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Johan Niklas Byström and the so-called Venus of Stockholm

New research on a presumably lost sculpture

Abstract

The inventory books of the Skulpturensammlung (Sculpture Collection) in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections, SKD) mention a plaster cast of a Venus sculpture, moulded from the marble so-called Venus of Stockholm. In the first half of the 19th century this statue—always considered an ancient artwork—had been owned by the Swedish sculptor Johan Niklas Byström, before it was sold to an English art collector. From that time on, the sculpture has been considered lost and it has remained unregarded by research. By contextualizing the Dresden plaster cast with other ancient Venus sculptures and textual sources, this article aims to show that the Venus of Stockholm was most likely an elaborate and mirror-reversed imitation made in its entirety in the 17th or 18th century. As such, the Venus of Stockholm was exceptional, because post-antique mirror-reversed copies of ancient sculptures are very rare. In addition, the article compares the Venus of Stockholm to statues sculpted by Byström, in order to highlight its impact on his oeuvre.

Keywords: Borghese collection, Johan Niklas Byström, mirror-reversed copy, plaster cast, sculpture, Venus

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Introduction

During the 19th century plaster casts were valued for their variability in use, and for their availability. Both universities and museums were eager to acquire such casts for their collections. However, in the 20th century plaster casts lost their popularity, which even resulted in some plaster cast collections being deliberately destroyed.¹ The last couple of decades have seen a growing art-historical and archaeological interest

in the history of plaster cast collections. The 20th-century notion of plaster casts as simple and inexpensive copies of highly valued originals has been reappraised. In particular, casts taken from sculptures since damaged, lost, or even destroyed, are seen to be of particular significance, as are casts of originals kept in private collections, inaccessible to the public.²

A case in point is provided by a plaster cast that was acquired for the collection of the Skulpturensammlung, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden in 1842 (*Figs. 2, 6–7, 9, 20, 23, 26*).³ The cast was taken from a marble sculpture representing Venus. Several art historians had been searching for the sculpture as early as 1875, but in vain: it remained nowhere to be found. In that year, the Swedish art historian Lorentz Dietrichson published an article in the *Tidskrift för bildande konst och konstindustri*, in which he investigated the whereabouts of the ancient “*Venus af Stockholm*.”⁴ The name Venus of Stockholm appears here for the first time, as a reference to the location of the sculpture, which was possessed by the Swedish sculptor Johan Niklas Byström (1783–1848) and housed for a long time in his villa in Stockholm. Dietrichson’s research came to a standstill, though he did discover that plaster casts of the Venus of Stockholm were preserved in the plaster cast collections in the Neue Museum in Berlin and in the Königliches Museum der Gypsabgüsse in Dresden, also known as the Königlich Sächsisches Mengs’sche Museum (*Table 1*). Nevertheless, the Venus of Stockholm was soon forgotten again.

This article investigates the question of the whereabouts of the Venus of Stockholm. It also analyses the marble sculpture, with a particular focus on the previously unrecognized peculiarity that it was a mirror-reversed copy of another ancient

¹ On plaster casts and plaster cast collections during the 20th century, see Alexandridis & Winkler-Horaček 2022; Cain 1995, 210f.

² See, e.g., the exhibition *Gips nicht mehr. Abgüsse als letzte Zeugen antiker Kunst* in Bonn in 2000–2001: Bauer & Geominy 2000.

³ Skulpturensammlung, SKD, inv. ASN 2260.

⁴ Dietrichson 1875, 197–202.

Denomination used in text	Comments
The Venus of Stockholm	Lost? Purchased by Johan Niklas Byström, presumably in Rome sometime between 1810 and 1833. Sold to British banker and archaeologist Henry Christy in 1853 after Byström's death in 1848
Dresden plaster cast	Dresden, Skulpturensammlung, SKD, inv. ASN 2260. Acquired for the royal collection in Dresden in 1842. Previous names for the collection are Königlich Sächsisches Mengs'sches Museum and Königliches Museum der Gypsabgüsse
Berlin plaster cast	Lost. Previously in the Königliche Gewerbeinstitut, the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Künste, and lastly the Neue Museum, all three in Berlin. Acquired from Byström for the Gewerbeinstitut in 1833
*Byström's plaster cast	Lost? Mentioned in a letter from Byström to Wetterling, 18 December 1829
Byström's plaster cast	Lost? Mentioned in Nyman 1939. It is not known whether this is the same cast as that mentioned in the 1829 letter from Byström to Wetterling
Heidenstam's plaster cast	Lost? Mentioned in Nyman 1939
Byström's marble copy	Lost? Sold to Henry Christy in 1853. Exhibited at a contemporary art exhibition in Manchester in 1857, Anonymous 1857, 134, no. 38. Mentioned in Nyman 1939

*Table 1. The Venus of Stockholm, as well as its recorded casts and copies, presented in the order they are mentioned in the text. Where the identification as a copy of the Venus of Stockholm is uncertain, the denomination used in the text is marked with *.*

marble sculpture, the Venus of Paris–Warsaw. Finally, the article highlights the importance of the Venus of Stockholm for Byström's independent artistic work. After the destruction of the plaster cast in Berlin,⁵ the Dresden cast is the only surviving copy of the original Venus of Stockholm. As such, the Dresden plaster cast plays a central role throughout this study.

Historical background

For the year 1842, Carl Theodor Chalybaeus, inspector of the Königlich Sächsisches Mengs'sches Museum (Royal Saxon Museum of Plaster Casts) in Dresden, noted four new acquisitions for the collection.⁶ In addition to a plaster cast of the so-called Wallraff Medusa from Cologne, there were three plaster casts taken from original artworks in Stockholm that reached Dresden on 15 September of the same year: the Sleeping Endymion, a boar-head *rhyton*, and a Venus sculpture. The first two plaster casts are based on originals from the Gustav III:s Antikmuseum (Gustav III's Museum of Antiquities) in the Royal Palace in Stockholm.⁷ The cast of the Endymion is actually a plaster cast of a plaster copy in reduced size of the original marble sculpture; the reduced-size copy was made in 1807 by

Byström.⁸ Chalybaeus does not mention from whom the casts were acquired or who possessed the original Venus sculpture.

In the catalogue of the plaster cast collection in Dresden, published in 1843, there is no specific indication of the provenance of these four casts, except a note stating that the original Venus statue is located in Stockholm and that it previously belonged to the Borghese collection in Rome.⁹ It was only in 1881 that the later director of the Dresden plaster cast collection, Hermann Hettner, stated that the Swedish sculptor Johan Niklas Byström was in possession of the original Venus sculpture, before it was sold to a buyer in England.¹⁰ This information can be verified by the correspondence between the sculptors Ernst Rietschel and Christian Daniel Rauch: in 1837, Rietschel asked Rauch where he had obtained the casts of the Endymion, the *rhyton*, and the Venus, as he was considering acquiring such casts for the collection in Dresden as well.¹¹ Rauch had already purchased casts of these works for the Königliche Gewerbeinstitut (Royal Institute of Industry) in Berlin in 1833 and explained to Rietschel that he had bought them from Byström, who possessed the originals and made the plaster casts. The marble Venus is described as “Ei-

⁵ The Berlin plaster cast collection first suffered severe damage during the Second World War. During the period that followed, casts were destroyed partly due to lack of space and in part also due to improper transport. The Berlin cast of the Venus of Stockholm was probably also among the casts that were lost during this period: Winkler-Horaček 2022, 361f.

⁶ Archive of the Skulpturensammlung, SKD, inv. 3683, loose inserted and unnumbered sheet.

⁷ The sculptures of the Gustav III's Museum of Antiquities are today included in the collections of the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, though some are on display in the Royal Palace.

⁸ Stockholm, Royal Palace, Gustav III's Museum of Antiquities, inv. NMSk 1. (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1089963>). The sculpture of the Sleeping Endymion had been found during excavations in the Villa Hadriana in Tivoli in 1783 and was acquired two years later by the Swedish king Gustav III: Leander Touati 1998, 101–106; the cast in Dresden still exists, inv. ASN 3198. The boar-head *rhyton*: Stockholm, Royal Palace, Gustav III's Museum of Antiquities, inv. NMSk 179 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1117684>); the cast of it in Dresden, inv. ASN 1504.

⁹ Chalybaeus 1843, 6, no. 32.

¹⁰ Hettner 1881, 118, no. 215. As noted below, the buyer was most likely the British banker and archaeologist Henry Christy.

¹¹ Rietschel's letter to Rauch of 10 November 1837. Published in von Wilmowsky & von Simson 2020, vol. 1, 458–461, no. 125.

*gentium des Künstlers und eines seiner Freunde*¹² (property of the artist [Byström] and one of his friends). Rauch did not mention which of Byström's friends was involved.

