; cf. Halliwell 2002, 17.

3 A shorter discussion in Danish appeared in Kiilerich 2019.

about the visual appearance or style of the image, except that it is a representation of a small, perhaps slightly disfigured, man. Travelling in Egypt, Herodotus marvels at the local architecture, noting columns that imitate palm trees (στύλοισί τε φοίνικας τα δένδρεα μεμιμημένοισι, Hdt. 2.169). Palm-shaped columns feature in Egyptian sacred architecture. Such columns, however, are highly stylised; the vegetal form turned to stone could therefore hardly be regarded as an exact copy or slavish imitation of a botanical phenomenon. The *mimesis* of the vegetal column, like that of the pygmy, does not imply naturalistic likeness or copying, but must be taken in the general sense of representation. In combination with other words, the *mimema* can take on a more specific meaning.

Daidalou Mimema

In a fragment of Aeschylus' satyr play *Isthmiasthai* or *Theoroi* (Spectators), dating from around 470/460 BC, *mimema* is one of many words for pictorial representation (Fr. 78a, vv. 1-22). A satyr who is about to present his portrait as a votive gift to Poseidon in the god's sanctuary at Isthmia claims that this '*Daidalou mimema*' – a visual representation made by or worthy of the legendary sculptor Daedalus – is so like himself that his mother would be shocked at the striking resemblance. Using various terms, including *mimema*, *eikon*, *eidolon* and *morph*ê, the satyr explains that the representation is an *eidolon* in his full form, only lacking his voice (είδωλον ειναι τουτ᾽ εμηι μορφηι πλέον, *to* Δαιδάλου μίμημα, φωνης δει μόνον, vv. 6-7).[4] The words must be understood in the context of the stage and the irony of the satyr play. Still, the contested passage shows the growing concern not only with likeness but not least with life-likeness. Daedalus' name is associated with statues that could walk and talk; they were marvellous and wondrous things. Thus the reference to the magical proto-artist Daedalus confirms that technical achievements were highly praised.
It is debated what kind of image Aeschylus had in mind, but an early

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4 Instead of *pleon* in verse 6, Ferrari 2013, 202, *pneon*: "che respira della mia figura", a figure that breathes.

Fig. 1
Zeus/Poseidon from Artemision, bronze, ca 470/460 BC. Athens, National Archaeological Museum (photo: B. Kiilerich).

Classical bronze statue would certainly have provided the most convincing idea of a lifelike image [Fig. 1].[5] It may seem that Aeschylus had some misgivings with regard to this new medium, as he is reported by a late source to have said that "the old statues though simply made are thought divine; while the new, though superbly wrought, have less of the divine in them" (Porphyry, De Abstinentia 2.18). Such misgivings are probably treated ironically in the satyr play. In any event, the many terms for image contained in these few verses indicate that visual representation was a complex phenomenon that had reached a new advanced stage in the early Classical age. Unfortunately, because most Greek artworks are lost, we are precluded from gaining a proper idea of the various mimetic modes that once existed. Moreover, most of the extant artworks have lost an important element: colour.
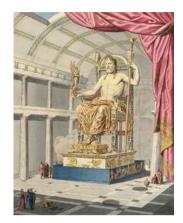
The Colour of *Mimesis*

Likeness (*eikon*) appears when the work possesses certain features in common with the subject represented. The artist makes likenesses by means of form and colour (Plato, Cratylus 432b 8-9). The modern evaluation of the mimetic level of ancient sculpture has, paradoxically, been made from now colourless works. When evaluating sculpture, a main question is the role played by the original polychromy (Liverani 2004). Did a given work look more or less mimetically convincing when painted? While it is difficult to fully ap-

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5 For the votive gift as a statue, see Kiilerich 2006b; Ferrari 2013; Sonnino 2016.

