

The Gosford Wellhead

An Ancient Roman Masterpiece

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Seán Hemingway

With a contribution by Dorothy H. Abramitis,
Federico Carò, and Adriana Rizzo



The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Director's Note

At the entrance to The Met's galleries of Roman art, prominently displayed and bathed in natural light, stands a magnificent Roman wellhead (or puteal) that dates to the second century A.D., when the empire reached its greatest extent. Carved in high relief around the exterior of the marble wellhead are the finest existing representations in ancient sculpture of two Greek myths: those of Narcissus and Echo, and Hylas and the Nymphs. The Gosford Wellhead, as this work is known, reminds us how deeply the Romans appreciated ancient Greek culture. As we marvel at the superb detail of the carving and reflect on it today, we also cannot help but be struck by how these myths and the cautionary themes they embody continue to resonate in the contemporary world.

A recent acquisition by the Museum, the wellhead is arguably the most important Roman sculpture to enter the collection since The Met purchased the Badminton Sarcophagus in 1955. Such a masterwork of Roman art, complete with a distinguished archaeological provenance, rarely comes onto the market, and we are grateful to its former owner, James Charteris, Earl of Wemyss and March, for entrusting its care to us, knowing that the wellhead will now be appreciated by millions of visitors to The Met after its long residence at Gosford House, in Scotland.

The acquisition of the Gosford Wellhead was made possible by numerous Trustees and friends of the Department of Greek and Roman Art. In particular, I want to acknowledge Mark Fisch, Chair of the Acquisitions Committee, for his leading role, as well as those who supported the acquisition financially, including Lila Acheson Wallace, Howard S. and Nancy Marks, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald S. Lauder, The Jaharis Family Foundation Inc., Philodoroi, Leon Levy Foundation, Renée E. and Robert A. Belfer, Mr. and Mrs.

John A. Moran, Mr. and Mrs. Mark Fisch, Annette de la Renta, Beatrice Stern, Frederick J. Iseman, The Abner Rosen Foundation Inc., Mr. and Mrs. Richard L. Chilton Jr., Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Barbara G. Fleischman, in memory of Lawrence A. Fleischman, the Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation, and The Bothmer Purchase and Diane Carol Brandt Funds.

The remarkable history of this exquisite sculpture—from its discovery in 1797 in Ostia, the ancient port of Rome, to its entry into The Met collection in 2019—is eloquently recounted in this *Bulletin* for the first time by Seán Hemingway, John A. and Carole O. Moran Curator in Charge of the Department of Greek and Roman Art, who delves into its rich iconography and discusses its broader significance within the history of art. I applaud Seán's initiative and leadership, which were instrumental in bringing this major acquisition into the collection. I also want to recognize the many other individuals throughout the Museum for their tireless work on this endeavor, including the Registrar's and Counsel's offices. I am likewise deeply grateful to Dorothy H. Abramitis, Federico Carò, and Adriana Rizzo for their technical study, which adds important nuance to our knowledge of this outstanding sculpture. Finally, we gratefully acknowledge Mary Jaharis, whose financial support makes possible the publication of this *Bulletin* with additional gifts from The Prospect Hill Foundation. As ever, The Met's quarterly *Bulletin* program is supported in part by the Lila Acheson Wallace Fund for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, established by the cofounder of *Reader's Digest*.

Max Hollein

Marina Kellen French Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



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The most remarkable Roman sculpture to enter The Met collection in recent decades is a magnificent marble wellhead (or puteal) of the second century A.D. (fig. 1). Celebrated at the time of its discovery for its artistic quality and for the fascinating myths carved around its drum, the wellhead was excavated at Ostia, the port town of ancient Rome, and exported to England in 1801. After an 1805 publication by an Italian scholar announced the wellhead's existence to the broader world, in subsequent decades its location became unknown. In fact, the wellhead had been acquired by Francis Charteris, 7th Earl of Wemyss and 4th Earl of March (1772–1853), for Gosford House, one of the most impressive country estates in Scotland, where it resided for generations before coming to The Met in 2019.

Among the finest of some seventy Roman marble wellheads with relief decoration known today, the Gosford Wellhead, as the puteal is generally known, is the only one whose iconography relates so directly to water. The ancient sculptor seamlessly and masterfully combined two cautionary tales from Greek mythology around its exterior. One side tells the story of

Narcissus and Echo, best known from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; on the other side, we see the hero Hylas being abducted by nymphs as he fetches water for the Argonauts (who were on their quest to find the Golden Fleece), a tale recounted in the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes. This *Bulletin* delves into the wellhead's rich history, closely examines its dramatic imagery and impressive earlier restorations, and reflects on the long iconographic traditions of the myths portrayed.

Robert Fagan: Irish Artist and Antiquarian

The wellhead was discovered in the spring of 1797 by Robert Fagan (1761–1816), an Irishman whose family hailed from Cork.¹ In 1781 Fagan moved to Rome to study painting, where he enjoyed some success as a portraitist, especially of English ladies traveling to Italy. He became better known as an antiquarian and amateur archaeologist, however, one who would come to rival Gavin Hamilton (1723–1798), considered the greatest British excavator of the period.

Fagan first took up excavations in 1792 along the Via Appia. Later, with the support of Prince

1. View of the Gosford Wellhead showing Hylas being abducted by nymphs



2. Mithras sacrificing a bull. Roman, Imperial, late 2nd century A.D. Marble, L. 55 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (142 cm), H. 33 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (84 cm), D. 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (30 cm). Vatican Museum, Rome (Galleria Lapidaria XXXIII.1, inv. 6982)

3. Robert Fagan (Anglo-Irish, 1761–1816). *The Artist and His Wife*, 1803. Oil on canvas, 27 × 36 in. (68.6 × 91.4 cm). The Hunt Museum, Limerick, Ireland

Opposite: 4. Venus. Roman, ca. A.D. 100–150. Marble, H. 88 in. (223.5 cm). British Museum, London (1834.0301.1)



Augustus Frederick, son of the British monarch George III, he was granted a general excavation permit for all of Rome and the Papal States. Fagan's most extensive digs were at Ostia, Rome's ancient harbor, where he uncovered a Mithraeum—a cult temple typically in the form of a cave or cavern—that still preserved many important sculptures, including a relief of the god Mithras slaying a bull (fig. 2).² Fagan, who had a genuine passion for making archaeological discoveries, was particularly hopeful that Ostia, as a wealthy suburb of ancient Rome, would yield attractive sculptures from the imperial villas that once dotted the coast close to the Tiber River.³

A rakish and somewhat bizarre self-portrait preserves Fagan's appearance not long after he excavated the wellhead and gives a vivid sense of his flair for the dramatic (fig. 3). While he looks straight out at us with a knowing smile, his second wife, the Roman Maria Ludovica Flajani (b. 1785), gazes at him adoringly. That she is shown topless—in a bold adaptation of the “à la Grecque” portrait mode—only adds to the painting's mystery and showcases the artist's narcissism. Even after Fagan went on to become British consul general of Sicily and Malta in 1809, he kept up his archaeological activities. While living in Sicily, for example, he excavated at Selinunte and Tyndaris, where he unearthed numerous marble sculptures. He even penned a book about the antiquities of Sicily, which remained unpublished at the time of his death.

Many of the sculptures that Fagan excavated in Rome and Ostia were acquired by the Vatican.⁴ Others were shipped back to England and acquired by various British collectors, such as Thomas Hope (1769–1831), a merchant banker who bought a statue of Athena and another of Hygeia, both excavated by Fagan in 1797 at Ostia (now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art). A fine statue of Venus that Fagan unearthed in 1794 at Campo Iemini in Laurentum, outside Rome, was destined for the Prince of Wales but eventually made its way into the British Museum (fig. 4).⁵ Fagan's personal collection of ancient sculptures, including a fragment from the Parthenon frieze (recently repatriated to Greece) as well as major imperial Roman sculptures from



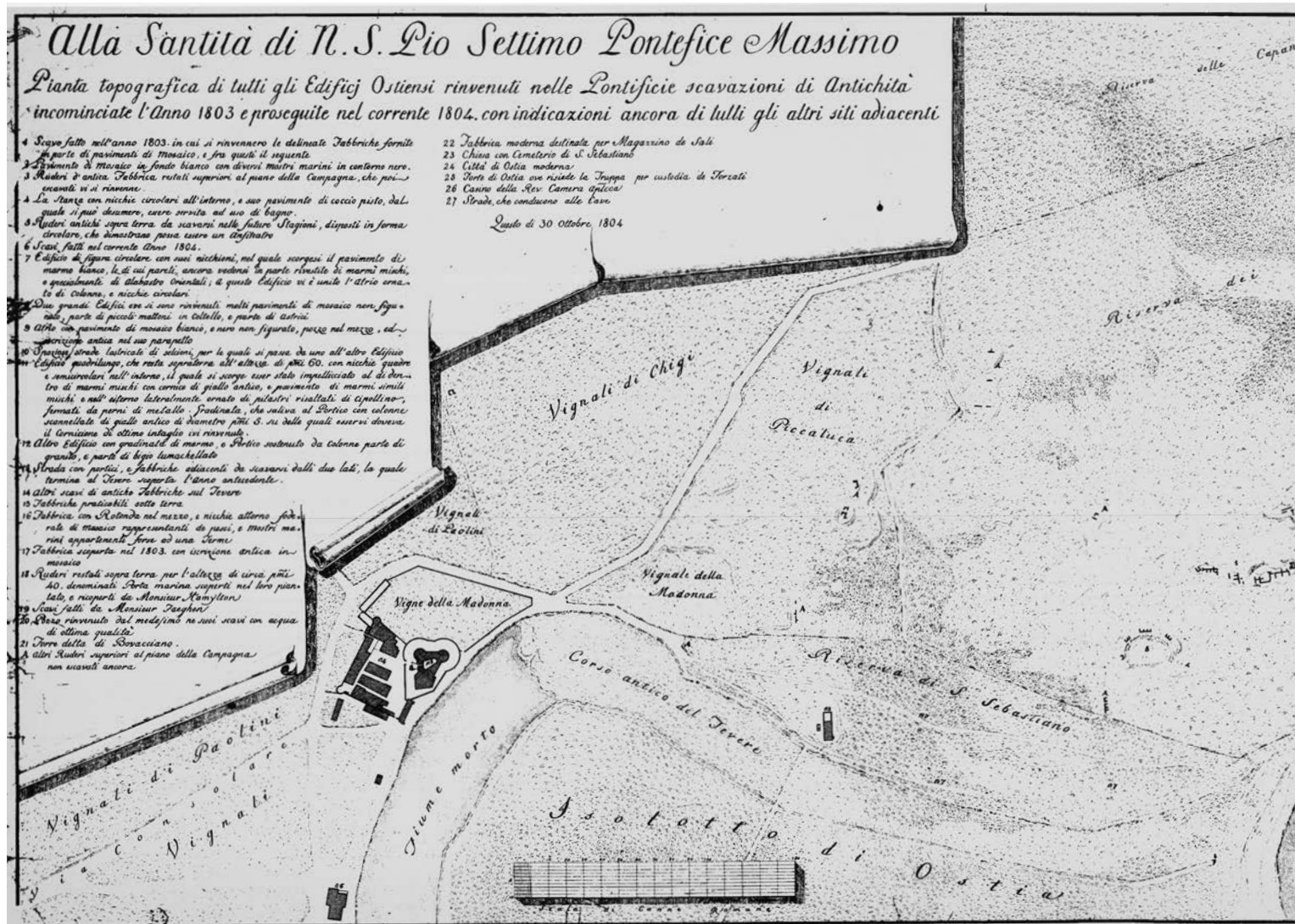
Tyndaris, were sold by his widow to the Museo Archeologico Regionale Antonino Salinas in Palermo. Besides antiquities, Fagan is known to have dealt in Old Master paintings by major artists, including Titian, Rembrandt, Caravaggio, Michelangelo, and Claude Lorrain (see fig. 7).⁶ Plagued by financial difficulties and failing health, Fagan committed suicide in 1816. The discovery of the marble wellhead at Ostia was undoubtedly a highlight of his career.