Johan Niklas Byström (Fig. 1) was born in 1783 in Filipstad and studied at the Royal Academy of Arts in Stockholm until 1810.¹³ Among his most influential teachers was Johan Tobias Sergel, who recognized Byström's talent early on. In the summer of 1810 Byström was awarded a travel grant from the Royal Academy in Stockholm and went to Rome, where he quickly established contact with other sculptors such as Bertel Thorvaldsen and Antonio Canova. Rome quickly became his second home. In addition to his first small apartment near the Mausoleum of Augustus, he purchased the Villa Malta in 1818, which remained in his possession until 1827. It became Byström's place of work and residence, and he also had other artists set up their studios there. In addition, he had a villa built in Stockholm in 1839–1844, the Villa Byström in Djurgården (the Royal Game Park). The villa in Stockholm was furnished with works of art that Byström had acquired in Rome in the years before. Byström died in 1848.

During his years in Rome, Byström travelled back to Stockholm several times, often via Berlin and Dresden, as his main clients were from Sweden. Four of the first works he created in Rome, the sculptures of Pandora, Hygieia, a nymph, and Mars, were bought by the Swedish crown prince Karl Johan.¹⁴ Although his main works include portraits such as the statue of Carl Linnaeus in Uppsala¹⁵ and the bust of Carl Michael Bellman in Djurgården in Stockholm, ancient sculptures and themes played an important role in Byström's oeuvre. In particular, statues of women (mostly depictions of Venus or nymphs or idealized sculptures of bathing women) are numerous among the works he created. Therefore, it is not surprising that Byström owned a Venus sculpture.



Fig. 1. Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein, Portrait of Johan Niklas Byström, 1816. Pencil drawing. Kupferstich-Kabinett, SKD, inv. C 2886. © Kupferstich-Kabinett, SKD, Photograph: Andreas Diesend.

The Venus of Stockholm

The Venus of Stockholm (Fig. 2,) was a marble statue in the Venus Pudica type, known from numerous ancient sculptures, such as the Medici Venus¹⁶ or the Capitoline Venus.¹⁷ The type was first realized in large sculptural form as the Aphrodite of Knidos by the Greek sculptor Praxiteles, active during the 4th century BC. The Venus of Stockholm depicted the ancient goddess standing naked, the right leg serving as engaged leg and the left foot placed behind the right. Her gaze was directed forward. She covered the pubic area with her right hand and the left breast with her left hand. The statue was supported by a slender vase on which Venus's robe lay. Measured at the plaster cast in Dresden, with a height of 163 cm without

¹² Rauch's letter to Rietschel of 25 December 1837. Published in von Wilmowsky & von Simson 2020, vol. 1, 461–467, no. 126. The casts later passed into the possession of the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Künste. See Böttiger's letter in Dietrichson 1875, 200. From here, the casts were transferred to the cast collection of the Neue Museum and mentioned by Panofka: Panofka 1844, 16, no. 95 (Endymion), 20f., no. 116 (Venus), 32, no. 410 (boar-head *rhyton*). None of these plaster casts previously in Berlin exist anymore, they were most likely destroyed, see Winkler-Horaček 2022, 349–374. Regarding the Sleeping Endymion, Chalybaeus (1843), Panofka (1844) and Hettner (1881) all mention the restorations on the original sculpture but not that the cast was taken from a plaster post-antique copy in reduced size made by Byström himself (generally the plaster cast makers are not stated in the catalogues of the plaster cast collections).

¹³ For the life and work of Byström, see the biography by Nyman 1939. Specifically on his life in Rome, see Landen 2002, 295–311.

¹⁴ Josephson 1927, 14–22.

¹⁵ Today in the Linneanum, the Orangery in the botanical gardens of Uppsala University.

¹⁶ Florence, The Uffizi Galleries, inv. 224 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1066017>): Haskell & Penny 1998, 325–328.

¹⁷ Rome, Capitoline Museums, inv. 409 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1075785>): Haskell & Penny 1998, 318–320.



Fig. 2. The Dresden plaster cast of the *Venus of Stockholm*, c. 1842. Skulpturensammlung, SKD, inv. ASN 2260. © Skulpturensammlung, SKD, Photograph: Christian Klose.

plinth, and 171 cm with plinth, the *Venus of Stockholm* was slightly below life-size.¹⁸

It is unknown when the *Venus of Stockholm* came into Byström's possession. He first mentions a plaster cast of an

¹⁸ Measured in June 2022. The head had been damaged and was reassembled and reattached in spring 2022. Slight deviations from the original size of the Dresden cast, and consequently also the *Venus of Stockholm*, are therefore possible. The Dresden cast is most certainly a 1:1 copy of the *Venus of Stockholm*.

ancient *Venus* in a letter he wrote to his friend, the painter Alexander Clemens Wetterling in December 1829.¹⁹ His choice of words "*Gips af den antika marmor Venus*" (plaster cast of the ancient marble *Venus*) indicates he is referring to a certain sculpture in his possession, but it is not clear whether *antik* means in this context that he believed the sculpture to have been made during antiquity or that it was just "old". In the letter Byström listed many of his works that he wanted to send from Rome to Stockholm. By that time, he had already sold the Villa Malta to the Bavarian king Ludwig I.²⁰ Apparently, he didn't have enough space in his other apartment in Rome and so had to house the sculptures in Stockholm.

In addition to the mention in Byström's letter, a *Venus* sculpture appears in the auction catalogue published in 1853 of Byström's estate from his villa in Stockholm, a few years after his death in 1848. The catalogue lists all the works in Byström's possession—a total of 474 paintings, drawings, and sculptures, including one *Venus* sculpture described as *antique*.²¹ Its size is indicated as 70 Swedish inches, which corresponds to approximately 173 cm—thus about the same size as the Dresden cast with plinth, 171 cm.²² After the auction, it was initially unclear who had bought Byström's "antique" *Venus*.

As we have seen, in 1875 Dietrichson tried to clarify the whereabouts of the marble sculpture that he was the first to call the "*Venus of Stockholm*", a sculpture once possessed by Byström. By that time, several art historians had already been searching for this sculpture.²³ But Dietrichson, too, could only find out that Byström brought along one "old" *Venus* sculpture from Rome to his villa in Stockholm. This sculpture had, after Byström's death, been sold to a buyer in England. Dietrichson also noted that plaster casts of the sculpture existed at least in Berlin and Dresden.²⁴ Thus, the preserved records only mention one "old" *Venus* sculpture in Byström's possession in Stockholm from which he could have made plaster casts. The fact that the Dresden plaster cast is in the same size as both the "antique" *Venus* sculpture listed in the auction catalogue of 1853, and as the casts described in the letters between Rauch and Rietschel, makes it very likely that the "antique" sculpture in the auction catalogue from 1853 is the *Venus of Stockholm*, and that the plaster casts in Dresden and Berlin were made from this marble *Venus* sculpture. It is,

¹⁹ Letter from Byström to Wetterling dated 18 December 1829: Archive of the Swedish National Museum Stockholm.

²⁰ Landen 2002, 303.

²¹ Weigel 1853, 25, no. 5.

²² Weigel 1853, 25, no. 5.

²³ Dietrichson mentions G. Thore Ericsson from Uppsala and Friedrich Wieseler from Göttingen who searched unsuccessfully for the *Venus of Stockholm*: Dietrichson 1875, 197.

²⁴ Dietrichson 1875, 202.

however, not possible to say with certainty whether Byström's plaster cast, mentioned in the 1829 letter from Byström to Wetterling, was also taken from the Venus of Stockholm.

The last mention of the Venus of Stockholm is in Thure Nyman's 1939 biography of Byström. According to Nyman, the sculpture was sold to a buyer named Christy.²⁵ In addition, Byström is said to have made a total of four casts of the Venus of Stockholm (for Berlin, Dresden, a member of the Swedish noble family of Heidenstam, and one for himself) as well as a marble copy.²⁶ This last mentioned marble copy might be the "*Venus, Imitation d'après l'Antique*"²⁷ in the 1853 auction catalogue for Byström's estate. It was earlier displayed together with the marble Venus of Stockholm in Byström's villa in Stockholm and was also sold to Christy.

Although it is not clear which sources Nyman used,²⁸ his statements can largely be confirmed. As shown, the plaster casts made for Dresden and Berlin can be traced with certainty. The person who purchased both the Venus of Stockholm and Byström's marble copy of the same is most likely the British banker and archaeologist Henry Christy. Christy is known to have owned several works by Byström, including a Venus "after the antique". This was most likely Byström's marble copy of the Venus of Stockholm ("*Venus, Imitation d'après l'Antique*"). In an exhibition catalogue from 1857 these works were mentioned as in the possession of Henry Christy.²⁹ Today, the whereabouts of the Venus of Stockholm, and those of Byström's marble copy, his plaster cast, and that made for Heidenstam, are all unknown.³⁰ The plaster cast in Berlin was probably destroyed together with the rest of this plaster cast collection.³¹ Thus, the Dresden cast is for the time being the only known still-existing sculptural image of the Venus of Stockholm.