preciate the original effect of polychromy, remains of pigments on ancient sculpture suggest that several chromatic solutions existed. In certain cases, the statue-painter could have used paint naturalistically. In other cases, the intended effect could have been completely different (Kiilerich 2016). We may tentatively propose that archaic art is basically non-mimetic. If the Greeks had been interested in making naturalistic images, they would not have applied a non-naturalistic colouring as they did on the Siphnian treasury at Delphi, ca 525. On the frieze, the manes of horses were painted blue, green, pink and red (Brinkmann 2014: 88-89, fig. 10). If the reconstructed polychromy is correct, it can be concluded that the artists had no interest whatsoever in depicting animals naturalistically. It may be speculated as to whether the sculptors used colour to stress a material and ontological distinction between image and reality. In archaic art, the artists often depicted creatures that do not exist in the real world such as gorgons, three-headed monsters and centaurs. In these instances, the artist could hardly observe the model. The pedimental figures of Medusa from the temple of Artemis at Corfu, ca 600/590, and the three-bodied Bluebeard from the Athenian Acropolis, ca 575, stood out in strong primary colours. Such large, non-mimetic apparitions must have looked not unlike blown-up cartoon figures. It is reasonable to assume that colour was applied according to different principles in archaic sculpture and in marble and bronze statues from around 480 onwards, in the very years that the terms *mimema* and *mimesis* gain ground. The pedimental sculpture from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (470-456) displays a mimetically sculpted anatomy showing veins and muscles that give a convincing idea of the human anatomy (Barringer 2005). Despite a certain stylisation, the about life-sized figures appear almost like 'living beings'. With parted lips (King Oinomaos), varied facial expressions, and blood running through their veins, the figures are *empnooi*, they seem to breathe with inner life.[6] When new and in a complete and painted state, the central figures in the east pediment at Olympia – when seen from a distance – might well have rendered the impression of being real men and women. Yet, was the artists' intention

6 For *empnoos*, 'breathing image', see Steiner 2001, 27.

Fig. 2
Pheidias' Zeus in Olympia, as imagined by A.-C. Quatremaire de Quincy, *Le Jupiter Olympien,* Paris 1814.

to represent them in this guise? Given the setting on a temple, this seems doubtful. Moreover, the central figure in both pediments is a god – Zeus in the east, Apollo in the west. Although gods were anthropomorphic, they were not human. Plausibly the divinities were distinguished not only by their larger size and no-longer-extant attributes but also by other means, such as gilding.

Mimesis and *Phantasia*

While we associate classical art with the still extant Parthenon sculpture and its idealistic naturalism, Phidias' reputation was not built on architectural sculpture; it was built on non-mimetic creations, namely the gigantic *Gesamtkunstwerk* in gold and ivory, the chryselephantine statues of Athena in the Parthenon and Zeus at Olympia; the latter was hailed as one of the seven wonders in the ancient world. How could Phidias depict Zeus, when he had never seen him? He could not enter into the heavens to study a living model. The answer was that Phidias crafted the statue of Zeus from Homer's description and by use of his inner vision by imagining what the majestically enthroned god would look like [Fig. 2]. It was by use of *phantasia* that Phidias created Zeus, says Philostratos (Apoll. Vit. 6.19; cf. Cicero, Orat. 2.2.9; Perry 2005: 150-171). As Aristotle had explained, *phantasia*, roughly equivalent of imagination is the capacity to form images in the mind (De anima 428a). By means of *mimesis* you can represent things you have seen; by means of *phan-*

tasia you can also represent things you have not seen – such as the majestic thunder-god in all his glory. The representation of the divine apparition was intended to visualise superhuman qualities. It was not intended to imitate nature.

Mimesis as Naturalism

Based on a rather too literal reading of a passage in Plato's *Republic*, *mimesis* has been perceived as a 'mirrored image' of the natural world (cf. Plato, Rep. 596d-e). It has been claimed that the Greek artists strove to achieve a close resemblance between the subject to be represented and the representation, and that they succeeded in reaching this goal in the Classical period (Gombrich 1961). The term *mimesis* then is tied to the naturalism paradigm and takes on the double meaning of being an artistic attitude (exact copying) and a style (naturalism). Ernst Gombrich named the stylistic transition from the Archaic to the Classical period 'the Greek revolution'.[7] The word revolution is unfortunate, as it implies a sudden and violent change. Still, Gombrich also spoke about a gradual adjustment to natural appearances (1961: 118) placing the climax of the revolution towards 350 BC (1961: 127) – in other words a process of one and a half century. Many factors, including technical advances and new functions of images, lay behind the forming of a given style, and the Classical certainly came about gradually rather than suddenly. At any rate there is no indication that exact copying of nature was the primary aim. Indeed, 'naturalism' was rather the means than the end: a means of showing artistic proficiency.[8]

Mimesis as a 'mirrored image' of nature is illustrated by the well-known anecdote about Zeuxis, Parrhasios and the grapes. Around 425, these two painters challenged each other in a contest of who could paint the finest picture (Bann 1989: chap. 1). According to

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7 Gombrich 1961, 116-145. Gombrich is influenced by E. Loewy's 'making before matching'- theory, meaning that artists at a first stage follow some schemata before they 'learn' to imitate nature. This paradigm has rightly been criticised.