Ostia Antica and Fagan's Excavations near the Bavacciano Tower

The golden age of the Grand Tour in the eighteenth century, when British aristocrats flocked to Italy to see its ancient ruins, led to a thriving industry of private excavations for antiquities. Ancient sculptures—but especially evocative

relics of ancient Rome—were particularly prized as souvenirs. Most of the marbles acquired by British collectors came from imperial sites, especially from the second century A.D., the height of the Roman Empire.⁷ The Gosford Wellhead, found during what would be one of the last private excavations on papal lands there, became one such prize. Fagan directed the excavations, and while the findings were never fully published, the location where the wellhead was discovered is identified on a plan made for the Vatican in 1804 (fig. 5). The findspot is of great significance for a number of reasons. The wellhead was discovered near the Bavacciano Tower, a medieval building located on the south side of the mouth of the Tiber, where the river met the beach of the coastline.⁸ The tower is constructed on the foundations of an imperial

5. Plan of the excavations directed by Fagan at Ostia, 1804 (wellhead findspot located in blue at no. 20). China ink on paper, 54 × 25⁵/₈ in. (137 × 65 cm). Archivio Designi, Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica (no. 71)





6. Map of the Via Ostiensis, showing the relationship between Ostia and Rome



Roman edifice that most likely served as an ancient Roman lighthouse, which would have helped guide boats into the river. The location would have been a natural spot for disembarking before continuing up the Tiber to Rome, and the nearby land, where the wellhead was set up, would have been highly desirable real estate.

The tower is mentioned in a historical account of the English king Richard the Lionheart (1157–1199), who landed at the mouth of the Tiber in 1190: “At the entrance of the Tiber there is a beautiful but abandoned tower. There are immense ruins of ancient walls . . . On the 26th of August, the king passed through a forest called the Forest of Aeneas, where there is a marble road made like a floor that runs for 24 miles in the woods, which abound in deer, roe deer and fallow deer.”⁹ It is quite marvelous to envision Richard setting out on his horse, in close proximity to the wellhead, before making his way to Rome through the Forest of Aeneas on the still serviceable Via Ostiensis (see fig. 6). According to myths immortalized in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Aeneas, the legendary founder of Rome, made an arduous voyage there following the sack of Troy. Aeneas’s journey to Rome is imagined in a magnificent 1675 painting by Claude Lorrain (fig. 7) that shows the Tiber stretching out from



the sea into the Italian countryside toward the city. The painting is one of two by Claude that passed through Fagan's hands and which he helped to smuggle from Rome to Palermo during the French occupation of 1798 and eventually, by ship in 1799, to England under the protection of British Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson.¹⁰

Fagan's digs took place before the advent of scientific excavations, and while little is preserved today that documents the archaeological context of what he found, contemporary correspondence about the find can help us understand the circumstances and importance of its discovery. In a letter preserved in the archives of the

British Library, Fagan wrote to his friend Lord Cumberland on June 10, 1797, that the wellhead was "the most beautiful in point of composition, sculpture and preservation of any *bassorelievo* in Rome" and that it was "the admiration" of the city.¹¹ The Danish antiquarian and numismatist Georg (Jørgen) Zoëga wrote about Fagan's discovery to Hereditary Prince Frederik of Denmark, who was in Rome at the time:

The painter Fagan, under whose direction the most exquisite searches have been made in these parts, and who amongst others is responsible for the beautiful Venus, decided for the

7. Claude Lorrain (French, 1604/5?–1682). *The Arrival of Aeneas at Pallanteum*, 1675. Oil on canvas, 75 × 93⁷/₈ in. (190.5 × 238.5 cm). National Trust Collections, Anglesey Abbey, United Kingdom

8. Portrait bust of Lucius Verus. Roman, Antonine, ca. A.D. 161–169. Marble, H. 37¾ in. (96 cm). Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (933.27.3)

9. Portrait bust of Septimius Severus. Roman, Severan, ca. A.D. 195–200. Marble, H. 32¼ in. (82 cm). Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (933.27.4)

Prince of Wales [see fig. 4], has this spring on the side of Ostia discovered a number of antiquities that a few days ago were transported here to the city and are now being restored by the sculptors [John] Deare and [Francesco] Massimiliano [Laboureur]. . . . What stands out most exquisitely is the immense beauty of a bas-relief portraying two fables, Hylas and Narcissus. . . . It is a round puteal or well enclosure of Carrara marble. . . . This top part is cracked as are the precipitating walls, some parts are lost, and the faces of both heroes and of one of the Naiads have fallen off. The rest are of the most complete conservation.¹²

The wellhead was found in situ on a well, which, quite remarkably, still contained potable water, a fact marveled at by the excavation's workmen, who drank from it at the time of its

discovery. Other marble sculptures found in the same area include a colossal marble head of the emperor Commodus (Vatican Museum, Rome) and portrait busts of Lucius Verus and Septimius Severus (figs. 8, 9).¹³ The existence of high-quality imperial portraits like these and the fact that they were found in a choice location near the mouth of the Tiber River and the seashore add to the likelihood that the wellhead was set up in an imperial residence, perhaps one used as a resting place when the imperial family traveled to and from Rome by sea.

The main phase of constructing the port of Ostia began under the emperor Claudius (r. A.D. 41–54) and was completed during the rule of his adopted son, Nero (r. A.D. 54–68). A coin from the latter's reign is decorated around the perimeter with a bird's-eye view of Ostia's breakwater and associated warehouses, giving us a good



10. Sestertius depicting the harbor of Ostia during Nero's reign, A.D. 64–68. Orichalcum, Diam. 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (3.5 cm). American Numismatic Society, New York (ANS 1954.203.155)



sense of the main features of the harbor during its heyday (fig. 10). A statue of Neptune crowns a lighthouse overlooking eight vessels, from large commercial ships to a small rowboat; a personification of the Tiber River reclines below. Further improvements to the harbor were made under the emperor Trajan (r. A.D. 98–117), and the port town thrived as a shipping hub and mercantile center in the second century, when the Roman Empire reached its greatest extent.¹⁴



Restoration of the Wellhead in the Late Eighteenth Century

Georg Zoëga's letter mentions that Fagan was having the wellhead and other sculptures restored in Rome. From careful examination of the wellhead today, it is possible to determine the areas of restoration, primarily a large missing section of the upper drum and rim highlighted in blue in this photo rollout image (fig. 11).

Whether the head of Narcissus and that of Hylas (as well as one of the nymphs holding him) are

ancient or very fine late eighteenth-century restorations remains a matter of debate, but the head of Hylas is the most likely to be original, as the joins at the neck are not so regular and appear more like an ancient break that has been rejoined.

On the interior, we glimpse the nature of some of the eighteenth-century restorations and how the newly sculpted marble sections of the rim were joined by iron clamps that were sealed with lead, which is especially well preserved on

11. Rollout image of the Gosford Wellhead with main restored areas in blue



the rim (see fig. 51). The state of preservation and the character of these early restorations are comparable to those of other wellheads that have been found, such as one that was discovered in Rome in the eighteenth century and is now in the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (fig. 12), but the Gosford Wellhead, notably, has much deeper relief carving and a considerably better-preserved ancient surface.

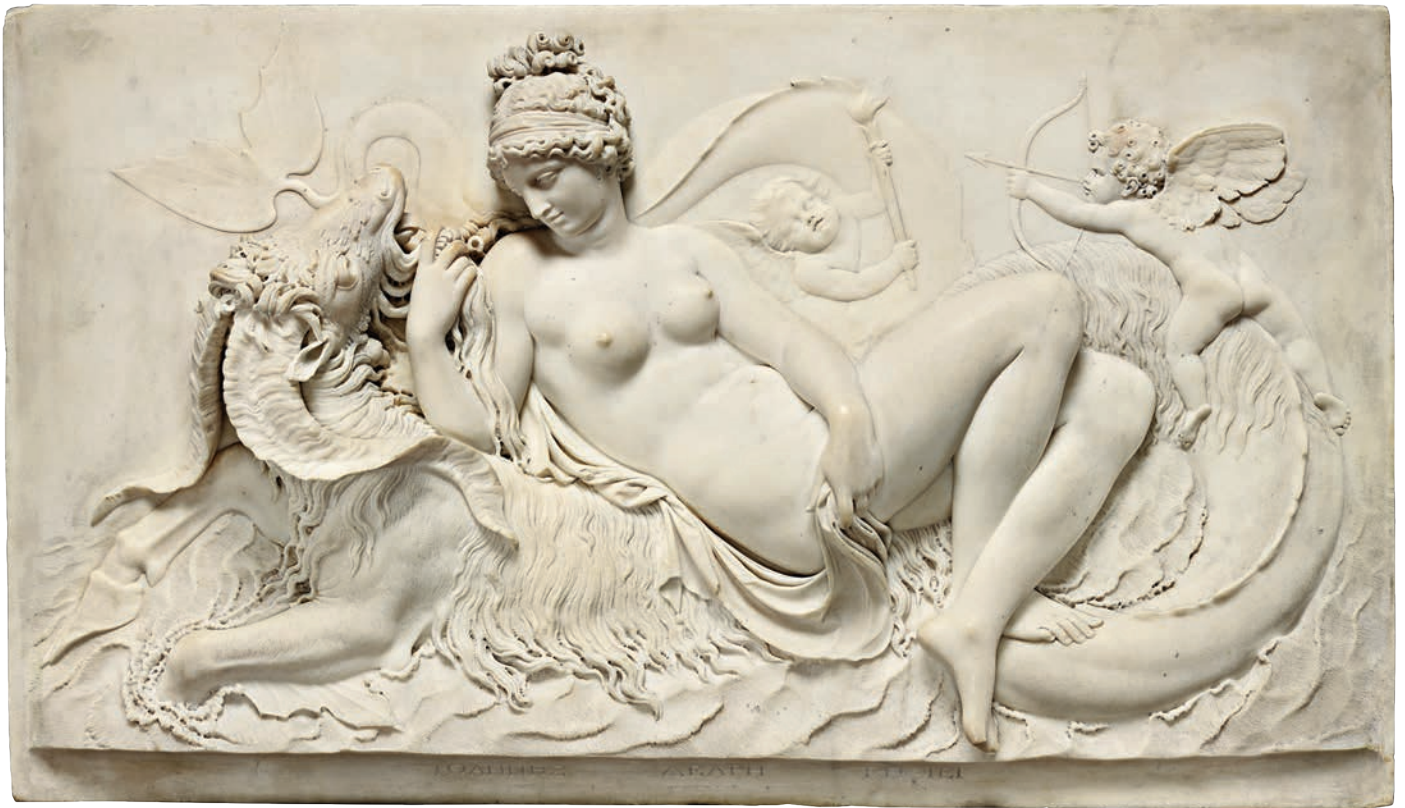
One of the marvels of the Gosford Wellhead is that these late eighteenth-century restorations, which are carved out of Carrara marble to match the original stone, are themselves excellent. John Deare (1759–1798; fig. 13), one of the two sculptors in Fagan’s employ in 1797, was a British artist living in Rome and a specialist in Neoclassical works, such as his relief of Venus riding a sea goat now in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (fig. 14). Deare died the following summer, so if he worked on the wellhead, it would have been one of his last ancient restorations.