Two aspects noted by earlier scholars need to be investigated further. The first is Chalybaeus's brief remark that the Venus of Stockholm was once part of the Borghese collection in Rome. From there, Byström would presumably have

acquired it sometime between the autumn of 1810, when he reached Rome, and 1833, when Rauch bought a plaster cast of the Venus of Stockholm from Byström for the collection in Berlin. It is questionable that Byström bought the sculpture from this collection because almost all of the ancient statues of the Borghese collection were bought by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1808 and brought to Paris by the summer of 1810, where they are still in the Louvre.³² Thus, by the time Byström reached Rome, the Borghese collection had already been sold. It can also be noted that neither Giacomo Manilli's,³³ Domenico Montelatici's³⁴ nor Ennio Quirino Visconti's³⁵ descriptions of the Borghese collection, published between 1650 and 1796, mention a Venus sculpture that can be identified as the Venus of Stockholm. The sculpture is furthermore not mentioned in Johann Joachim Winckelmann's selective description of the collection.³⁶ Of course, the statue could have been acquired earlier, between 1796 and 1808, but there is no evidence to support this supposition. It is therefore not possible to securely trace the Venus of Stockholm back to the Borghese collection.

The second aspect to be investigated further is the date of the Venus of Stockholm. It is commonly referred to in the sources as an ancient work. Karl Friederichs and Heinrich Gustav Hotho had noted that on the Berlin plaster cast some parts—especially the arms—appeared to be modern.³⁷ These observations are not surprising, because arms are often restored on fragmentarily preserved ancient sculptures. The vase and the garment have no flaws and are therefore most likely to be determined as modern additions, should the torso be ancient. The question arises whether the sculpture contained ancient fragments at all, or whether it was an entirely modern work. It may seem problematic to doubt the dating of a marble sculpture that is no longer accessible on the basis of a plaster cast taken from that same sculpture, and go on to suggest a new dating. However, an attempt to achieve this will be made below. On the basis of comparative examples and 17th–18th-century descriptions of the Borghese collection, it is argued that the Venus of Stockholm is most likely a modern imitation of another ancient Venus sculpture.

²⁵ Nyman 1939, 164, 176, no. 72.

²⁶ Nyman 1939, 176, no. 72.

²⁷ Weigel 1853, 26, no. 10. At 65 Swedish inches (approximately 163 cm), the copy was slightly smaller than the antique Venus.

²⁸ See Nyman 1939, 163f., nn. 1–4.

²⁹ Byström's marble copy was shown at a contemporary art exhibition in Manchester in 1857: Anonymous 1857, 134, no. 38. A drunken faun (no. 48) and a girl sculpture (no. 97a), both made by Byström, were also exhibited.

³⁰ Christy ordered that after his death his archaeological collection be transferred to the Musée d'Archéologie nationale in Saint-Germain-en-Laye in France, while his art collection was donated to the British Museum, and from there, some to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG122138>. No works by Byström can be found in these two museums in Great Britain today.

³¹ For the fate of the Berlin plaster cast collection in the Neue Museum see Winkler-Horaček 2022, 349–374.

³² For the sale of the Borghese collection, see Fabrèga-Dubert 2009.

³³ Manilli 1650.

³⁴ Montelatici 1700.

³⁵ Visconti 1796.

³⁶ Winckelmann 2003.

³⁷ Friederichs 1868, 341, no. 591 with partly incorrect information about provenance and Dietrichson 1875, 201 with the published letter of Hotho to Dietrichson.



Fig. 3 (far left). Illustration of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, 1st–3rd centuries AD, published in Visconti 1796, vol. 2, stanza V, no. 2 (*Venerere per entrar nel bagno*). © German Archaeological Institute (BOOK-1361149-0062_1049105).

Fig. 4 (left). Fig. 3, mirrored. © German Archaeological Institute (BOOK-1361149-0062_1049105).

THE VENUS OF STOCKHOLM AND THE VENUS OF PARIS–WARSAW

As noted above, Chalybaeus's claim that the Venus of Stockholm was formerly in the Borghese collection is most likely not true. However, there is an important connection between the Venus of Stockholm and another restored ancient sculpture once in the Borghese collection: the Venus of Paris–Warsaw (Figs. 3–5, 8). Among the Venus sculptures in Visconti's *Sculture del palazzo della villa Borghese* there is one statue that repeats certain features seen in the Venus of Stockholm (Fig. 3). This is also a Venus Pudica of the Capitoline Venus type. The goddess is depicted holding one hand in front of the left breast, and the other in front of the pubic area. The design of the vase and the garment placed on top of it is crucial regarding the relationship to the Venus of Stockholm. If one mirrors the depiction of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, one gets an image almost identical to the Venus of Stockholm (Fig. 4).

Since Visconti has illustrated all the other sculptures un-reversed and his descriptions correspond to the images, an error on his part can be ruled out. The Venus of Paris–Warsaw was one of the antiquities of the Borghese collection acquired by Napoleon in 1808, and which was transferred to the Musée

Napoléon, today's Louvre, in the summer of 1810 (Fig. 5).³⁸ The sculpture is currently on permanent loan from the Louvre to the Polish National Museum in Warsaw (thus the Venus of Paris–Warsaw).³⁹

Only the torso, upper legs and the head of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw are ancient, and they originally belonged to two different ancient sculptures. Both arms are modern, as are the two legs from the knees to the feet. Also restored are the statue support—consisting of the vase and garment—and the plinth. In its restored condition, the sculpture (with plinth) measures approximately 195 cm.⁴⁰ This means that the Venus of Paris–Warsaw is some 20 cm taller than the Venus of Stockholm and the cast of the latter in Dresden (respectively c. 163 cm and 171 cm, with plinth).

³⁸ Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. MA 316 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1094284>). Now in Warsaw, National Museum, inv. 143401. For the purchase for the Louvre see Fabrèga-Dubert 2009, vol. 2, 217, no. 433; Mikocki 1994, 74f., no. 64.

³⁹ Kalveram 1995, 194, no. 67.

⁴⁰ According to Mikocki 1994, 74f., no. 64. His information coincides with that of the Louvre: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010276913>. Kalveram 1995, 194, no. 67 states a height of 178 cm and Fabrèga-Dubert 2009, vol. 2, 217, no. 433 “6 pieds, 1 pouce, 7 lignes” which corresponds to about 200 cm.



Fig. 5 (far left). Venus of Paris–Warsaw, 1st–3rd centuries AD, Musée du Louvre, Paris. inv. Ma 316. © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais, Photograph: Maurice and Pierre Chuzeville.

Fig. 6 (left). Mirrored version of Fig. 2, the Dresden plaster cast of the Venus of Stockholm. © Skulpturensammlung, SKD, Photograph: Christian Klose.

Fig. 7 (above). Detail of the Dresden plaster cast of the Venus of Stockholm, right three-quarter profile. © Skulpturensammlung, SKD, Photograph: Christian Klose.

If one mirrors a depiction of the Dresden cast of the Venus of Stockholm and compares it with the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, the similarities become more evident (*Fig. 6*). When mirror-reversed, Venus's posture is identical in the two statues; also somewhat similar is the way the goddess holds her arms. It is, however, the execution of the support in particular that can be regarded as a precise copy. In addition, the head is almost identical mirror-reversed as can be seen from the arrangement of the goddess's curls of hair. Thus, the Venus of Stockholm is revealed as a mirrored version of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw.

Even though the two sculptures are very similar, the sculptor who created the Venus of Stockholm has made some changes, in addition to the mirroring and the size reduction. Although the curls of the hair mostly coincide, the hair of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw ends in two braids, while for the Venus of Stockholm the hair is brought together at the nape of the neck (*Fig. 7*, and below *Fig. 20*). At the same time, the heads

of the two sculptures are aligned differently. While the head of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw is turned strongly to the right, the head of the Venus of Stockholm is only slightly tilted. Equally noticeable is the neck of the goddess. In the Venus of Stockholm, the neck is disproportionately long, which is not the case for the Venus of Paris–Warsaw.

The position of the raised arm also diverges. The left arm of the Venus of Stockholm is much more sharply angled than the right arm of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw. The Venus of Stockholm covers her left breast with her left hand, while the Venus of Paris–Warsaw holds her right hand slightly below her left breast. If one looks down, there is another notable detail: the robe of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw ends on the plinth, between the left foot and the vase; the Venus of Stockholm, however, steps with her right foot on the garment (*Figs. 8–9*). In view of these deviations, only very few observers of the Venus of Stockholm might have been able to recognize the ancient model, especially after the sculpture's transfer from



Fig. 8. Detail of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, Fig. 5. © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais, Photograph: Maurice and Pierre Chuzzeville.