8 Cf. Steiner 2001, 28, in connection with the Riace bronzes: "not so much the living human form […] as the virtuosity of the statue-maker".

Fig. 3
Wall-painting of grapes, triclinium from Pompeii (casa II, 1, 2), ca 50 AD (after: De Caro 2001, fig. 32).

Pliny, Zeuxis painted grapes that were so convincingly lifelike that birds began to peck at them. Proud of the result, Zeuxis asked his colleague to draw the curtain and show his painting. What curtain? The curtain *was* the painting. Zeuxis then had to admit that Parrhasios was the better painter for having deceived him while he had only deceived the birds (Pliny, NH. 35.65). At first sight, this may be taken as evidence that the Greeks – as handed down by Pliny – were mimetophilic in the sense of striving for an ancient equivalent of photorealism. But it is not necessarily so. What was praised was in particular technical finesse, which included the ability to make accurate renderings. Moreover, these were neither easel paintings, nor wall-paintings but stage designs. As goes forth from Pliny reporting that "the birds flew up onto the stage" (in scaenam aves advolarent), the images were part of a theatrical display.

What kind of *mimesis* was required to fool the birds? Although birds do react to forms and colours, and many birds have sharper eyesight than humans, no matter how naturalistic and well-done the painting, it is highly doubtful that a bird should have been able to perceive a painted image of grapes, such as the ones preserved for instance from Roman houses [Fig. 3]. Experiments have been made with seagulls: in order to get food seagull chicks peck at a red spot on the mother bird's yellow beak. When confronted with a yellow stick with two red spots the birds peck still more vigorously. Apparently birds do not react to exact resemblance but to colour clues (Ramachandran & Hirstein 1999: 16-21).

Pliny's anecdote should hardly be taken at face value; still it raises interesting issues with regard to art and illusion. At first Zeuxis mistakes the picture for a real curtain and then he recognises it as

an artifice. The thrill comes from the skilfully painted deception. To enjoy the skill of the artifice, the viewer must be aware that it is artifice. In any event, it requires visual literacy to perceive a picture. Thus contrary to the storyline as related by Pliny, it actually seems easier to deceive a human being than a bird by artistic mimesis.

Mimesis as Illusion

Zeuxis' grapes and Parrhasios' curtain are something else than they appear to be. According to the anecdote, the paintings deceive the viewer on account of their mimetically skilled design. Plato notes that pictures may betray. Images – like sophists – are something else than they pretend to be. The images appear different, when seen from a distance and when seen close-up. Seen from a distance a statue may look deceptively like a man, but seen close-up it turns out to be merely an image of a man (Rep. 10. 601c). Such images are therefore illusions (*eidola*, *phantasmata*, *phenomena*) that are the result of artistic representation (Janaway 1995; Kiilerich 2009: 45-47). Plato's position, that images deceive, strikes a familiar note in our digital age with millions of manipulated images on the Internet. In the Platonic sense one can hold that pictorial *mimesis* may indeed be fraudulent. But Plato, of course, was no art critic, and he made references to art to illustrate other phenomena, such as the relationship between truth and falsehood and the devious behaviour of sophists.[9]

Plato sees the image (*eidolon*) as a copy of a copy, as famously stated in the text on couches, also known as Plato's theory of forms (Rep. 10. 595c-597c). There are three types of couches (*klinai*): (a) the divine form, the idea (*eidos*); (b) the physical couch crafted by the carpenter and (c) the artistic *mimesis* of a couch (*eidolon*). The artist's painted couch or bed is but a copy of the carpenter's bed, which itself is but a copy of the idea 'bed' (Rep. 597a-c). Thus the image is two removes from the idea. Moreover we only see part of it, e.g., in a painting the front or backside only. Thus when Plato criticises the

9 For a thorough discussion of *mimesis* and representation in Plato, see Halliwell 2002, 37-147; further Potolsky 2006, 15-31.

eidolon, his mimetophobic stance is that the representation renders merely part of the truth. In any event, an *eidolon*-couch possesses many forms/truths. Madame Récamier's chaise longue as painted by David (1800) looks quite different from, say, the bed in Van Gogh's room at Arles (1888 and two replicas from 1889) or, Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* (1955), not to say Tracy Emin's *My Bed* (1999). The latter, a sculptural installation of the artist's own bed, is actually closer to the carpenter's bed, and thus in a subtly perverted way to be placed in between the second and third level in Plato's hierarchy.