Francesco Massimiliano Laboureur (1767–1831), shown in a portrait by Jean-Baptiste Wicar (fig. 15), was equally talented and likewise a specialist in Neoclassical sculpture. Laboureur was the artist responsible for creating the plaster reliefs that decorate the upper walls of the Vatican’s famed Braccio Nuovo sculpture hall, which opened in 1822 and has recently been restored (fig. 16).¹⁵ Laboureur’s reliefs combine iconography from ancient Roman sculptures with new compositions of his own design after the antique. The restorations made to the Gosford Wellhead are similarly faithful to, but do not compete with, its original style and composition. As was common practice at the time (as it was from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century), the desired aesthetic of such a restoration was to re-create the complete work and repair all damages, thus making the sculpture appear intact and, as much as possible, as it was when it was made.

12. Wellhead with a Dionysian scene. Roman, ca. 50–25 B.C. Marble, H. 46⁷/₈ in. (119 cm), Diam. 35⁷/₈ in. (91 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (E000173)

13. Charles Grinion II (British, 1754–1804). *John Deare*, 18th century. Ink and wash on paper, 9¹/₄ × 7¹/₄ in. (23.4 × 18.5 cm). Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, Lancashire, United Kingdom





14. John Deare (British, 1759–1798). *Venus Reclining on a Sea Monster with Cupid and a Putto*, 1787/88–90. Marble, H. 13¼ in. (33.7 cm), W. 23 in. (58.4 cm), D. 4½ in. (11.2 cm). J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (98.SA.4)

15. Jean-Baptiste Wicar (French, 1762–1834). *Massimiliano Laboureur*, 19th century. Oil on canvas. Accademia di San Luca, Rome (0270)





16. Braccio Nuovo,
Vatican Museum, Rome,
1822 (restored 2016)

17. Plaster cast of the “Puteal Fagan,” Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen (L. 298)

18a, b. Drawings of the wellhead published by Giuseppe Guattani in “Parapetto di pozzo con bassorilievo d’Illa, e Narciso,” *Monumenti antichi inediti, ovvero, notizie sulle antichità e belle arti di Roma per l’anno 1805, Marzo e Aprile, Scultura*, pls. 7–8 (Rome, 1805)

Early Studies and Apparent Disappearance

Fagan, concerned about Napoleon invading Italy and the threat of an impending French occupation of Rome, moved the wellhead from Rome to Naples in 1798, after the restoration was complete. In 1801 he brought it back to Rome, where he applied for and secured an export license from the Vatican to send it to England. The export license was granted with the condition that a plaster cast be made of the wellhead as an accurate three-dimensional record for the Vatican’s archives.¹⁶ The location of the Vatican’s cast is no longer known, but two other casts survive that were presumably made around the same time. One is in Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen (fig. 17), a testimony to how much famed Danish Neoclassical sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844) admired the sculpture,¹⁷ and the other is in the French Academy, Rome.¹⁸ These casts helped ensure that the wellhead remained familiar to scholars even after its location became unclear. Italian archaeologist Carlo Fea, for one, praised the beauty of the wellhead in 1802:

The most excellent thing found was a small wellhead, carved all around in relief, representing Narcissus, who is reflected in the spring, and other themes related to it, well suited to water, such as bovine animals, birds and plants. After the famous wellhead in the Capitoline Museum carved around in relief with the twelve gods in a very old [Archaistic] Greek style, and another, from the Galleria Giustiniani, while beautiful and well preserved, representing a Bacchanal, was converted into a vase and published as



such by Sponio, the wellhead from Ostia, is perhaps the most beautiful.¹⁹

The wellhead was published more extensively in an 1805 article by Italian scholar Giuseppe Guattani, who illustrated it alongside a rollout drawing of the relief and a three-quarter view (fig. 18).²⁰ Although the Fagan Puteal, as it was long known to scholars, continued to be referenced in specialist studies, about this time the wellhead’s location became obscure and until recently it was presumed lost. Owing to its exceptional state of preservation (as recorded in the plaster casts) and certain anomalies of iconography, a 1997 monographic study of ancient



Roman wellheads argued erroneously that the Fagan Puteal may have been an eighteenth-century forgery, but the author did not have the opportunity to see the original and its careful restorations, which surely would have changed his opinion.²¹

Gosford House

Although the precise history of the wellhead after it left Rome in 1801 is unclear, we know that it entered into the collection of Thomas Noel Hill, 2nd Baron Berwick of Attingham, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

After Lord Berwick went bankrupt, he put much of his property, including the wellhead, up for auction in 1827. The sale catalogue attributes the restorations to John Deare but misidentifies the wellhead as a circular sarcophagus and states that it was found in the ruins of Hadrian's villa at Tivoli; the knowledge of its true findspot was thus already lost to its owner. It was likely at this sale that Francis Charteris, 7th Earl of Wemyss (fig. 19), purchased the wellhead together with a Roman marble candelabrum (fig. 20) that had also been restored by Deare sometime in the late eighteenth century.



19. Sir Henry Raeburn (Scottish, 1756–1823), *Francis Charteris, 7th Earl of Wemyss (1772–1853)*. Oil on canvas, 35 × 27 in. (88.9 × 68.6 cm). Collection of the Earls of Wemyss and March, Gosford House, Scotland

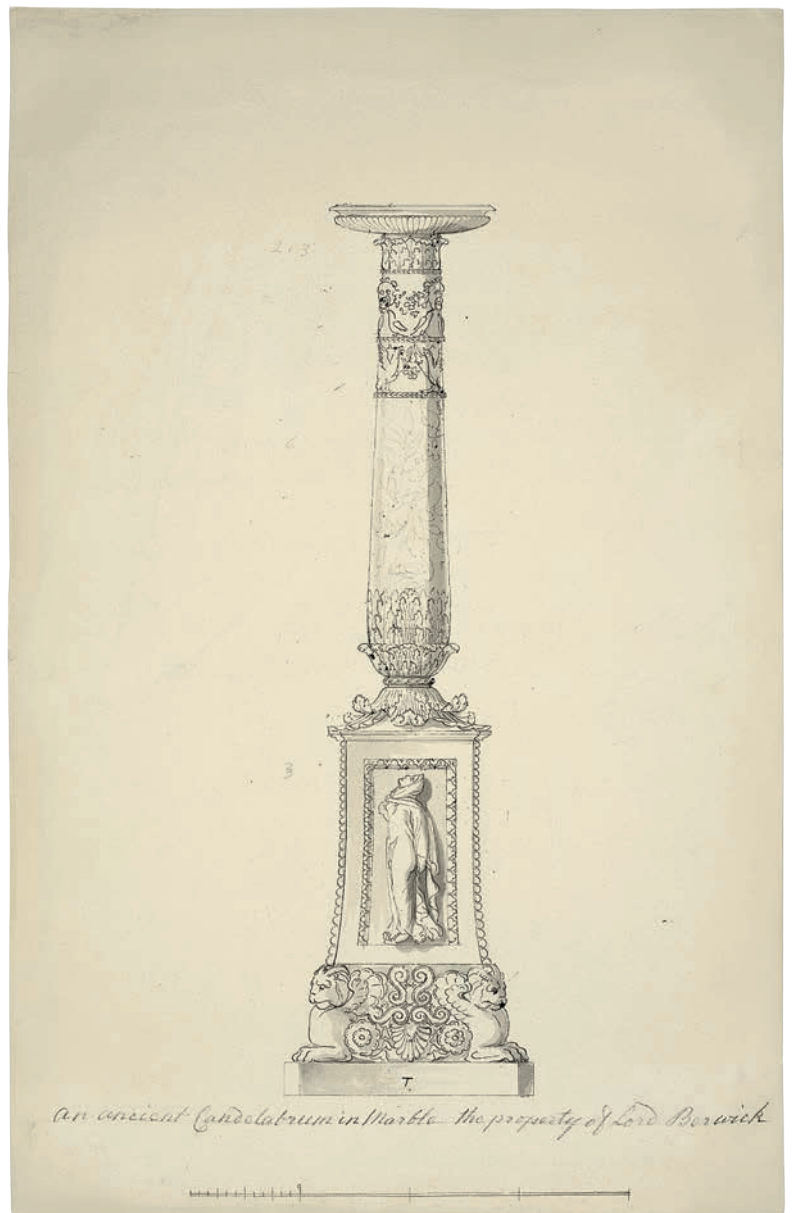
20. Candelabrum.
 Roman, 1st century A.D.
 (with 19th-century
 restorations). Marble,
 H. 94 in (239 cm).
 Collection of the Earls
 of Wemyss and March,
 Gosford House, Scotland

**21. Candelabrum, 1768–
 1805.** Pen and ink, with
 gray wash and graphite,
 16⁵/₈ × 10³/₄ in. (42.3 ×
 27.2 cm). British Museum,
 London (2010,5006.1801)

The wellhead's acquisition was recorded in the memoirs of his grandson, the 9th Earl of Wemyss and 6th Earl of March, who noted that it bore traces of use in Roman times, when ropes for drawing water had worn into the surface, evidence of which can still be seen today (see fig. 50). The wellhead was but one of many classical antiquities purchased to decorate Gosford House, near Edinburgh, the stately home of the Earls of Wemyss and March and one of the most elegant buildings in Scotland (fig. 22).

Begun in 1791, Gosford House, a grand Neo-classical residence based on the architectural

designs of Robert Adam (1728–1792), is home to an impressive art collection formed over generations. Its Marble Hall, in particular, a visual tour de force, captivates visitors from the moment they enter the house, drawing the eyes up to the peristyle hall on the second level and the cupola above (fig. 23). The wellhead was displayed prominently in the peristyle at the top of the entrance stairs on the right, as can be seen in a photograph taken about 1912 (fig. 24).²² Other notable antiquities acquired for Gosford House include marble statues of Roman emperors and members of the imperial family, a strigilated sarcophagus with





22. Gosford House, near Longniddry, East Lothian, Scotland

23. Marble Hall at Gosford House



lion heads that was reused as a magnificent bathtub, and the impressive candelabrum from the Attingham sale.²³

Like the wellhead, the candelabrum gives a powerful sense of a complete object from antiquity, but here the impression is especially indebted to the artful restorer, quite possibly John Deare, who recomposed the base from fragments, probably added elements from disparate works, and restored areas after ancient examples. A drawing of the candelabrum from the time it belonged to Lord Berwick shows how it would have looked then (fig. 21). The traditional triangular form of the base derives from Etruscan incense burners, while the feet, which are in the form of horned lion-griffins, give it an Eastern flair. On each side is represented a veiled female dancer, reminiscent of Greek art of the Hellenistic East. Similar

elaborate marble candelabra have been excavated in Rome and in Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, and some of the earliest dated examples come from a late Hellenistic shipwreck that foundered off the coast of Mahdia, in Tunisia.²⁴ The monumental scale of the restored Gosford example and its ornate form may have helped inspire Labourer's Neoclassical reliefs in the Braccio Nuovo, which ultimately derive from scenes on ancient Roman terracotta Campana reliefs.