Fig. 9. Detail, the Dresden plaster cast of the Venus of Stockholm, Fig. 2, mirrored illustration. © Skulpturensammlung, SKD, Photograph: Christian Klose.

Rome to Stockholm and the transfer of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw from Rome to Paris.

It can only be approximated when the Venus of Paris–Warsaw was acquired for the Borghese collection, founded by Scipione Borghese. The first reference is in 1650 when Manilli described it as “*Venere nuda, che esce nel bagno*”⁴¹ (nude Venus, going to the bath) displayed in the Galleria.⁴² The description is more detailed in Montelatici 1700 as “*Venere ignuda in atto d’uscir dal bagno con un vaso accanto, & un panno sopra*”⁴³ (nude Venus, coming out of the bath with a vase and garment on it). A drawing in red chalk by Carlo Calderi made around 1716–1730 shows the Venus of Paris–Warsaw with all of its current restorations,⁴⁴ and so by this time all the post-antique additions made to the ancient fragments must have been completed. The sculpture is described and illustrated in the same state by Visconti in 1796.⁴⁵

The earliest conceivable acquisition date is 1609 when two sculptures of undressed Venuses were purchased for the Borghese collection from the Della Porta collection. These sculptures are comparable to the Venus of Paris–Warsaw (c. 195 cm with plinth) as their sizes are c. 188 and 200 cm.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Manilli 1650, 74. The sculpture was already in the gallery of the Casino in Villa Borghese at that time. Although the description is not entirely clear, as several Venus statues existed in the collection, the details of the other sculptures do not match the description as well as does the Venus of Paris–Warsaw: Kalveram 1995, 194.

⁴² Kalveram 1995, 170f.; Coliva 2011, 164f.

⁴³ Montelatici 1700, 231.

⁴⁴ Fabrèga-Dubert 2020, 369, no. Bm. 2.50.

⁴⁵ Visconti 1796, 23f.

⁴⁶ Kalveram 1995, 147, no. 4 and 150, no. 117. The height is indicated as 9 feet and 8¾ feet respectively. Based on a foot measurement of 22.34 cm (Roman foot/*Palmo architettonico*), this corresponds to approximately 200 cm and 188 cm respectively.

In the inventory of the Borghese collection from 1610 a Venus “*con il vaso e panno nel lago*”⁴⁷ (Venus with vase and garment by the lake) is mentioned. However, a reliable identification with this as one of the Venus sculptures mentioned in the purchase inventories or lists is not possible. In the following years, several Venus sculptures, either as torsos or unspecified parts, were acquired for the Borghese collection, which may have included the Venus of Paris–Warsaw.⁴⁸ Thus, the period of acquisition can only be narrowed down to the period between 1609 and 1650, when the Venus of Paris–Warsaw was first mentioned by Manilli. The sculpture may have been purchased for the Borghese collection either as an already restored sculpture, or as ancient fragments—a torso and a head.

OTHER SCULPTURES POSSIBLY USED AS MODELS FOR THE VENUS OF STOCKHOLM

If we hypothesize that the Venus of Stockholm is post-antique, it can be assumed that its sculptor knew numerous other ancient Venus sculptures. But these do not seem to have influenced the sculptor working on the Venus of Stockholm. There were many famous and widely appreciated representations of Venus, such as the Medici Venus (excavated before 1638) or the Capitoline Venus (excavated in the early 1670s).⁴⁹ The Venus of Paris–Warsaw is similar to the Capitoline Venus. The two sculptures share the same posture, but the design of the head and the support clearly diverges between the two. By the beginning of the 18th century at the latest, the Capitoline Venus had served as model for several additions made to other

⁴⁷ Kalveram 1995, 153, no. 64.

⁴⁸ See the acquisition lists for the years 1616 to 1620 at Kalveram 1995, 157f.

⁴⁹ Haskell & Penny 1998, 318–320, 325–328.

Venus sculptures. Thus, for example, the restorer of a replica of the ancient Venus Capitolina sculpture type now in Dresden used an ancient statue support that originally belonged to another Venus sculpture and that is very similar to that of the Capitoline Venus.⁵⁰ The addition of that particular support was intended to further emphasize the proximity of the sculpture now in Dresden to the eponymous sculpture in the Capitoline Museum.⁵¹

The Medici Venus—transferred from Rome to Florence in August 1677⁵²—differs from both the Venus of Paris–Warsaw and the Venus of Stockholm to such an extent that it can be excluded as the model for the makers of these two sculptures. The design and the posture of the head of the Medici Venus, which is clearly more turned to the side, as well as the shape of the support, are clearly different. The support of the Medici Venus is a tree-trunk, next to which is an erote riding a dolphin.

In addition, there were some 17th- and 18th-century Venus sculptures in the same posture as the Venus of Stockholm that could have served as a model for the complement. Two such sculptures are in the Vatican Museums: the Venus Colonna⁵³ and a well-known Roman copy of the Knidian Aphrodite, known since 1536.⁵⁴ Both statues were in the 18th century already identified as copies of the famous sculpture by Praxiteles, the 4th-century BC Aphrodite of Knidos.⁵⁵ On balance, the complementing sculptor of the Venus of Stockholm would have had the freedom to create his own additions, which were only vaguely oriented towards other models in order to consciously distinguish his work from them.

One detail of the Venus of Stockholm that cannot be seen in any other Venus sculptures mentioned is the posture of the upper hand, covering the breast of the same side of the body; that is, the Venus of Stockholm covers her left breast with her left hand (*Fig. 2*). For most examples of Venus Pudica statues,

the sculptors have chosen to add the arms so that they cover with their hand the breast of the opposite side of the body (cf. the Capitoline Venus, the Medici Venus, and here the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, *Fig. 5*). Fewer examples are known where Venus covers her breast with the hand of the same side, but one example of such a sculpture is a Venus statue in Berlin.⁵⁶

This particular Venus statue was acquired in 1827 from the art dealers Ignazio and Luigi Vescovali in Rome. When purchased in Rome the sculpture had been restored using the head from an ancient sculpture; Rauch restored the Venus in Berlin and replaced the head with a post-antique copy of the head of the Medici Venus. The arm, which also showed modern additions in plaster, was left as it was. The gesture is very similar to that of the Venus of Stockholm even though the left arm of the Venus in Berlin is held closer to her body. Following the Medici Venus, the head of the sculpture turns strongly towards to her left shoulder, while the head of the Venus of Stockholm turns only slightly to her right side. However, since it is not known when the additions to the Berlin Venus were made, only a very hypothetical connection can be drawn between the Venus now in Berlin and the Venus of Stockholm.

The production date of the Venus of Stockholm cannot be estimated with precision. The sculpture must have achieved its current design after the restoration of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, which (following Manilli's description) was finished in 1650 or earlier. The latest possible period is the time before the Borghese collection of antiquities was sold to Napoleon in 1808. Copies or plaster casts of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, which could have served as models for a sculptor working on the Venus of Stockholm, are not known. Thus, the sculptor most likely studied the original Venus of Paris–Warsaw. It therefore seems probable that the Venus of Stockholm was either made in its entirety or restored between 1650 and 1808.

Since the sculptor must have looked at the Venus of Paris–Warsaw from all sides, a favourable time for the production of the Venus of Stockholm would have been when the Venus of Paris–Warsaw was not standing in its niche in the Galleria of the Villa Borghese. From notations in the *Archivio Borghese* we know that the sculptor Agostino Penna made restorations on two Venus sculptures in the Galleria in 1779.⁵⁷ At this time, there were at least one or two other Venus sculptures in the Galleria.⁵⁸ If one of the restored Venuses was the Venus of Paris–Warsaw and if the sculptures had to be lifted out of their niches for these works, this might have been an opportunity to view the sculpture from all sides and possibly also to copy it. A similar opportunity arose when the Venus of Paris–War-

⁵⁰ Skulpturensammlung, SKD, inv. Hm 308 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1065477>): Boschung 2011, 250–255, no. 33. The sculpture was acquired from the Flavio Chigi collection in 1728 and depicted in Leplat 1733, pl. 52 in completed condition. It can therefore be assumed that the restoration had already taken place in Rome.

⁵¹ Boschung 2011, 254.

⁵² Haskell & Penny 1998, 325, no. 88.

⁵³ Vatican City, Vatican Museums, inv. 812 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1080605>): Helbig 1963, vol. 1, 526–531, no. 207.

⁵⁴ Vatican City, Vatican Museums, inv. 4260 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1080491>): Haskell & Penny 1998, 330f.

⁵⁵ Helbig 1963, vol. 1, 530; Haskell & Penny 1998, 331. The tendency among post antique restorers to replicate parts of renowned sculptures is even clearer in the case of an ancient torso at Wörlitz Palace. Here the head, arms, and statue support were also replaced in the early 18th century in a manner even more in line with the Capitoline Venus: Wörlitz Palace, inv. II-14 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1091109>). This sculpture was formerly owned by Luigi Passani and acquired for the collection in 1798: Kansteiner 2021, 44, no. 9.