In a later dialogue, Plato further distinguishes between *eikastikê* and *phantastikê mimesis* (Sophist 234b-235e). The first shows a sculpture 'as it is' that is according to its actual proportions, the second is manipulated, being a sculpture with false proportions. In order that a statue may look right, the artist has to correct it and make it 'wrong'. Phidias therefore used optical corrections for his 12 m high chryselephantine statue of Athena Parthenos. If it had reproduced true proportions, the upper part would have appeared too small and the lower part too large.[10] Unknowingly Plato foresees the possibilities of Photoshop, Instagram filters and other digital means of making *phantastikê mimesis*. As such his writings are pertinent in the context of contemporary visual culture.

It seems that the mimetic qualities of Greek art relied on a number of non-mimetic practices such as *phantastikê* proportions, *phantasia* images, non-naturalistic colours, and a varied use of material. But in particular, the religious function of images, which was dominant throughout the Archaic and Classical periods, required a basically non-mimetic visual representation. With the spread of art to the secular realm in the Hellenistic age, mimetic strategies, in the sense of lifelike likenesses – *eikastikê mimesis* – gained greater ground especially for portraiture. At least the Hellenistic era opened for a greater range of visual approaches than before and thus a wider interpretation of *mimesis*. The demand for artworks in the private

10 Optical corrections were also used by Giovanni Pisano, Donatello and Michelangelo, see Shearman 1992, 214-216. I am grateful to Benjamin Paul for drawing my attention to this.

sphere also resulted in the copying of coveted sculptures: *mimesis* in the sense of repetition.

Mimesis as Repetition

In early Republican Rome, the blacksmith Mamurius Veturius made eleven exact copies of a magical shield that had fallen from heaven. There being no apparent difference between the original and the eleven identical copies, it made no difference to King Numa Pompilius which one was the original shield and which ones were copies (Dionysius of Halicarnassus II. 71). Mario Perniola (1980) has referred to this phenomenon as an instance of the artist as simulator and the image as simulacrum. The legend is of particular interest as an example of *mimesis* as exact copy. The 'age of mechanical reproduction' coined by Walter Benjamin in 1935 can in effect be projected back into the Roman era. Indeed, when thousands of imperial statues were to be distributed all over the Roman world, 'mechanical' reproduction was called for: the imperial effigy had to be recognizable, and there would have been little point in making changes to an established imperial formula. The mimetic qualities of the image did not lie in its resemblance to the emperor but in its resemblance to his official image.

The popularity of Greek visual culture also led to more or less faithfully mimetically copied artworks and the functional change of certain images from figures of cult to figures of culture; with reference to Benjamin (1974: 21), the *Kultwert* (cult value) changed to *Ausstellungswert* (display value). Since many more Roman copies and variations on Greek sculptures than Greek 'originals' are preserved, we may run the risk of associating originality with the Greeks and mimetic copying with the Romans. This is certainly wrong. As it is now generally acknowledged by students of Roman art, by imitation, the Romans intended emulation (Perry 2005). Furthermore, with a change in material, often from bronze to marble, the mimetic properties would inevitably change.