One of the finest Roman sculptures in the collection of the Earls of Wemyss and March is a majestic marble eagle, acquired in 1854 (fig. 25).²⁵ Discovered near the Baths of Caracalla in Rome in 1742, the eagle likely originally served as a pendant sculpture to a monumental statue of a Roman emperor or the Roman god Jupiter. Before being acquired by the Earls of Wemyss and March, it was owned by the British aristocrat

24. View of the wellhead in the gallery around the Marble Hall at Gosford House, ca. 1912

25. Eagle on altar base. Roman, Imperial, 1st century A.D. Marble, H. 72 in. (182.9 cm). Collection of the Earls of Wemyss and March, Gosford House, Scotland



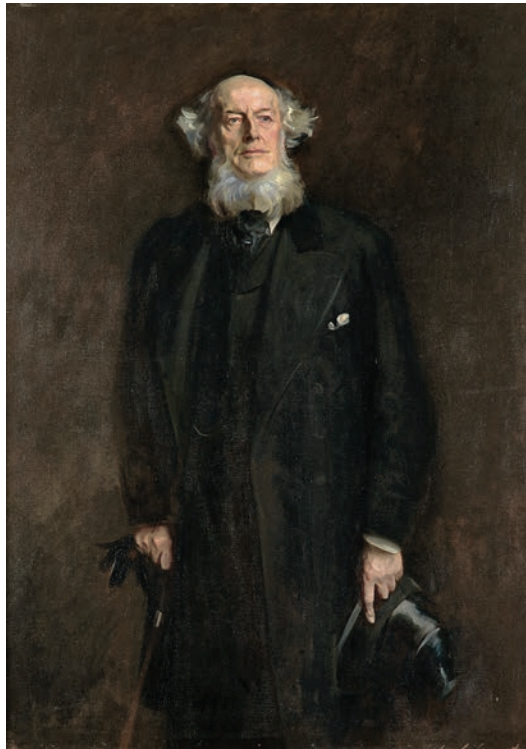
and influential art historian Horace Walpole (1717–1797), who counted it as among his most treasured possessions.²⁶ The eagle stands on an ancient Roman funerary altar, itself adorned with eagles, that was refashioned into a base in the eighteenth century.

The collection of paintings at Gosford House is equally distinguished and was significantly enriched through acquisitions by the 9th earl, who wrote in his memoirs that collecting art was the great solace of his life.²⁷ A fine portrait by John Singer Sargent shows him dressed in tails and holding a top hat, giving a strong impression of this remarkable man (fig. 26). Commissioned by the sitter's friends and fellow members of Parliament, the portrait, which still hangs in the Marble Hall, was presented to the 9th earl in commemoration of his ninetieth birthday, after fifty years of public service.

Another work formerly in the Gosford collection is Botticelli's *The Virgin Adoring the Sleeping Christ Child*, an extraordinarily beautiful devotional representation that today hangs in the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh and is sometimes referred to as the *Wemyss Madonna* (fig. 27).²⁸ A young Bernard Berenson once memorably described this outstanding painting—to the great indignation of its owner—as a product of the “studio of Botticelli.” When Berenson voiced this opinion to Lord Wemyss during a visit in 1892, he was summarily thrown out of Gosford House in the middle of a thunderstorm. In Berenson's defense, only after a subsequent cleaning and the removal of layers of discolored varnish by Michael Gallagher—at the time Keeper of Conservation at the National Galleries of Scotland and now The Met's Sherman Fairchild Chairman of Paintings Conservation—did the sublime original details become apparent again, making clear that it is a masterwork by Botticelli himself.

Acquisition by The Met

Collecting antiquities has been central to The Met's mission since the Museum's founding, in 1870, and the first work of art to enter the collection was Roman: a sarcophagus from Tarsus, in present-day Turkey.²⁹ In the more than



26. John Singer Sargent (American, 1856–1925). *Francis Charteris, 9th Earl of Wemyss* (1818–1914), 1908. Oil on canvas, 76¾ × 58⅞ in. (195 × 148.5 cm). Collection of the Earls of Wemyss and March, Gosford House, Scotland

150 years since that initial acquisition, The Met's holdings of Greek and Roman art have grown primarily through gifts and bequests as well as through judicious purchases of both outstanding and representative works. Today the collection comprises more than 33,000 works, ranging in date from the Neolithic period (ca. 4500 B.C.) to the time of the Roman emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity, in A.D. 312. Incorporating the creative expression of many cultures, The Met's Greek and Roman collection ranks with the holdings of the British Museum, the Louvre, and the Vatican as among the finest and the most comprehensive ever assembled. A complete reinstallation of the Greek and Roman collection between 1996 and 2007 in twenty-seven award-winning galleries reveals classical art in all its complexity and resonance, from small, engraved gemstones to black-figure and red-figure painted vases to over-lifesize statues, reflecting virtually all the materials in which ancient artists and craftspeople worked.

A central tenet of The Met's collections management policy for the acquisition of

ancient art, reflecting today's museological best practices, is that "the Museum normally shall not acquire a work unless provenance research substantiates that the work was outside its country of probable modern discovery before 1970 or was legally exported from its probable country of modern discovery after 1970."³⁰ These guidelines establish a high standard of ethical and professional practice, placing The Met among the leaders in the field for responsible collecting. Consequently, given the diminishing pool of available antiquities that meet the Museum's standards and the specific needs of the collection, not to mention the high cost of antiquities with good provenance, The Met today acquires few Greek and Roman antiquities. In this sense, the reinstatement of the collection came at a fortuitous time, as the collection is unlikely to change dramatically in the coming decades.

The Department of Greek and Roman Art does continue to acquire, however, and the Gosford Wellhead is a prime example of how it is still possible to find works of art that augment the collection in new and exciting ways. The acquisition process for the wellhead began in October 2017, when an antiquities dealer brought the sculpture to my attention during my first week as Curator in Charge of Greek and Roman Art (it might be worth noting for posterity that the wellhead became my first purchase as department head). After researching the object, the department determined that it was essential that we examine the wellhead in person in order to verify that it was indeed the "lost" Fagan Puteal. I was ably assisted in this task by Paul Zanker, former Dietrich von Bothmer Research Scholar and a noted authority on Roman sculpture, and Dorothy H. Abramitis, a conservator at The Met who specializes in Greek and Roman art (fig. 28). We traveled to Gosford House, as did Mark Fisch, a Met Trustee who heads the Acquisitions Committee, and Carrie Reborra Barratt, then Deputy Director. It was thrilling to see that the piece was certainly authentic and that it is even more impressive in person than in photographs. With this knowledge in hand, we set out to raise funds for what



27. Botticelli (Alessandro di Mariano Filipepi) (Italian, 1444/45–1510). *The Virgin Adoring the Sleeping Christ Child*, ca. 1485. Tempera and gold on canvas, 48 × 31¾ in. (122 × 80.5 cm). National Galleries of Scotland; Purchased with the aid of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund, the Scottish Executive, the Bank of Scotland, the Royal Bank of Scotland, Sir Tom Farmer, the Dunard Fund, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Woodcock (donation made through the American Friends of the National Galleries of Scotland) and private donations, 1999 (NG 2709)



28. Paul Zanker and Dorothy Abramitis examining the wellhead at Gosford House, November 30, 2017

would be a major acquisition, one that was ultimately made possible, as the long label for the sculpture makes clear, by the generous support of many Trustees and friends of the Museum.

The final step before The Met could bring the piece into the collection was to apply for an export license from the United Kingdom. According to British law, works of national importance can be denied an export license, and British institutions and individuals have the opportunity to match the price in order to keep a work of art in the country. Fortunately, the wellhead was granted an export license after seven weeks. Despite some consternation at this outcome, as covered by *The Art Newspaper*,³¹ among the some seventy extant ancient Roman wellheads with relief decoration—most of which reside in Italy—there are still at least five specimens in the United Kingdom, including two historic examples in the British Museum. The Gosford Wellhead is only the third to enter a North American museum collection, and it is doubtless the finest now in the United States.³²

History and Iconography

Marble wellheads with figural decoration were made for Roman wells from about the middle of the second century B.C. through the end of the second century A.D. Several examples are known from Ostia, of which the Gosford Wellhead is the most elaborate. The deep relief of the carving, the extensive use of the running drill (a technique for sculpting marble), and its high classicizing style indicate a date in the second century, most likely during the Antonine period (A.D. 139–192).

The Gosford Wellhead, like all such works, was made to cover an ancient well, thereby protecting people and objects from falling in. It also served as the place where water was drawn, as indicated by ancient wear marks on the interior rim. The square step, the austere moldings around the base and rim, and the elaborate figural decoration surrounding the drum combine to transform this essentially utilitarian object into a luxurious work of art, one that resembles a Hellenistic altar. Many major European museums with collections of Roman antiquities—including the British

Museum, the Capitoline Museum in Rome, the Louvre, the Prado, and the Vatican—have puteals, but until the acquisition of the Gosford Wellhead the form was represented in The Met collection only by two later Venetian examples (fig. 29), both of which perpetuate the ancient sacred tradition of protecting and adorning wells as a source of life-giving water.³³

The two mythological scenes that run seamlessly around the drum of the wellhead, both carved in high relief, are united by a watercourse at the bottom in whose rippling waves can be found a variety of aquatic wildlife. On one side is the young hunter Narcissus, represented wearing only a short cloak and holding a staff; he stands and admires his reflection in the running water of a spring, which flows from a jug held by a seminude nymph sitting nearby in

the shade of a pine tree amid tall grasses (fig. 32). Behind Narcissus, the nymph Echo reclines while grasping the trunk of a plane tree and looks up at him (fig. 30).³⁴ Between Narcissus and Echo are two cows, rendered at a smaller scale and shown drinking water, and a mother bird feeding its young in an upper tree branch, completing the pastoral setting.