⁵⁶ Berlin, Skulpturensammlung, inv. Sk 20 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1121627>): Grassinger 2008, 184f.

⁵⁷ Quoted from Coliva 2011, 421.

⁵⁸ Kalveram 1995, 169; Coliva 2011, 221.

saw was moved from one niche in a corner of the room to the niche to its left, next to a door, as well as shortly before its removal from Rome (although in these cases it is questionable whether there would have been enough time for a sculptor to create a copy).

AN ANCIENT TORSO WITH RESTORATIONS ...

One important question is whether the Venus of Stockholm was at its core an ancient torso with additions copied from the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, or whether it was a completely post-antique mirror-reversed copy. Closely related to this is the question of the purpose for which such a mirrored copy was made. If the Venus of Stockholm consisted of a torso of an ancient sculpture, the post-antique additions must, as noted above, have been made after the Venus of Paris–Warsaw had been restored, i.e., 1650 or later. Because the head and support of the Venus of Stockholm are clearly attributable to the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, the torso of the Venus of Stockholm, if ancient, could only have been preserved as a trunk, without arms and legs. In its design, the torso of the Venus of Stockholm would then have roughly corresponded to the ancient sculpture type known as the Knidian Aphrodite.⁵⁹

If the Venus of Stockholm was at its core an ancient torso with modern additions, one would have to ask why the sculptor chose the Venus of Paris–Warsaw as a model, even copying the modern parts of the sculpture and in addition elaborately mirroring them? Such an effort could make sense if the intention was to set up the Venus of Stockholm as a pendant to the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, for example, to use the pair to flank a door, a stairway, or similar. As will be discussed further below, such combinations occur repeatedly in antiquity: one only has to think of the antithetically made sculptures of the giant Dioscuroi⁶⁰ and the allegoric sculptures of Tiber and Nile at the *Piazza del Campidoglio* in Rome⁶¹ or the pediment sculptures of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia⁶² (even if most of these antithetical sculptures vary in their details). The phenomenon is, however, not limited to antiquity, but is also well represented in later times.

Following the descriptions by Manilli, Montelatici, and Visconti, the Venus of Paris–Warsaw was displayed in a niche in the Galleria of the ground floor in the Villa Borghese. Based on Montelatici, Katrin Kalveram has reconstructed the presentation of the sculptures for the beginning of the 18th cen-

tury.⁶³ In this time, the Venus of Paris–Warsaw was situated in one of the four niches in the rear wall almost in the corner of the room. In the other niches sculptures of Venus Victrix,⁶⁴ Bacchus,⁶⁵ and Adonis⁶⁶ were displayed. Consequently there would have been no space for the Venus of Stockholm to be displayed as pendant to the Venus of Paris–Warsaw.

During the 18th century, the disposition of the sculptures in the Galleria was changed. According to Visconti, the presentation of the sculptures was now an aesthetic one and the statues were positioned in pairs or in larger groups. The Venus of Paris–Warsaw had been moved to the niche directly on the right side of a door, and in the niche to the left of this door stood another Venus sculpture in type of the Capitoline Venus.⁶⁷ However, based on Visconti's description in 1796, it can be excluded that this statue was the Venus of Stockholm, as the sculpture mentioned can be identified with another Venus sculpture from the Borghese collection, a sculpture now in the Louvre.⁶⁸

If the Venus of Stockholm was displayed in this niche before the replica of the Capitoline Venus was placed there, one would wonder why the Venus of Stockholm was replaced and presumably sold, rather than set up somewhere else in the Villa Borghese or the surrounding garden? If it was the other way round and the Venus of Stockholm was made after 1796 to replace the replica of the Capitoline Venus, one must also wonder why the effort in rearranging was made, given that the Venus of Stockholm seems then to have been sold only a few years later.

... OR A MODERN IMITATION?

However, there is another possible explanation for how the Venus of Stockholm was made, and it is worth discussing. The notion that the whole sculpture was a modern mirror-reversed copy of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw is not as far-fetched as it may seem. Regardless of whether the Venus of Stockholm was an ancient torso with modern additions that were made after the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, or whether the sculpture was a completely post-antique and mirror-reversed version of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, its sculptor must have studied the Venus of Paris–Warsaw intensively because the process of mirroring is very deliberate and requires a high level of skill and

⁵⁹ Cf. Haskell & Penny 1998, 330f.

⁶⁰ Haskell & Penny 1998, 136–141 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/16915>).

⁶¹ Concerning the Tiber: Klementa 1993, 138–141 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1077906>); concerning the Nile: Klementa 1993, 16f (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1077906>).

⁶² Treu 1897, 44–137.

⁶³ Kalveram 1995, 168.

⁶⁴ Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. MA 370 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1094281>): Kalveram 1995, 192, no. 64.

⁶⁵ Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. MA 85 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1074499>): Kalveram 1995, 193, no. 65.

⁶⁶ Unknown location. Last mentioned in the Borghese collection in 1762: Kalveram 1995, 193, no. 66.

⁶⁷ Coliva 2011, 220f.

⁶⁸ Visconti 1796, 23. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. MR 375 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1094283>): Martinez 2004, 177f., no. 307.

concentration. As parts of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw were copied evenly from all sides, it can be assumed that the copyist studied the sculpture as a whole, rather than using drawings or prints of it. Maybe he even had to take the sculpture out of its niche to study its backside. Therefore, it is questionable whether this effort would be justified simply for the copying of some parts of a sculpture and then reducing the size (the Venus of Stockholm is some 20 cm shorter than the Venus of Paris–Warsaw). It would have been easier to mirror the whole sculpture. Furthermore, if a post-antique mirror-reversed copy had been commissioned to serve as pendant to the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, one would have to wonder why the sculptor decided to make this copy smaller than the original sculpture. Almost all the other sculptures in the high and large niches in the Galleria were larger than life-size.⁶⁹

In addition, the sculptor of the Venus of Stockholm precisely copied some parts, like the head and the support, from the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, but diverged in other areas, such as the position of the head and hands. Moreover, in an elevated position, such as in the niches in the Galleria in the Villa Borghese, a detail such as the stepping on the garment, seen in the Venus of Stockholm but not in the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, would never have been noticed. Also the posture of the left arm is problematic. As restored, the Venus of Paris–Warsaw was designed to be viewed slightly from below. In the high niche in the Galleria, the goddess's right arm was perfectly positioned to cover her left breast. However, the Venus of Stockholm was most likely designed for a display at eye level, so her left hand covers her left breast. This effect would not occur if viewed slightly from below and therefore it is debatable whether the Venus of Stockholm was ever intended to serve as a counterpart to the Venus of Paris–Warsaw.

It is not mentioned when the placement of the statues in the Galleria was changed during the 18th century. In the 1780s, the French architect Charles Percier visited the Villa Borghese and made several drawings of the interior. One of them depicts the Galleria and one can see that the statues are all in the same place as Visconti describes the room in 1796—with one exception. Instead of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, a statue of Jupiter⁷⁰ was placed in the niche on the right side of the door at the rear wall, that is on the side opposite the windows as seen in *Fig. 10*. The Venus of Paris–Warsaw was probably still displayed in the niche in the corner, so the two Venus sculptures—the Venus of Paris–Warsaw and the Venus of Stockholm—could not have served as pendants. Sometime later, between Percier's visit to the collection and Visconti's

description of the same, the places of the statues of Jupiter and Venus of Paris–Warsaw had been exchanged. This would mean that it was not originally intended to display the Venus of Paris–Warsaw with another Venus sculpture as a counterpart. Therefore, there is also the possibility that the Venus of Stockholm was never made for presentation together with the Venus of Paris–Warsaw. The Venus of Stockholm cannot be securely traced in any of the descriptions of the Borghese collection and so it is doubtful whether it was ever there.

Copying a sculpture precisely while at the same time varying the details can be observed in some examples of imitations after antiques. For example, in the production of a torso that imitates the ancient Venus Esquilina, the course of the hair at the neck had deliberately been altered in order to avoid suspicion that it was a modern imitation of the ancient sculpture, because an exact copy would look too similar to the Venus Esquilina. The intention seems to have been to trade the post-antique torso as an ancient fragment.⁷¹

A similar picture emerges in a modern copy of the replica of the Crouching Venus in the Gabinetto delle Maschere in the Vatican Museums.⁷² This Venus sculpture, now in the Palazzo Altemps in Rome, has only recently been identified as a modern copy of the sculpture in the Vatican, rather than an ancient replica.⁷³ At first sight, the Venus in the Palazzo Altemps looks ancient: the surface shows some damage, some parts of the sculpture are missing and there is a break at the neck.⁷⁴ However, the sculptor has not just copied the body of the Crouching Venus in the Gabinetto delle Maschere but also the post-antique part of the head made by Giovanni Pierantoni in 1793. The sculptor of the Venus in the Palazzo Altemps decided to vary some details. For example, he changed the design of the hair at the back of the neck a little while the rendering of the hair elsewhere remained identical. This procedure of accurate copying combined with deliberate variation of certain details is comparable to what we see in the Venus of Stockholm. As we have seen, the sculptor of the Venus of Stockholm also copied some parts of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw precisely but at the same time he changed some details in what appears to be a deliberate approach. Together with the fact that the sculpture is mirror-reversed, it would have been difficult to identify the Venus of Paris–Warsaw as the model for the Venus of Stockholm. Thus, the Venus of Stockholm may have been a post-antique sculpture made to be sold as ancient.