The Venus de'Medici (Florence, Uffizi galleries) is a marble copy of a bronze statue [Fig. 4]. The inscription on the base states that ΚΛΕΟΜΕΝΗΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΟΔΩΡΟΥ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΟΣ ΕΠΩΕΣΕΝ, ''The Athe-

Fig. 4
Kleomenes' Venus de'Medici, Roman marble version after bronze original from ca 100 BC. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.

nian Kleomenes, son of Apollodoros, made it'', indicating it to be the work of a Greek artist (Haskell & Penny 1981: no. 88, 325-328). But whether Kleomenes is the author of the statue in Florence or of the 'original' is uncertain. This no-longer-extant 'original' is mimetic in so far as it derives from Praxiteles' Knidian Aphrodite, from around 350 BC, a statue that had become a paradigm for Aphrodite/Venus representations. Venus de'Medici is recorded in Rome at least by 1638. Louis XIV ordered five copies: four in marble made by four different artists and one in bronze (Haskell & Penny 1981: 325). In this instance, the point of *mimesis* was to get exemplars of a famous artwork, while the artwork as such was not defined by its mimetic or non-mimetic qualities. Venus regained popularity as a garden ornament – reproduced in lead it could be painted or gilded to acquire a finer surface. Small-sized Medici Venuses were produced in bronze, porcelain and other material. In the 18th and 19th centuries, countless plaster casts were taken from the Venus de'Medici. Some of these were copies of other plaster copies (Haskell & Penny 1981: 325-328). The Italian arte povera artist Giulio Paolini (b. 1940) has made several works titled *Mimesi* (1975 and later). One of these consists of two identical plaster casts of the Venus de'Medici.[11] The

11 Monferini 1988, pl. 16; Di Stefano 1998, pl. 162; Kiilerich 2006a, 244-245. Paolini uses the title Mimesi for other compositions: e.g., twin images of the torso or head of Praxiteles' Hermes, and the head of Athena Lemnia.

two figures can be perceived as twin copies, reflections of each other, and as each a copy of the antique Venus. When Paolini presents the Venus in plaster, it is a *mimesis* not only of the statue in Florence but of the whole classical tradition.

From *Mimesis* to Hyperrealism

The most characteristic distinction in visual *mimesis* is that the model and the representation are ontologically different. No matter how close the resemblance, the work differs fundamentally because of its material properties: "…images are far from having the same properties as the things they are images of" (Plato, Cratylus 432d 2-4). As Plato further notes: "the image must not reproduce all the qualities of that which it imitates if it is to be an image" (432b 3-5). A human being of flesh, blood and bone (*physis*) is represented in art (*techne*) in materials such as wood, terracotta, marble and bronze.[12] Mimetic qualities depend on material possibilities and technological changes. Today, artificial materials, such as various polymers, have made possible the creation of surprisingly lifelike works. Following Duane Hanson, hyperrealistic artists, including John DeAndrea, Carole A. Feuerman [Fig. 5], Sam Jinks, Tony Matelli, Jamie Salmon and Marc Sijan, have created sculptures in polyvinyl, silicone and various other media that have a strikingly lifelike appearance. They certainly, *pace* Plato, almost succeed in deceiving the viewer.[13]

Based on casts of live models, the American sculptor John DeAndrea (b. 1941) makes three-dimensional hyper-mimetic representations that give the impression of being real people (Letze & Fritz 2018: 78-81). In the present context, his interpretation of *The Dying Gaul* from 1984 is of particular interest. This is a deliberately mimetically conceived work repeating the seated posture of the Dying Gaul in the Capitoline Museum. Made from a living

12 The word *techne* comprises art, skill, craft, handicraft, medicine, etc.

13 For examples of works by these and other hyperrealistic sculptors, see the catalogue Letze & Fritz 2018. It is worth noting that hyperrealism is not an isolated phenomenon but has been a trend for the last fifty years explored by artists from Europe, USA, Canada, Mexico, Africa and Australia.

Fig. 5
Carole A. Feuerman, *The Midpoint*, polyvinyl, paint, etc. Giardino della Marinaressa, 2017 Venice Biennale (photo: Wikimedia Commons) (above, left).
Fig. 6
John DeAndrea, *The Dying Gaul*, polyvinyl, oil-pigment, acrylic hair, 1984. Portland Art Museum, Oregon (Flickr, Creative commons license) (above, right).
Fig. 7
Dying Gaul, marble, Roman 1st-2nd c. AD version after Pergamene bronze from ca 230-200 BC. Rome, Museo Capitolino (below, right).