On the other side we see the hero Hylas, one of Jason's Argonauts and a companion of Herakles, being abducted by Mysian nymphs. Hylas is shown nude and moving to his left, his cloak over his left arm, a spear in his left hand, and a water jug in his right (see fig. 1). With a laurel tree behind him and to his right, Hylas looks back to his right and moves away from a nymph who grasps his right arm and waist; a second nymph crouches on the edge of the

29. Wellhead. Italian (Venice), 14th–15th century. Marble, H. 35 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (91.1 cm), Diam. 41 $\frac{1}{4}$ –41 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (105.4–104.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Frederick C. Hewitt Fund, 1914 (14.134.26a, b)









Opposite: 32. Detail of a nymph watching Hylas (left) and a nymph pouring water (right)

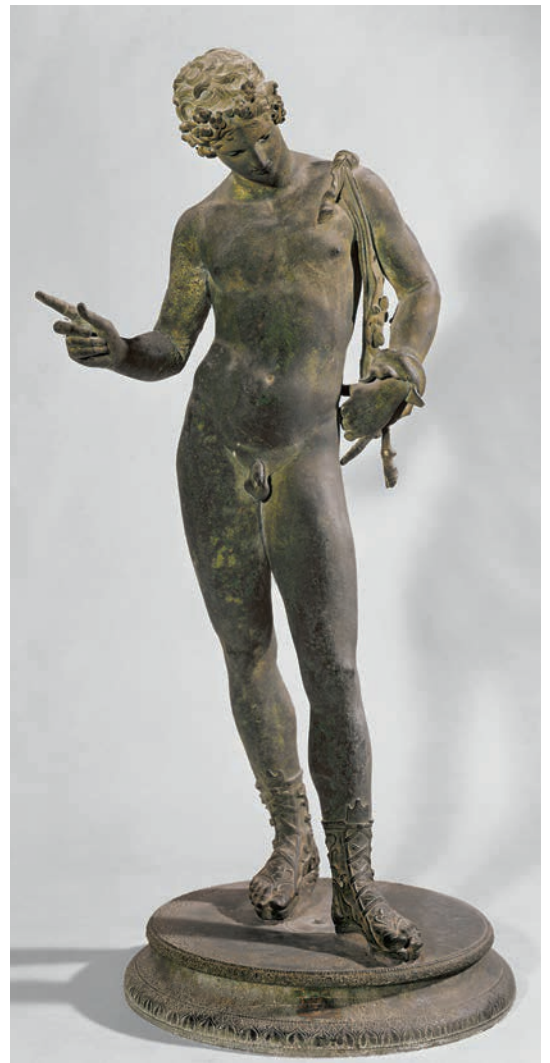
33. Statuette of so-called Narcissus from Pompeii. Roman, Imperial, 1st century A.D. Bronze, H. 23⁷/₈ in. (60.6 cm). Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples

water to his left and grabs his left thigh and wrist as she looks up at him from below (fig. 31). A third nymph, with her hair tied up, sits under an oak and wears a diaphanous chiton; she supports her right hand on the ground, rests the left on her lap, and turns her face back toward Hylas (fig. 32).

Notwithstanding small losses to the noses, extremities, and other areas, such as a section of Hylas's spear and Narcissus's staff, as well as signs of wear on the surfaces throughout, the sculptures are in a remarkably good state of preservation. Vertical grooves on the inner rim indicate significant but not excessive use in antiquity from pulling a bucket of water up with a rope. Three of the heads—those of Narcissus, Hylas, and one of the nymphs—have broken off. As noted above, the nature of the break for the head of Hylas, along with an evaluation of its sculptural quality, suggests that it is original. The other two are more likely late eighteenth-century restorations given their excellent state of preservation, but the sculptor(s) nonetheless carefully worked the faces and hair to match the style of the original, including the incised eyes and the locks of hair that artfully join to the surface of the relief.

Narcissus and Echo

The imagery on the Gosford Wellhead is best understood when considered within the broader framework of ancient representations of the myths it portrays. The iconography of Narcissus standing and looking at his reflection is thought to derive from a late fifth-century B.C. statue of the Polykleitan school known only through later copies and adaptations from the Roman Imperial period; more than forty such examples are known today.³⁵ While many of the Roman versions may well represent Narcissus, it is uncertain that the classical prototype actually did. One of the most famous bronze statuettes from Pompeii is known as "Narcissus," but it, too, does not necessarily represent the famous hunter and may instead be an image of a youthful Dionysos or one of his followers wearing a goatskin (fig. 33). It was replicated by several different foundries in Naples, most notably the Chiurazzi Foundry,



soon after its discovery in 1869 and was sold in a variety of sizes and finishes well into the twentieth century as a Grand Tour souvenir. More certain is a marble statue in the Louvre dated to the second century A.D. and attributed to the Aphrodisias school in western Turkey. It is a particularly good example of another freestanding sculptural type that looks to a Hellenistic model and shows Narcissus standing with crossed legs and both arms resting on his wreathed head as he looks down (fig. 34). It would likely have been set up by a reflecting pool, where the young hunter could gaze upon his reflected image. It is a clever composition, suitable for contemplation



Opposite: 34. Narcissus, Roman, 2nd century A.D. Marble, H. 73½ in. (186.7 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris (MA 435)

35a, b. Sarcophagus with Narcissus (top) and detail of reflection (bottom). Roman, late 2nd century A.D. Vatican Museum, Rome (Galleria Lapidaria, 169)



in a public or private Roman garden. This Narcissus statue type was also adopted for reliefs on sarcophagi in the late second and third centuries A.D., as represented by an example found on the Via Appia outside Rome in which the reflection of Narcissus's face is carved in relief below him (fig. 35).

Whatever its original inspiration, the Narcissus myth represented on the Gosford Wellhead is unique in its depiction of the source of the spring as a beautiful nymph holding a jug from which she pours water, which then becomes a torrent (fig. 36). Greek mythology long associated beautiful nymphs with springs. The original foundation of the Greek city-state of Syracuse in Sicily, for example, lay on the island of Ortygia, which had an abundant spring said to be guarded by the nymph Arethusa. She was represented on the city's coinage as a beautiful young woman with a barley wreath in her hair, elaborate earrings and a necklace, and dolphins swimming around her head (fig. 37). The pine tree that the nymph sits beneath on the Gosford Wellhead may indicate the region of Thespieae in Boeotia, identified by the Greek geographer Pausanias as the location of the spring in which Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection (book IX, lines 31. 7–8).³⁶



Opposite: 36. Detail of nymph

37. Decadrachm of Syracuse with the nymph Arethusa. Greek, Classical, 400–390 B.C. Silver, 1³/₈ × 1¹/₈ in. (3.5 × 4.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1905 (05.44.295)



Although it has been suggested that the female figure watching Narcissus from a distance is his deceased twin sister—in one version of the myth, she is the reason he became captivated with his own reflection, because he was trying to see her³⁷—in this case the figure more likely represents Echo. Indeed, the myth is frequently the subject of early imperial wall paintings and mosaics, where Echo is often represented watching Narcissus from a distance, as she does on the Gosford Wellhead. There are nearly fifty representations of the myth known from Pompeii alone, where it was a popular wall decoration for Roman houses and villas (fig. 38).³⁸

The representation of Narcissus's reflection is itself unparalleled and a sculptural tour de

38. Fresco of Narcissus and Echo from Pompeii. Roman, Vespaianic, A.D. 69–79. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples (9380)



force (fig. 39). Instead of the usual image of a still pool, as described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, his reflection appears in the moving waters, and his long locks of hair morph into rivulets. As the water flows around the wellhead, it unites the two mythological scenes into a lush riparian landscape with a notable variety of plants and animals. In addition to the cows and the feeding nestlings, there are fish and waterbirds poking up their heads, a frog, and a crab shown clinging to a rock on the other side (figs. 40, 41).

As discussed in the accompanying essay in this *Bulletin*, scientific analysis of the wellhead

has revealed traces of Egyptian blue pigment, indicating that, like most ancient Roman sculptures, it was originally painted. Although we can only imagine what that must have looked like, a painting in The Met collection by French artist Camille Corot of another myth related in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the 1836 *Diana and Actaeon* (fig. 42), reminds us of what such a lush pastoral landscape might have looked like, with an abundance of color bringing to life an abundance of sculptural detail.

The myth of Narcissus and Echo is first recorded in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (book III,



39. Detail of reflection in the moving water

40. Detail of waterbird

41. Details of frog and fish in water with cow drinking above



lines 454–657), and while the artist who carved the wellhead was clearly familiar with Ovid’s account, artistic license was taken with the story, as is often the case with ancient art. Here is Ovid’s exact description of the myth:

Narcissus. He’d trifled with her and so many others, water nymphs, nymphs of the wooded mountains, as well as a host of male admirers. One of those spurned raised his hands to heaven: “May he himself love as I have loved him,” he said, “without obtaining his beloved,” and Nemesis assented to his prayer. There was a clear pool of reflecting water unfrequented by shepherds with their flocks or grazing mountain goats; no bird or beast, not even a fallen twig stirred its surface; its presence nourished

greenery around it, and the surrounding trees would keep it cool. Worn out and overheated from the chase, here comes the boy, attracted to this pool as to its setting, and reclines beside it. As he strives to satisfy one thirst, another is born; drinking he’s overcome by the beauty of the image that he sees; he falls in love with an immaterial hope, a shadow that he wrongly takes for substance. Transfixed, suspended like a figure carved from marble, he looks down at his own face; stretched out on the ground, stares into his own eyes and sees a pair of stars worthy of Bacchus, a head of hair that might adorn Apollo; those beardless cheeks, that neck of ivory, the decorative beauty of his face, and the blushing snow of his complexion; he admires all that he’s admired for, for it is he that he

42. Camille Corot (French, 1796–1875). *Diana and Actaeon* (*Diana Surprised in Her Bath*), 1836. Oil on canvas, 61⁵/₈ × 44³/₈ in. (156.5 × 112.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.162)

43. *Narcissus poeticus*, plate 160 from Pierre Joseph Redouté’s *Les Liliacées* (Paris, 1801–16). Engraving. The LuEsther T. Mertz Library, The New York Botanical Garden





himself desires, all unaware; he praises and is praised, seeks and is the one that he is seeking; kindles the flame and is consumed by it. . . . His last words were directed to the pool: "Alas, dear boy, whom I have vainly cherished!" Those words returned to him again, and when he cried "Farewell!" "Farewell!" cried Echo back. His weary head sank to the grass; death closed those eyes transfixed once by their master's beauty, but on the ferry ride across the Styx, his gaze into its current did not waiver. The water nymphs, his sisters, cut their locks in mourning for him, and the wood nymphs, too, and Echo echoed all their lamentations; but after they'd arranged his funeral, gotten the logs, the bier, the brandished torches, the boy's remains were nowhere to be found; instead, a flower, whose white petals fit closely around a saffron-colored center.³⁹

Today we know the flower from the myth as the narcissus (*Narcissus poeticus*; fig. 43),⁴⁰ which was prized in antiquity for its distinctive fragrance and for its use in the making of perfumes as well as floral crowns and garlands. Narcissi also functioned as votive offerings at sanctuaries, as can be seen on votive sculptures from Cyprus in The Met collection. The flowers were closely associated with the gods of the

underworld and death, as illustrated by their role in the myth of Persephone, in which Hades uses narcissi to lure her to the location where she is kidnapped and brought to the underworld. This scene is dramatically rendered in a painting of about 340 B.C. from the facade of a royal tomb at Vergina, in northern Greece, where Persephone is shown with terror in her eyes just after Hades, in his chariot, has abducted her from the spot where she was admiring the flowers (fig. 44). On the Gosford Wellhead, the sculptor emphasized the water's power to captivate Narcissus through his reflection, a fate brought on by Nemesis, goddess of retribution (fig. 45), for his having scorned other lovers.