⁶⁹ Cf. Kalveram 1995, 191–194; Coliva 2011, 220f. Only a sculpture representing Adonis was less than life-size.

⁷⁰ Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. MR 254 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entry/1074529>): Martínez 2004, 108, no. 167.

⁷¹ Kansteiner 2017, vol. 2, 5, no. 1a. For further examples, see Kansteiner 2017, n. 18.

⁷² Vatican City, Vatican Museums, inv. 815 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entry/1080609>): Spinola 1999, 170, no. 41.

⁷³ Kansteiner 2015, 111.

⁷⁴ Kansteiner 2016a, 2.



Fig. 10. Charles Percier, Croquis faits hors des murs de Rome et aux environs, sur la route de Naples et à Naples. Vues de l'intérieur du casino de la villa Borghèse, sheet 32, drawing 61, after 1786. Pen and wash drawing, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France. © bpk/ RMN-Grand Palais, Photograph: Agence Bulloz.

Until the Venus of Stockholm reappears, its absence, combined with the lack of reliable sources for the 18th century, means that one can neither confirm nor confute either of the two possibilities discussed above: that the Venus of Stockholm included an ancient torso that had been restored, or that it was in its entirety a post-antique sculpture. It should be noted, though, that the sculptor of the Venus of Stockholm used the Venus of Paris–Warsaw as a model. He adopted its individual parts and all the modern additions. Although it might have been easier or more creative to invent new additions, the sculptor decided to mirror the vase and garment from the Venus of Paris–Warsaw. Simultaneously he deliber-

ately altered some specific details, such as the hair at the neck, and the “stepping on the garment”; these differences would look peculiar if both statues were displayed side by side. For this reason the Venus of Stockholm is, with all caution, here suggested to be a complete mirror-reversed reworking of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw rather than an ancient torso with post-antique additions.

Another question that should be discussed is whether Byström considered the Venus of Stockholm to be an ancient artwork or a modern one? Of course, one wonders whether a sculptor like him would not recognize whether an (almost) flawless sculpture was new or not. However, we do not know

the condition of the Venus of Stockholm when Byström acquired it. It may not have been very well preserved, like the above-mentioned copy of the Crouching Venus in the Palazzo Altemps, which could explain why Byström thought it was an ancient sculpture. The plaster casts of the Venus of Stockholm in Berlin and Dresden have always been considered to be casts of an ancient Greco-Roman statue. If Byström, who sold the casts, did not believe that the Venus of Stockholm was ancient, why would the casts in Berlin and Dresden have been referred to as taken from an ancient sculpture?

A problem is the meaning of the Swedish *antik* or the French *antique* in the sources. Both can mean “ancient” but also “old” in a more general sense. In his 1829 letter to Wetterling, Byström mentions an “*antik marmor Venus*” that cannot with certainty be identified with the Venus of Stockholm. In the 1853 auction catalogue of Byström’s estate a distinction is made between *sculptures antiques* and *sculptures modernes*. The Venus of Stockholm is here mentioned as *antique*.⁷⁵ In this context *antique* should be understood as “ancient” because Byström’s marble copy of the Venus of Stockholm is referred to as “*Imitation d’après l’Antique*”.⁷⁶ So it seems likely that Byström also believed the Venus of Stockholm to be ancient.

Mirror-reversed copies—The art-historic context of the Venus of Stockholm

ANTIQUITY

Mirroring is one of the rarer forms of the reception of exemplary sculptures in antiquity, but there are known some examples.⁷⁷ One can identify singularly mirror-reversed copies, but in several cases there exist more than one mirrored version of a sculpture type. They occur at least from the Classical period onwards. Examples of mirror-reversed versions include the river gods Alpheios and Kladeos on the east pediment of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, made in the 460s BC, and the reclining Lapith women on the west pediment of the same temple.⁷⁸ Sculptural mirror-reversed arrangements can also be seen in the so-called grave precinct of the Herakleiot at

the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens, erected before 338 BC.⁷⁹ Here, a large stele (Stele of Agathon) was flanked by the two large *naiskoi* (*naiskoi* of Korallion) with reliefs depicting farewell scenes. On the outside of the precinct, a similar arrangement comprised a smaller stele and a monumental *lekkythos* on each side. The reliefs were anything but exactly mirrored, but the general impression of the arrangements appeared aesthetically balanced. The contemporary grave monument of Dionysios at the same cemetery had a large *naiskos* in the centre, crowned by a bull and framed by an antithetically carved pair of standing lions.⁸⁰ Likewise, one can observe mirror-reversals set up as pendants during the Roman period. Perhaps the most famous examples are the Horse Tamers of Monte Cavallo in Rome, representing the *Dioskouroi* Castor and Pollux.⁸¹ The colossal, over 3-m-tall Roman statues were presumably made after Hellenistic models and were set up in front of the Bath of Constantine or Aurelian’s Temple of the Sun.

But mirror-reversed copies have not just been displayed as pairs. There also exist examples where a sculptor mirrored a well-known model without arranging it with an unreversed version of the motif. Among others, the so-called Charis Palatina, probably made in the Late Hellenistic period,⁸² is considered to be a reversed adaption that can be traced back to the statuary type of the Aphrodite Louvre–Naples (also known as the Aphrodite Fréjus type), a Greek statue from the 5th century BC attested in many Imperial Roman copies.⁸³ The Charis Palatina was found in 1862 at the Palatine Hill in Rome, near the church of S. Anastasia. Comparing replicas of the Aphrodite Louvre–Naples type with the Charis Palatina, not only the mirrored standing posture stands out, but also the corresponding course of the chiton in reversed form, which reveals the Charis Palatina as a clear reflection of the Aphrodite Louvre–Naples type (*Figs. 11–12*).⁸⁴ With a height of about 130 cm from the bottom to the neck the Charis Palatina is slightly smaller than the replicas of the Aphrodite Louvre–Naples, with a height of approximately 170–180 cm (with head).

⁷⁵ Weigel 1853, 25, no. 5.

⁷⁶ Weigel 1853, 26, no. 10.

⁷⁷ Of course, sculptures such as the Capitoline Venus or the Medici Venus can be seen as mirror-reversed copies of the Knidian Aphrodite, if one allows for a large degree of variation. However, the chapter here focuses on the more exact mirror-reversals. Cf. primary for this phenomenon in antiquity Vermeule 1968.

⁷⁸ For the finding and the rearrangement of the pediment sculptures, see primarily Treu 1897, 44–137.

⁷⁹ Athens, Kerameikos (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1398534>): Vermeule 1968, 546.

⁸⁰ Athens, Kerameikos (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/8381>): Vermeule 1968, 546. The lions are now exhibited in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, inv. 803 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1144369>) and 804 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1144368>).

⁸¹ Vermeule 1968, 555; Haskell & Penny 1998 136–141.

⁸² Rome, National Roman Museum, inv. 607 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1076663>): Kansteiner 2001, 121f.

⁸³ Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. MA 525 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1074702>): Brinke 1996, 19f.

⁸⁴ Kansteiner 2017, vol. 2, 12, no. 1d.



Fig. 11 (far left). A replica of the Aphrodite Louvre–Naples type, 1st century BC–1st century AD, Roman copy of a Greek original sculpture of the 5th century BC, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. Ma 525. Here: plaster cast, Skulpturensammlung, SKD, inv. ASN 2671. © Skulpturensammlung, SKD. Photograph: Elke Estel & Hans-Peter Klut.

Fig. 12 (left). So-called Charis Palatina, c. 1st century BC, Roman mirrored reinterpretation of a Greek original sculpture of the 5th century BC. Rome, National Roman Museum, inv. 607. Here: plaster cast, plaster cast collection of the Freie Universität Berlin, inv. 91/6. © Freie Universität Berlin, plaster cast collection.

It is more difficult to identify the model of a caryatid in the collections at the Villa Albani (Fig. 13).⁸⁵ The statue was found in the Villa of Herodes Atticus at the Via Appia in Rome, together with a second caryatid. The Roman copyist had not only mirrored it, but also greatly changed the attributes as known from the sculpture type that served as the model. Only if one thinks away the *kalathos* on the head of the figure and adds the *aegis* above the peplos it becomes clear that it is a reinterpreted mirrored copy of the Athena Lemnia, created by Phidias around 450 BC (Fig. 14).⁸⁶ With the *kalathos* the caryatid measures 224 cm and without 202 cm.⁸⁷ This roughly corresponds to the height of the replicas of the Athena Lemnia in Dresden (207 and 209 cm).⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Rome, Torlonia Collection, Villa Albani, inv. 19 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1087066>): Bol 1990, 90–94, no. 178.