model, it is cast in polyvinyl enhanced with oil pigments and acrylic hair [Fig. 6]. Seen from a distance or in photographs, the sculpture definitely looks like a real man. As Aeschylus' satyr might have put it: it only lacks a voice; or as Plato would have been able to observe: seen from a distance it is deceptively close to the real thing. Still, in front of the sculpture, the body is not real to the touch, the bodily temperature is wrong and it has no human smell. It is not *empnoos*, breathing with life. By contrast to the legendary works of Daedalus, despite its lifelikeness, the statue can neither walk nor talk. If we compare DeAndrea's Gaul with the Dying Gaul in Rome [Fig. 7], the

20th-century work is more mimetic in the naturalistic sense than the ancient one. In its original polychromy the marble Gaul would have looked different from now (Polito 1999), just as its Hellenistic prototype, Epigonos' wounded trumpeter (Pliny, NH 34.88), would have presented still other mimetic properties depending on the fashioning of the bronze. But the aesthetic of burnished bronze and polychrome marble inevitably differs from that of polyvinyl. Paradoxically, in spite of its artistic qualities and striking hyperrealism, DeAndrea's Gaul is almost too lifelike to render a true impression of a dying man.

Some contemporary artists have created mimetic forms that superficially are quite true to nature, but are totally unrealistic in other respects, for instance, with regard to size. Also working in polyvinyl, the Australian sculptor Ron Mueck (b. 1958) reproduced his own features in a mimetically convincing manner in *Mask II* (2001-02). However, the naturalism of the work is negated by its being a hollowed-out mask and especially by its over-life-size of 1.18 m (Sturgis 2012: fig. 48; Cranny-Francis 2013: fig. 1). Mueck has made other hyperrealistic sculptures in fibreglass resin, vinyl and silicone, some dressed in real clothes. The surface realism, however, is challenged when it turns out that the sculptures are mere statuettes. Being either smaller or larger than life, Mueck's discomforting hyperrealistic sculptures are actually quite unrealistic.

An extreme endeavour to break down the barriers between nature (*physis*) and art (*techne*) is represented by the British Marc Quinn's series of self-portraits, starting with *Self 1991*. The portrait consists of a cast of Quinn's own head dipped in silicone and filled with nine pints of his own blood, which is subsequently frozen (Sturgis 2012: 54-55). The portrait is re-created every five years with fresh blood, *Self 1996*, *Self 2001* and so on to present. This may seem grotesque. Still, as Aristotle noted: people take pleasure in viewing images of things that are unpleasant to contemplate in real life. It is rewarding to look at pictures of base animals and corpses, because they give knowledge, and knowledge is a source of joy and satisfaction (Poetics 4, 1448b 4-19).[14] Moreover, the *pars pro toto* heads are to

some extent anchored in the medieval tradition of reliquary busts and brandea.

Conclusion: *Mimesis* as Visualisation

To imitate is a basic human instinct (cf. Aristotle, Poetics 4, 1448b). But in contrast to the performative arts, in which a dancer or actor mimes with his or her body, a sculpture exists in virtue of its material and is defined by it. The various materials of the visual arts – from wood, stone, metal and ivory to modern polymers – result in different kinds of *mimemata*. In fact, the choice of material to a large extent determines the degree of resemblance and lifelikeness. In contemporary art, artificial material and new technological solutions have made it possible for artists to create sculptures that may fool the viewer into believing them to be real – the kind of *mimesis* of which Plato would have disapproved. In antiquity the media were more limited. Marble was particularly well-suited for rendering thin draperies and for depicting the shape of the female body, while burnished bronze provided a better illusion of sun-tanned male skin. When Phidias visualised Athena Parthenos and the Olympic Zeus, he chose neither marble, nor bronze, but made the statues in the chryselephantine technique, since shiny gold and ivory were best suited for visualising their divine qualities. Written and material evidence from antiquity suggests that artists wanted their images to be imbued with life, but that the aim of mimesis was not to make *mimemata* that were exact copies of nature. A *mimema* comprised anything from an abstracted concept, such as Herodotus' palm trees, to a closer-to-nature representation such as statues of Greek athletes. *Mimesis* must be understood as the act of visualising in a variety of artistic media, in both 'fantastic' and 'eikastic' modes. The mimetic practice thus ranges from *phantasia* creations to the deliberate copy as in Mamurius' shields, Paolini's *Mimesi* and DeAndrea's *Dying Gaul*.

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14 For Aristoteles and *mimesis*, Halliwell 2002, 151-259. The passage 1448b 4-19

is cited in full on p. 178.

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