Hylas and the Nymphs

Like the iconography of Narcissus and Echo, the story of Hylas being abducted by nymphs follows an established tradition in Greek art. The myth is best known from the account in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes (book I, lines 1171–1357), composed in the third century B.C. In that tale, the hero Jason and his band of adventurers (known as the Argonauts after their famous ship, the *Argo*) embark on a quest to steal the magical golden fleece of a ram preserved in Kolchis, on the Black Sea.⁴¹ With the help of the gods and the sorceress Medea,

44. Abduction of Persephone by Hades. Fresco, ca. 340 B.C. From a royal tomb in Aigai (Vergina), Macedonia, Greece

45. Ring with carnelian intaglio of winged Nemesis. Roman, Cypriot, Imperial, 1st–early 3rd century A.D. Carnelian and gold, $\frac{5}{8} \times \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.5 × 1.1 × 1.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Cesnola Collection, Purchased by subscription, 1874–76 (74.51.4234)





46. Column-krater (bowl for mixing wine and water) showing Jason and the Argonauts collecting the golden fleece with Athena. Attributed to the Orchard Painter. Greek (Attic), Classical, ca. 470–460 B.C. Terracotta (red-figure), H. with handles 11½ in. (29.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1934 (34.11.7)

Jason is able to take the fleece from a grove protected by a dragon. This climactic scene is portrayed on a classical Greek vase in The Met collection where Jason, with Athena beside him, reaches for the fleece as one of his companions prepares to board the *Argo* (fig. 46). The abduction of Hylas occurs earlier in Apollonius's narrative. Hylas, one of Jason's band, was a close companion of Herakles, who had also joined in the quest. According to Apollonius, the episode takes place while the *Argo* has stopped in Mysia, on the central western coast of present-day Turkey, and Herakles is out making an oar from a pine tree:

Meantime Hylas with pitcher of bronze in hand had gone apart from the throng, seeking the sacred flow of a fountain, that he might be quick in drawing water for the evening meal and actively making all things ready in due order against his lord's return. For in such ways did

Herakles nurture him from his first childhood when he had carried him off from the house of his father, goodly Theiodamas, whom the hero pitilessly slew among the Dryopians because he withstood him about an ox for the plough. . . . Hylas came to the spring which the people who dwell thereabouts call Pegae. And the dances of the nymphs were just now being held there; for it was the care of all the nymphs that haunted that lovely headland ever to hymn Artemis in songs by night. All who held the mountain peaks or glens, all they were ranged far off guarding the woods; but one, a water-nymph was just rising from the fair-flowing spring; and the boy she perceived close at hand with the rosy flush of his beauty and sweet grace. For the full moon beaming from the sky smote him. And Cypris made her heart faint, and in her confusion she could scarcely gather her spirit back to her. But as soon as he dipped the pitcher in the stream, leaning to one side, and the brimming water rang loud as it poured against the sounding bronze, straightaway she laid her left arm above upon his neck yearning to kiss his tender mouth; and with her right hand she drew down his elbow, and plunged him into the midst of the eddy.⁴²

Hylas's cry for help is heard by one of the Argonauts, but he is never seen again. Herakles, who in many versions of the myth was Hylas's lover, stays behind to look for him, calling out his name repeatedly and thinking he has been attacked by robbers or wild beasts. While the myth of Hylas is known in literature as early as the fifth century B.C., none of the possible fifth- and fourth-century B.C. representations of Hylas are certain. It has been suggested that in one such piece, an engraved gem in The Met collection, the man represented as standing in front of a female figure is Hylas with a nymph (fig. 47).

The iconography of Hylas and the nymphs on the Gosford Wellhead relates to earlier Roman wall paintings of the first century A.D. that are thought to reflect a famous lost painting from the Hellenistic or late Republican period.⁴³ Specifically, the iconography belongs to a Roman tradition most evident in imperial wall

47. Scaraboid showing a kneeling girl and standing youth (Hylas and a nymph?), with its impression. Greek, Classical, late 5th–early 4th century B.C. Chalcedony, H. 1⁵/₁₆ in. (3.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Fletcher Fund, 1925 (25.78.7)

48. Aryballus (oil flask) with Nereids riding Tritons. Roman, Imperial, 2nd century A.D. Silver, H. 5¹/₄ in. (13.3 cm). Collection of Andrés A. Mata

paintings and mosaics of the first to third century A.D. As with the imagery of Narcissus, the artist did not rigidly follow the extant literary version, although several specific details noted in the account of Apollonius of Rhodes, such as the bronze jug (we can assume the material from its ornate shape) and the “moonstruck” beauty of Hylas, are clearly evident. A notable difference is the involvement of more than one nymph, a detail that appears in an alternate version of the myth referenced by the early Hellenistic poet Theocritus.⁴⁴ An interesting parallel can be drawn from scenes rendered in relief on the body of a contemporary silver vessel that represents sea nymphs, known as Nereids, riding Tritons (fig. 48). The pose of one of the seated nymphs recalls that of one of the nymphs on the Gosford Wellhead, reminding us that such figures may have been copied from sketches that circulated among artists. That

vessel, notably, likely served as an elaborate container for water used at public baths.

As the work of a virtuoso second-century artist, the Gosford Wellhead gives us the finest ancient representations in sculpture that we have of both Narcissus and Echo and Hylas and the nymphs. It is also the only known ancient work of art that combines these two Greek myths, which relate to each other through their connection to water and the themes of tragedy, danger, male beauty, and erotic love. How remarkable, then, that an ancient sculptor working in Italy in the second century A.D. presents us with such a compelling evocation of the dangers of narcissism and sexual predation, two themes that resonate strongly in the contemporary world. With its circular form recalling a sacrificial altar, the Gosford Wellhead emphasizes those all too contemporary perils as it also reaffirms the sanctity and essential nature of water in ancient life.





Condition, Restoration, and Scientific Study of the Gosford Wellhead

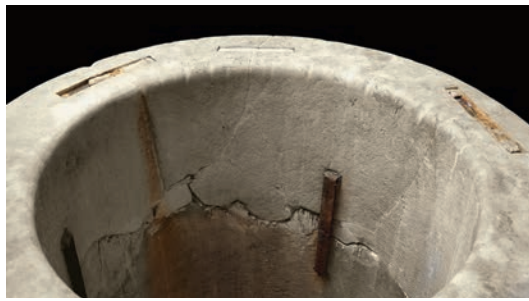
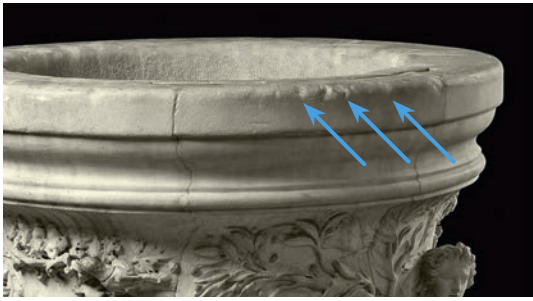
Dorothy H. Abramitis, Federico Carò, and Adriana Rizzo

Technical and scientific investigations of the Gosford Wellhead have contributed essential information to our understanding of the object's origin, manufacture, and history, including insights into earlier restoration campaigns. The drum and the flat step of the wellhead were carved in antiquity from a single block of marble using a variety of tools, from drills and chisels to rasps and abrasives. While the majority of the decoration is rendered in deep relief, certain details, such as the tips of branches (fig. 49) and fine tendrils of hair, are indicated with shallow incised lines. The wellhead's long-term use in antiquity can be inferred from the wear visible along the top edge (fig. 50) and from the gently smoothed waves of water along the lower edge.

Shortly after its discovery, at the end of the eighteenth century, the wellhead was masterfully restored in a manner consistent with practices common at the time. Missing or damaged elements of the decoration were replaced, for example, with carvings in the traditions and style of the original artist. The upper third of the drum comprises three sections: two original fragments and a large carved marble restoration.

The sections were joined with adhesive reinforced with iron clamps, which were set in lead on the interior and, on the top edge, covered with stucco (fig. 51). Three of the figures' heads have joins at the necks and may be eighteenth-century restorations. In contrast, the other remaining heads show damage, such as broken noses; some of these losses were restored using marble replacements, while others were re-created in modeled stucco, perhaps during a different restoration campaign. Numerous other small elements, including the head of the bird feeding its young, a cow's head, fingers, and sections of hair, were repaired or restored using carved marble replacements. Some of the restorations themselves are now lost, leaving behind surfaces that were reshaped during the late eighteenth-century campaign, as described in Seán Hemingway's essay in this *Bulletin* (fig. 52). Following common practice of the time, irregular fractured surfaces were carved smooth in order to create a clean, well-fitting join between the broken marble and the newly made fragment. In some cases, a small hole was drilled in both parts into which a

49. Detail of shallow incised lines used to create the tip of the olive branch held by Echo



50. Wear marks from use in antiquity are visible along the top edge

51. Detail of the top of the wellhead, showing clamps

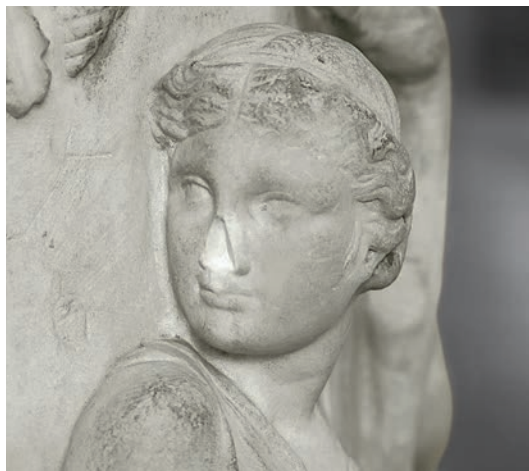
small metal pin was fit in order to strengthen the adhesive join.

Analysis of samples of the adhesive used in the restoration identified two types.¹ One sample contains colophony—a resin compound typically obtained from the sap of pine trees after the distillation of turpentine—mixed with calcium carbonate, likely in the form of marble dust. This finding matches a recipe for an adhesive used to join marble described by the sculptor Francesco Carradori (1747–1824) in an academic handbook published in Florence in 1802.² The other sample is composed of beeswax mixed with colophony. Although many traditional adhesive recipes contain marble dust, the English sculptor Nicholas Stone (1586/87–1647), who visited with sculptors active in Rome during a trip there in 1640, recorded one such recipe in his diary as consisting of a mixture of rosin (another name for colophony), wax, and a little turpentine.³ It is unknown whether these two adhesives were used at the time of the first restoration or if subsequent repairs were needed to re-adhere small restorations that had been damaged, a frequent occurrence during the transport of restored antiquities.