⁸⁶ Cf. the Roman copies in the Skulpturensammlung, SKD, inv. Hm 49. (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1065497>) and Hm 50 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1065496>): Raeder 2011a, 121–131; 2011b, 132–137.

⁸⁷ Bol 1990, 90.

⁸⁸ A third replica in Kassel, Antikensammlung, inv. Sk 2 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1101608>) is preserved up to the height of the figure's shoulders and is 174 cm high: Gercke 2007, 51. If one reckons with a head height of about 30 cm, this replica is about the same size as the replicas in Dresden.

A Late Hellenistic sculpture type representing a half-dressed Venus Pudica occurs in about 50 Roman replicas.⁸⁹ Venus is depicted standing, covered with a garment from her hips to her feet. Her upper body is nude. The statue combines different aspects seen in Venus sculptures of the Classical and Hellenistic period. The replicas can be divided in two groups:⁹⁰ the first of approximately 30 statues shows the goddess placing her weight on her left leg, the left hand covers the pubic area and her right hand covers her breast.⁹¹ The replicas of the second group can be described as mirror-reversed versions of this statue type, albeit with more variation in the rendering of different details.

Praxiteles' Resting Satyr, known from many Roman-era replicas, exists in at least one mirrored copy. Normally the Satyr is depicted resting his right elbow against a tree trunk. A panther pelt is hanging from his right shoulder to his left hip and he places his weight on his left foot.⁹² The torso of a

⁸⁹ Cf. Schröder 2004, 169–173, cat. no. 128.

⁹⁰ Schröder 2004, 171.

⁹¹ See, e.g., the statue of this type in Madrid, Prado Museum, inv. 86-E (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1071674>).

⁹² C.f. the replica in Munich, Glyptothek, inv. 228 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1072590>): Gercke 1968, 24f.



Fig. 13 (right). *Caryatid*, first half of the 2nd century AD, Roman mirror-reversed reinterpretation of the so-called *Athena Lemnia* of Phidias, 5th century BC. Rome, *Villa Albani*, inv. 19. Reproduction from Brunn & Bruckmann 1888–1944, no. 254.

Fig. 14 (far right). So-called *Athena Lemnia* of Phidias. Roman copy of the 1st century AD, after a Greek original sculpture from the 5th century BC. *Skulpturensammlung*, SKD, inv. Hm 50. © *Skulpturensammlung*, SKD. Photograph: Elke Estel & Hans-Peter Klut.



replica of the Resting Satyr in Terracina depicts the sculpture completely mirror-reversed.⁹³

MODERN MIRROR-REVERSED COPIES

Even rarer are modern mirror-reversed copies of ancient originals. The phenomenon seems not to have been discussed previously. In a broader sense the *Venus, som stiger upp ur havet* (Venus Rising from the Waves) made by Johan Tobias Sergel in 1785 can be seen as a mirrored copy of the Medici Venus.⁹⁴ Sergel adopted—in a mirror-reversed version—the posture of Venus's body, her head and her arms, but he changed the hairstyle and added a garment covering her left breast, her back, and her right thigh. The goddess places her weight on her left foot; her right foot rests on a shell. In contrast to ancient replicas of the same sculpture type as the renowned ancient Medici Venus, Sergel's sculpture should be seen as inspired by a famous model rather than a precise copy of one.

A head of a young woman in the Museo Chiaramonti in the Vatican,⁹⁵ in the type of the *Eirene with the Infant Ploutos* of Cephisodotus (active during the first half of the 4th century BC), has been interpreted as a post-antique mirrored reproduction of an ancient head of the same type, which is now in the Museum of King John III's Palace in Warsaw. The replica now in Warsaw was acquired around 1800 by the Polish statesman and art collector Stanisław Potocki in Rome for his collection of antiquities.⁹⁶ Comparing the design of the hairstyle of both heads (Figs. 15–16), not only the identical size, but also the identical pattern of the hair strands is striking in the profile view. Sascha Kansteiner first classified the head in the Vatican as a modern imitation of the sculpture now in Warsaw, on the basis of its state of preservation and design.⁹⁷ Kansteiner has, however, now pointed out in conversation

⁹³ Terracina, Archaeological Museum, inv. 25: Bartman 1992, 63, 100f., no. 20. For an example of the mirror-reversed versions of the Lateran Poseidon: Bartman 1992, 102–146.

⁹⁴ Stockholm, Swedish National Museum, inv. NMSk 694.

⁹⁵ Vatican City, Vatican Museums, Museo Chiaramonti, inv. 1381 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1107206>): Amelung 1903, 730f., no. 626; La Rocca 1974, 113, no. 10.

⁹⁶ Warsaw, the Museum of King John III's Palace, inv. 3493. Kansteiner 2016b, 221. Both heads measure 20 cm in height.

⁹⁷ Kansteiner 2016b, 221.



Fig. 15 (far left). Female head, 1st century AD, Roman copy after the Greek original sculpture from the 4th century BC. Warsaw, Wilanów, Museum of King John III's Palace, inv. 3493. © Warsaw, Wilanów, Museum of King John III's Palace, Photograph: Wojciech Holnicki.

Fig. 16 (left). Female head, modern? Vatican City, Vatican Museums, Museo Chiaramonti, inv. 1381.

© German Archaeological Institute (D-DAl-ROM-87Vat.857a_55921,09), photograph: Klaus Anger.

that the head in the Vatican may be ancient, having served as the head of a Peplophoros statue in antiquity.⁹⁸

Maybe the most prominent example of a modern mirror-reversed copy of an ancient sculpture is Flaminio Vacca's 16th-century statue known as one of the so-called Medici Lions. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando de' Medici, acquired for the Villa Medici in Rome an ancient statue of a lion who stands with his right paw resting on a globe.⁹⁹ The sculpture was originally made in high relief, which the sculptor Giovanni Sciarano recarved into a sculpture in the round in 1591. In 1594 Vacca decided to copy the lion in a mirror-reversed fashion, and four years later this sculpture was also set up in the Villa Medici,¹⁰⁰ where the two lions flanked the stairway to the garden of the Villa. When they were transferred to Florence in 1787, they were again set up as pair, in the Loggia dei Lanzi. In this example, the modern mirror-reversed copy was made explicitly for a pendant display together with the ancient artwork and the two sculptures have never been displayed individually. Vacca made a precise copy. It is made in the same scale as the ancient lion and without any obvious variation in the details.

These examples show that in antiquity and later, mirror-reversed copies of sculptures have been used for different purposes. As pairs they could serve to flank stairways, entries, or monuments. In such cases the sculptures occur as identi-

cal mirror-reversed pairs in the same size, as seen in the ancient Horse Tamers of Monte Cavallo and the Medici Lions. Mirror-reversed copies never intended for display as pendants were also produced in antiquity. But in such instances the sculptures were created with greater variations in size and design, as can be seen, for example, in the ancient Charis Palatina and the caryatid in the Villa Albani. As a probably post-antique example one can mention the female head in the Vatican. With regard to the Venus of Stockholm, there is much to suggest that this sculpture was not intended as a pendant to the Venus of Paris–Warsaw. On the one hand, there are no sources that could confirm a juxtaposition of the two sculptures. On the other hand, the Venus of Stockholm differs too much from the antique model in size, design, and posture. It is almost impossible to recognize their connection, because of the mirroring, and the inability to directly compare the two sculptures. The sculptor of the Venus of Stockholm may have taken this opportunity to create a sculpture that could be sold as an antique.

The reception of the Venus of Stockholm in Byström's oeuvre

The study of ancient art was an important part of Byström's sculptural work, and antique-like depictions soon became part of the Swedish sculptor's repertoire. During his studies in Stockholm he was already copying ancient originals in plaster, such as the Sleeping Endymion in 1807, which he executed

⁹⁸ I would like to thank Sascha Kansteiner most sincerely for this information and the critical reassessment of his own work.

⁹⁹ Haskell & Penny 1998, 247, no. 53.

¹⁰⁰ Haskell & Penny 1998, 247, no. 53.

in a reduced size.¹⁰¹ The previously mentioned Dresden cast of the Sleeping Endymion is likely to be a cast of this reduced version. But Byström also made marble copies of ancient sculptures, such as the Dionysos head or the Amor and Psyche group, both copied after ancient originals in the Capitoline Museums.¹⁰² He furthermore created his own antique-like sculptures, such as an Amor as the Young Dionysus¹⁰³ and the Juno–Heracles Group.¹⁰⁴

As already mentioned, in addition to the Venus of Stockholm, Byström had both a marble copy of this sculpture, and a plaster cast of it, both of which he had created himself, all three of which seem to have been set up together in his villa in Djurgården (*Table 1*). The threefold presence of the same sculpture suggests a certain appreciation on Byström's part. Thus, it is very likely that the Venus of Stockholm may have served as model for some of Byström's own works.