When scientists study ancient marble sculpture, one of the pieces of information most sought after by archaeologists, art historians, and conservators alike is the source (and even the specific quarry) of the stone, which can help illuminate ancient trade routes, locate specific areas of production, and even assess authenticity.⁴ Identifying the exact geological provenance of marble specimens is often possible through the examination of certain characteristic features of the stone, such as the size and shape of

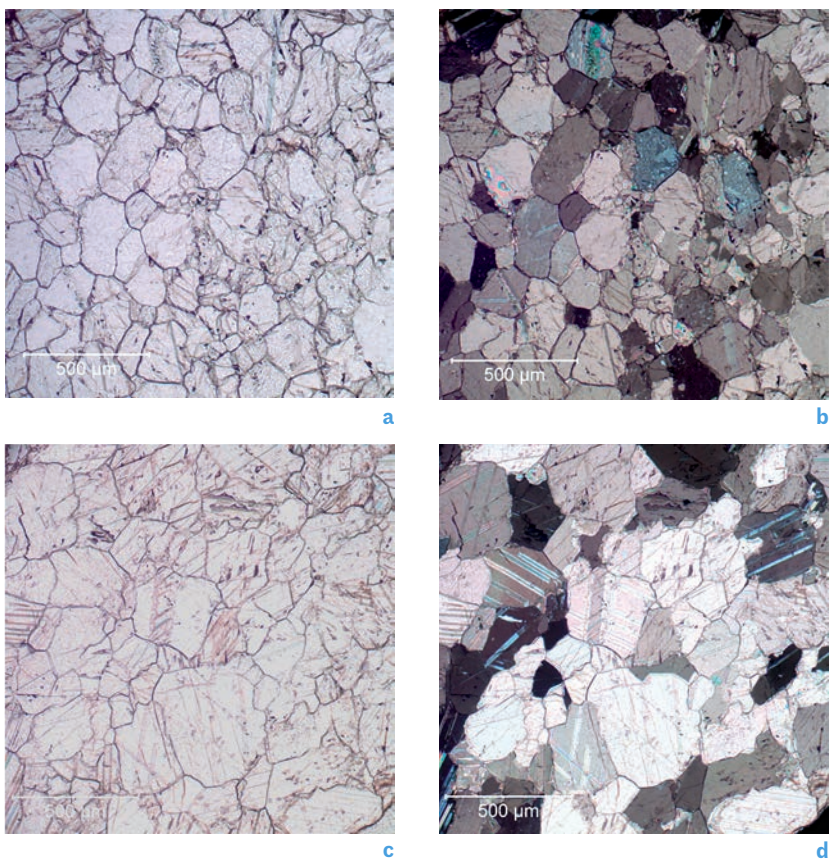
the calcite grains and the relative abundance of isotopes of carbon and oxygen, which is dependent on the geological processes responsible for the formation of the rock. Marble from different sources can thus be positively differentiated through a combination of scientific analyses, the most widely adopted being petrographic analysis and the measurement of stable carbon and oxygen isotopic ratios.

In petrographic analysis, a thin (30 µm) slice of rock is mounted on a glass slide and examined with a petrographic microscope. Under these conditions, light travels through the specimen and interacts with the marble's constituent minerals, permitting their identification based on characteristic optical properties. At high magnifications, this analysis can determine the size and shape of the calcite grains (including the maximum grain size, or MGS), show the boundaries between the grains and the specimen's overall microstructure, and identify



52. Detail of a nymph whose nose was reshaped during the 18th-century restoration

53a–d. Photomicrographs of thin sections of marble showing the stone used for the original wellhead (a, b) and for the later additions (c, d), taken with a 5x objective using plane (a, c) and crossed polarized light (b, d)



accessory minerals. In isotopic analysis, a mass spectrometer is used to measure the relative abundance of specific isotopes of a chemical element, such as the isotopes of carbon ^{13}C and ^{12}C , expressed as a ratio ($^{13}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$). Results are reported in parts per thousand (‰) as relative differences (δ) from recognized international standards. Isotopes of the same element have the same number of protons but slightly different masses (isotopes with more neutrons are heavier than those with fewer neutrons) and behave differently during chemical reactions, a process known as isotopic fractionation. Marbles with different protoliths (parent rocks) and metamorphic history are thus characterized by different isotopic ratios.

Micro-samples from both the original and the restored elements of the Gosford Wellhead were removed and studied following this analytical protocol. Under the petrographic microscope, the original marble appears very fine grained

(average grain size = 0.3 mm), with a maximum grain size (MGS) of about 0.5 mm. The calcite grains are of a similar size (or homeoblastic fabric, to use the scientific description), with straight crystal boundaries and triple points (figs. 53a, b). In addition to calcite, the marble contains small grains of muscovite, quartz, and apatite. Chemical analysis by scanning electron microscopy and energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) indicates that the marble contains low amounts of magnesium ($\text{MgO} = 1 - 1.4\%$). The isotope values of $^{13}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$ and $^{18}\text{O}/^{16}\text{O}$ resulted, equal to $1.8 \delta^{13}\text{C}\text{‰}$ and $-1.1 \delta^{18}\text{O}\text{‰}$ (see above for an explanation of these notations).⁵ These results are consistent with a fine variety of marble from Carrara (*Marmor lunense*), in the Apuan Alps.⁶

The replacement marble is also fine grained (average grain size = 0.45 mm), with an MGS of 0.6 mm. The grain size of the calcite in the replacement marble is more variable than the original, however, and has straight to curved



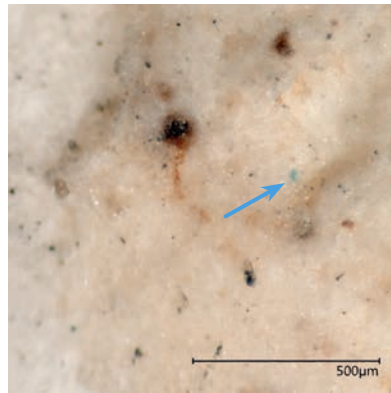
54. Arm of Narcissus under microscopic examination (visible in the monitor at 200x magnification is the same particle seen in fig. 55, here exhibiting blue color)

crystal boundaries (figs. 53c, d). Small muscovite, quartz, and apatite grains are the most common accessory minerals. SEM-EDS analysis indicates that this marble likewise shows low values of magnesium ($\text{MgO} = 0.7\text{--}1\%$), while its characteristic isotopic values are $2.1\ \delta^{13}\text{C}\text{‰}$ and $-1.8\ \delta^{18}\text{O}\text{‰}$. The grain size of this marble taken alongside its isotopic values suggests that the later replacements were most likely carved from a different variety of Carrara marble, one slightly coarser and less homogeneous than that used in the second century A.D.

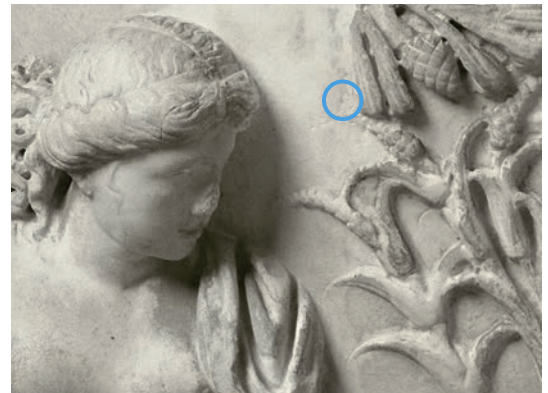
Many (perhaps most) sculptures in ancient Rome were not stark white but, rather, bore colorful surface treatments. In recent years, advancements in techniques used to identify traces of pigment on the surfaces of ancient sculptures have allowed scientists to study and characterize even minimal vestiges of pigments without the need for the invasive or disruptive removal of samples. The hunt for evidence of polychromy on ancient sculptures thus often begins with a combination of visual examination under magnification (fig. 54) and technical



55. Arm of Narcissus viewed using VIL, with arrow pointing to a luminescent particle



56. Area circled in fig. 57 at 200x magnification, showing blue particle that exhibited luminescence under VIL



57. Detail of nymph with circle indicating area shown in fig. 56 under magnification

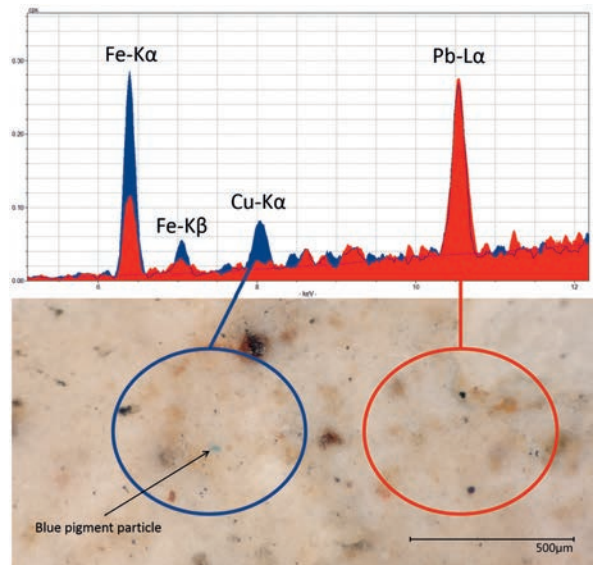
photography, followed by a suite of spectroscopic techniques such as fiber-optic reflectance spectroscopy (FORS) and X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectroscopy.⁷ Images of surfaces are also taken under a variety of different wavelengths of light using a modified digital camera, a method known as multispectral or multiband imaging (MBI).

One of the MBI techniques used in this investigation, called visible-induced luminescence (VIL),⁸ discovered small remains of Egyptian blue, the earliest known synthetic pigment,⁹ on the wellhead's surface: the sole pigment thus far unambiguously identified. Egyptian blue can be readily identified and mapped because it absorbs visible light and luminesces strongly in the near-infrared region.¹⁰ In VIL imaging, Egyptian blue appears bright white relative to other non-luminescing materials, which appear dark. Such luminescence was observed in numerous areas where pigments are not readily visible, such as on the arm of Narcissus (fig. 55) and in the background. The visibly blue particles were also found through examination under

magnification up to 200x (figs. 54, 56).¹¹ In order to corroborate the information obtained by VIL, a particle of blue pigment was analyzed in situ by means of XRF (figs. 58, 59) and was found to contain copper, which supports the presence of Egyptian blue: a pigment that was widely used in the ancient world as a color, admixture, and underpaint but that fell out of favor and is rarely found on objects produced in subsequent periods.¹² The identification of the pigment suggests that the Gosford Wellhead, like many ancient sculptures and monuments, was originally painted. Although the material and scientific evidence is too limited for us to ascertain the full extent of the wellhead's original color scheme, we can guess that it might have been richly decorated, given the sumptuous and elaborate nature of the carved scenes. One can imagine how the use of color would have enhanced and added detail to the background areas that now appear empty, giving them the appearance of depth or even creating a landscape setting for the figural relief.

58. Wellhead under examination by XRF analysis

59. Comparison between the XRF spectra collected from an area with a blue pigment particle and an adjacent area shows a small but detectable Cu-K α peak, supporting the presence of Egyptian blue



Notes

The Gosford Wellhead

1. See Raleigh Trevelyan, "Robert Fagan: An Irish Bohemian in Italy," *Apollo* 96, no. 128 (October 1972), pp. 298–311; Raleigh Trevelyan, "Robert Fagan: Un inglese in Sicilia," *Kalós: Arte in Sicilia* 5, no. 6 (November–December 1993), pp. 6–15; Ilaria Bignamini et al., *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome*, 2 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010), vol. 1, pp. 266–68.
2. With as many as seventeen sanctuaries to Mithras identified among the excavations at Ostia, it was no doubt a thriving center for the cult. See Marja-Leena Hänninen, "The Cult of Mithras in Ostia," in *Life and Death in a Multicultural Harbour City: Ostia Antica from the Republic through Late Antiquity*, edited by Arja Karivieri, Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae 47 (Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2020), pp. 353–61.
3. Ilaria Bignamini, "British Excavations in the Papal States during the Eighteenth Century: Written and Visual Sources," in *Archives and Excavations: Essays on the History of Archaeological Excavations in Rome and Southern Italy from the Renaissance to the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Ilaria Bignamini (London: The British School at Rome, 2004), pp. 91–108, esp. p. 94.
4. Ilaria Bignamini, "I marmi Fagan in Vaticano: La vendita del 1804 e altre acquisizioni," *Bollettino: Monumenti, musei e gallerie pontificie* 16 (1996), p. 381.
5. See Trevelyan, "Robert Fagan: An Irish Bohemian in Italy," p. 304, fig. 10.
6. Trevelyan, "Robert Fagan: Un inglese in Sicilia," pp. 6–15, esp. pp. 8, 10.
7. Bignamini et al., *Digging and Dealing*, vol. 1, p. 6.
8. On the Bavacciano Tower, see G[iovanni] M[aria] De Rossi, *Torri costiere del Lazio* (Rome: De Luca Editore, 1971), pp. 58–59.
9. Felix Liebermann and R. Pauli, eds., "Ex gestis Henrici II et Ricardi I," *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (in Folio)* 27 (1885), pp. 114–15. I am grateful to Dario Daffara for this reference and translation.
10. Trevelyan, "Robert Fagan: An Irish Bohemian in Italy," pp. 299–302; Trevelyan, "Robert Fagan: Un inglese in Sicilia," pp. 6, 8.
11. Letter (p. 3) of June 10, 1797, from Fagan to Lord Cumberland. British Library, London.
12. Letter of June 24, 1797, in Øjvind Andreasen and Karen Ascani, eds., *Georg Zoëga: Briefe und Dokumente*, vol. 3, 1791–1797 ([Copenhagen]: Munksgaard, 2013), pp. 618–21. I am grateful to Robert Haber for providing me with this certified translation.
13. For the two busts, see the Royal Ontario Museum website (www.rom.on.ca/en) under Collections & Research; Online Collections.
14. On Ostia, see Russell Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).
15. Antonio Paolucci, *Il Braccio Nuovo: I volti del restauro* (Vatican City: Musei Vaticani, 2016), p. 9.
16. Bignamini, "I marmi Fagan in Vaticano," p. 381.
17. I am grateful to Christopher S. Lightfoot for examining and photographing the Thorvaldsen cast in Copenhagen.
18. I am grateful to Paul Zanker for examining and photographing the cast in the French Academy.
19. Carlo Fea, *Relazione di un Viaggio ad Ostia e alla Villa di Plinio detta Laurentino* (Rome: Antonio Fulgoni, 1802), p. 45. Translation by the author.
20. Giuseppe Antonio Guattani, ed., "Parapetto di pozzo con bassorilievo d'Illa e Narciso," *Monumenti antichi inediti, ovvero, notizie sulle antichità e belle arti di Roma*, March–April 1805, pp. 39–47, pls. 7–8.
21. Thomas Matthias Golda, *Puteale und verwandte Monumente: Eine Studie zum römischen Ausstattungsluxus* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1997), p. 110, no. 65, pl. 71.3.
22. It can be seen in an archival photograph taken in 1893 of a general view of the upper gallery above the Marble Hall, preserved in the collection of Bedford Lemere and Company photographers, catalogue no. SC 695065, available at Canmore: National Record of the Historic Environment; <http://canmore.org.uk/collection/695065>. It also appears in the same location in a 1911 article on Gosford House; see J. K., "Gosford House, East Lothian: The Seat of the Earl of Wemyss," *Country Life* 30, no. 765 (September 2, 1911), p. 344.
23. The term "strigilated," used to describe the decoration on the long side of the sarcophagus, refers to a strigil, an implement used to scrape oil from the skin of athletes or at the bath.
24. Hans-Ulrich Cain and Olaf Dräger, "Die Marmorkandelaber," in *Das Wrack: Der antike Schiffsfund von Mahdia*, edited by Gisela Hellenkemper Salies et al., Kataloge des Rheinischen Landesmuseums Bonn 1, 2 vols. (Cologne: Rheinland Verlag, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 239–57.
25. *Catalogue of the very choice collection of pictures of the highest quality selected from the Collections of H.R.H. The Duke of Lucca . . . and other works of art of the highest class: including the very celebrated antique marble eagle, from Strawberry Hill; . . . which will be sold at auction, by Messrs. Christie and Manson . . . on Saturday, March 25, 1854*, sale cat., p. 10, lot 77.
26. See Silvia Davoli, *Lost Treasures of Strawberry Hill: Masterpieces from Horace Walpole's Collection*, exh. cat. (London: Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers, 2018), pp. 19–21, figs. 9–10.
27. For discussion of the antiquities, see [Francis Richard Charteris] Earl of Wemyss [and March], *Memories, 1818–1912*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1912), pp. 13–14.
28. See Aidan Weston-Lewis in *Masterpieces from the Scottish National Gallery*, by Michael Clarke et al., exh. cat. (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2014), pp. 24–29, no. 1; see also John Leighton, *100 Masterpieces: National Galleries of Scotland* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2015), pp. 38–39, no. 4.
29. Severan (ca. A.D. 200–225), Proconnesian marble, 53 × 88 in. (134.6 × 223.5 cm) overall, Gift of Abdo Debbas, 1870 (70.1).
30. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Collections Management Policy*, September 13, 2022, p. 8; <https://www.metmuseum.org/-/media/files/about-the-met/policies-and-documents/collections-management-policy/Collections-Management-Policy.pdf>. For The Met's antiquities policy, see esp. pp. 8–9 of this report. The Met's policy revisions in 2008 and 2013 followed the Association of Art Museum Directors' report, *Task Force on the Acquisition of Archaeological Materials and Ancient Art*, and the American Alliance of Museums' *Standards Regarding Archaeological Material and Ancient Art*.

31. Martin Bailey, "Britain's Loss Is America's Gain," *The Art Newspaper* 28, no. 314 (July–August 2019), pp. 1, 8.
32. Other Roman wellheads are in the Yale University Art Museum, New Haven, and the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta.
33. These date to the 11th–12th century (or possibly modern; 2011.245) and to the late 14th–15th century (14.134.26a, b).
34. I am grateful to Patrick Bowe for helping me to identify the tree.
35. See Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 205. Two of the best-preserved copies of this type are in the Louvre (nos. Ma 456, 457). See also Miranda Marvin, *The Language of the Muses: The Dialogue between Roman and Greek Sculpture* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008).
36. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, vol. 4, translated by W. H. S. Jones, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. 311.
37. Guattani, ed., "Parapetto di pozzo con bassorilievo d'Ilia e Narciso," pp. 39–47, pls. 7–8, esp. p. 44; Pausanias discusses this version of the myth.
38. For a list of the representations, see Birgitte Rafn, "Narkissos," in *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, 8 vols. (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1981–99), vol. 6, pt. 1, pp. 707–8, 710.
39. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Charles Martin (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), pp. 106–7, 110–11.
40. On the narcissus flower and its significance in antiquity, see Annette Giesecke, *The Mythology of Plants: Botanical Lore from Ancient Greece and Rome* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2014), pp. 58–65.
41. The basis for the legend of the Golden Fleece is probably the ancient practice of extracting alluvial gold by washing the deposits in a stream over a fleece, thereby catching the gold-bearing material in the curly pelt.
42. Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica*, translated by R. C. Seaton, The Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1912), book 1, lines 1207–39, pp. 85, 87.
43. Roger Ling, "Hylas in Pompeian Art," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Antiquité* 91, no. 2 (1979), pp. 773–816, esp. p. 786.
44. On Narcissus in Theocritus, see Clayton Zimmerman, *The Pastoral Narcissus: A Study of the First Idyll of Theocritus* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), esp. pp. 1–24.

Condition, Restoration, and Scientific Study

1. The samples were analyzed by Fourier transform infrared micro-spectroscopy (micro-FTIR) to characterize the bulk composition, followed by pyrolysis-gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (Py-GC/MS) with methylation, to identify the individual components.
2. Brigitte Bourgeois, "'Secure for Eternity': Assembly Techniques for Large Statuary in the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Century," in *History of Restoration of Ancient Stone Sculptures: Papers Delivered at a Symposium Organized by the Departments of Antiquities and Antiquities Conservation of the J. Paul Getty Museum and Held at the Museum 25–27 October 2001*, edited by Janet Burnett Grossman et al. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), pp. 151, 160.

3. Phoebe Dent Weil, "Contributions toward a History of Sculpture Techniques: I. Orfeo Boselli on the Restoration of Antique Sculpture," *Studies in Conservation* 12, no. 3 (August 1967), p. 98.
4. Fabrizio Antonelli and Lorenzo Lazzarini, "An Updated Petrographic and Isotopic Reference Database for White Marbles Used in Antiquity," *Rendiconti Lincei* 26, no. 4 (December 2015), pp. 399–413.
5. The samples were analyzed by continuous flow mass spectroscopy at the Stable Isotope Laboratory, Department of Geology, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, and elaborated by Scott Pike, Department of Environmental Sciences, Willamette University, Salem, Oregon. Analytical report by Scott Pike dated January 24, 2020.
6. Antonelli and Lazzarini, "An Updated Petrographic and Isotopic Reference Database," pp. 399–413.
7. FORS identifies pigments and colorants by collecting their absorption spectra when illuminated by a source of light and by comparing them to known reference materials. See, for instance, Maurizio Aceto et al., "Characterisation of Colourants on Illuminated Manuscripts by Portable Fibre Optic UV-Visible-NIR Reflectance Spectrophotometry," *Analytical Methods* 6 (2014), pp. 1488–1500. XRF analysis provides chemical information about a volume of material probed by a beam of primary X-rays by collecting and analyzing the secondary X-rays emitted as a result of atoms–primary X-rays interaction. For application of XRF on archaeological objects, see, for instance, Aaron Shugar and Jennifer L. Mass, eds., *Handheld XRF for Art and Archaeology* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2012).
8. VIL images were taken using a Canon D60 camera, with IR/UV filters removed, and with a Coastal Opt UV-Vis-IR 60mm macro lens covered by an X-Nite 830 filter using a 630nm LED light. For more information about VIL, see, for instance, J[oa]ne Dyer and S[ophia] Sotiropoulou, "A Technical Step Forward in the Integration of Visible-Induced Luminescence Imaging Methods for the Study of Ancient Polychromy," *Heritage Science* 5, no. 24 (2017), pp. 1–21.
9. Egyptian blue is a synthetic calcium–copper tetrasilicate compound (CaCuSi₄O₁₀), analogue to the natural mineral cuprorivaite. See G[areth] Hatton, A[ndrew] Shortland, and M[ichael] Tite, "The Production Technology of Egyptian Blue and Green Frits from Second Millennium BC Egypt and Mesopotamia," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 35, no. 6 (June 2008), pp. 1591–604.
10. G[ianluca] Accorsi et al., "The Exceptional Near-Infrared Luminescence Properties of Cuprorivaite (Egyptian Blue)," *Chemical Communications* 23 (2009), pp. 3392–94.
11. Observations were done using a Keyence digital microscope VHX-6000 with a VH-ZST dual-objective low-power (20–200x) zoom lens mounted on a tripod.
12. Maria Carolina Gaetani, Ulderico Santamaria, and Claudio Seccaroni, "The Use of Egyptian Blue and Lapis Lazuli in the Middle Ages: The Wall Paintings of the San Saba Church in Rome," *Studies in Conservation* 49, no. 1 (2004), pp. 13–22.

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1000 Fifth Avenue
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