Despite the extensive list of works published by Nyman in 1939, many of the works can no longer be found at the locations listed there, or are in private collections that are unknown or not publicly available. Comparisons of the Venus of Stockholm with Byström's own works must therefore be limited to a sample of freely accessible works, as well as to sculptures of which graphic reproductions exist.

VENUS OCH KÄRLEKEN

One such reception of the Venus of Stockholm can be seen in the head of Venus from the group *Venus och Kärleken* (Venus and Amor), which Byström created in Rome in 1819 (*Fig. 17*). Venus is shown as she kneels to embrace and kiss little Amor, who comes running towards her with open arms. Amor is shown completely naked. Venus is clothed only with a robe resting on her lap, covering only her legs.

Byström made a total of four copies of this group within a few years, the present whereabouts of all of which are unknown. However, a drawing¹⁰⁵ of the sculpture group made in 1820 and a lithograph by Carl Oscar Cardon have survived.¹⁰⁶ Here one can see the similar shape of the head of Venus com-



Fig. 17. Carl Oscar Cardon, Venus och Kärleken, 1852. Lithograph after the sculpture of Johan Niklas Byström, published in Cardon & Cardon 1849–1852, vol. 3, pl. 4. © Staatsbibliothek Berlin.

pared to the Venus of Stockholm. Although they are by no means identical, there are similarities in the design. This applies above all to the design of the hairstyle, which is particularly evident in the profile from the left side (*Figs. 7 & 18*). Both Venuses wear a hair-band, over which sits a loop braided from the hair. The hair covering the temples is tied to a wreath that ends in a knot at the nape of the neck. Even if the head of the Dresden plaster cast of the Venus of Stockholm lacks a bit in detail, it can be seen that the strands of the hair wreath in front of the left ear are similar, indeed almost identical, to the Venus created by Byström for the *Venus och Kärleken* sculpture group.

Also in the right-hand profile, Byström's design of the Venus's head is obviously based on the Venus of Stockholm (*Figs. 19–20*). Although it can be seen that the strands of hair above the hair-band run differently and that the ear of Byström's Venus is covered by the crown of hair, the position of the hair-band, and the shape of the topknot are almost identical. Such similarities clearly suggest that Byström used the Ve-

¹⁰¹ Nyman 1939, 173, no. 3.

¹⁰² The head of Dionysos: Stockholm, Swedish National Museum, inv. NMSk 384; the ancient sculpture in Rome, Capitoline Museums, inv. 734 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1075802>): Helbig 1966⁴, vol. 2, 236, no. 1430. The Amor and Psyche group: Stockholm, Swedish National Museum, inv. NMSk 869; the ancient sculpture in Rome, Capitoline Museums, inv. 408 (<https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1075792>): Haskell & Penny 1998, 189–191.

¹⁰³ Stockholm, Swedish National Museum, inv. NMSk 378: Nyman 1939, 82–85, 175, no. 49.

¹⁰⁴ Stockholm, Swedish National Museum, inv. NMSk 377: Nyman 1939, 56–58, 174f., no. 40.

¹⁰⁵ Stockholm, Swedish National Museum, inv. NMTiD 646.

¹⁰⁶ Published with lithographs of further works by Byström in Cardon & Cardon 1849–1852, vol. 3, pl. 6.



Fig. 18. Detail of Fig. 17. © Staatsbibliothek Berlin.

Fig. 19. Detail, the Dresden plaster cast of the *Venus of Stockholm*, left-hand three-quarter profile. © Skulpturensammlung, SKD, Photograph: Christian Klose.



Fig. 20. Johan Niklas Byström, *Venus och Kärleken*, pen and ink drawing, c. 1820. Stockholm, Swedish National Museum, inv. NMTiD 646. © Swedish National Museum, Stockholm.

nus of Stockholm as a source of inspiration. Considering that Byström created *Venus och Kärleken* in 1819, this indicates that Byström must have possessed the *Venus of Stockholm* at least by that time.

SEGERN

The design of the hairstyle of the *Venus of Stockholm* was again adapted by Byström for the sculpture *Segern* (The Victory) (Fig. 21).¹⁰⁷ This marble statue was begun by Byström in Rome in 1826 and completed four years later in Stockholm as a gift to King Charles XIV John. Dressed in a mantle, the alle-

goric statue is holding a palm branch in its left hand and a victory wreath in its raised right. As noted, the hairstyle is similar to that of the *Venus of Stockholm*, but the hair strands are different and the hair-band is missing. More consistent here with the *Venus of Stockholm* is the position of the head. This is surprising at first, since the neck of the *Venus of Stockholm* is remarkably long. In the sculpture of *Segern*, Byström has made it somewhat shorter, but adopted the positioning of the head directly, evident from the slight inclination and turn to the right (Figs. 22–23). Even more clearly, however, the face of the *Venus of Stockholm* seems to have served as a model. The firm, almost rigid gaze can be found in *Segern* as well as the narrow mouth, which is not much wider than the nose.

¹⁰⁷ Nyman 1939, 176, no. 66. It was first set up in the Royal Palace in Stockholm and later moved to the park of Solliden Palace, where it is still located today.



Fig. 21. Carl Oscar Cardon, *Segern*, 1849, lithograph, after the sculpture of Johan Niklas Byström, published in Cardon & Cardon 1849–1852 vol. 1, pl. 5. © Staatsbibliothek Berlin.



Fig. 22. Detail of Fig. 21. © Staatsbibliothek Berlin.



Fig. 23. Detail, the Dresden plaster cast of the *Venus of Stockholm*. © Skulpturensammlung, SKD. Photograph: Christian Klose.

BADANDE

Finally, one should take a look at the position of the feet as rendered in the *Venus of Stockholm*. The position in which the *Venus* stands is not unusual in itself. However, the sculpture captures the moment when *Venus* steps on her garment, as it were, carelessly. The motif is not known from ancient *Venus* sculptures, but is found in similar form in Canova's group of *Adonis and Venus* (1795)¹⁰⁸ and the *Venus Italica* (1802),¹⁰⁹ and Canova's *Perseus steps with his right foot on the end of his robe* (1800–1801).¹¹⁰ These three works were created by the Italian sculptor in Rome around the same time that it is here suggested the *Venus of Stockholm* was created. However,

this should not lead to Canova being considered as the creator of the *Venus of Stockholm*: Canova would most certainly have claimed the sculpture as his own, rather than selling it as a forged antique. It is, however, quite probable that the sculptor of the *Venus of Stockholm* was inspired by Canova's work or was part of his working environment.

This motif also seems to have appealed to Byström, as is evident in his sculpture *Badande* (*Bathing Woman*, 1838, Fig. 25).¹¹¹ It depicts a young woman who is just about to step into a spring. With her left hand, she holds the upper end of

¹⁰⁸ Geneva, Museum of Art and History, inv. LG 4929: Marin 2019, 160.

¹⁰⁹ Florence, Palazzo Pitti, inv. 878: Licht 1983, 191–195.

¹¹⁰ Vatican City, Vatican Museums, inv. 969: Licht 1983, 181–187.

¹¹¹ Byström created several examples of this sculpture, which are difficult to identify today. Nyman 1939, 179, no. 128 mentions seven altogether. One of the sculptures was in Hyderabad, Nyman 1939, 161, fig. 65, 179, no. 134; another probably belonged from its production in 1838 to the Senator family of Jenisch in Hamburg, and is now in the Jenischhaus Hamburg, inv. AB06 146: Küster 2005, 5.



Fig. 24. Johan Niklas Byström, *Badande*, 1838. Hamburg, Jenischhaus, inv. AB06146. © SHMH-Altonaer Museum, Sammlung Martin Johann Jenisch.

her garment in front of her body, which no longer covers her breast. The rest of the robe runs over her back and a tree trunk right next to her on the ground at her feet. With her right hand she leans on the trunk. Her gaze is directed at her right foot with which she touches the surface of the water in front of her.

It is easy to see that Byström uses the subject of Venus descending to the bath, as earlier represented in ancient sculptures. Through the contemporary design of the young woman's hair, he transfers the ancient mythological theme into an everyday scene of his own time. Two motifs are borrowed from the Venus of Stockholm. Byström's *Badande* steps with her left foot on the garment, similar to the case with the right foot of Venus of Stockholm (Fig. 25–26). In addition, Byström also copied the right foot and the lower part of the leg for this representation, as shown in particular by the design of the toes of the right foot of *Badande*: here the rendering is



Fig. 25. Detail of Fig. 24. © SHMH-Altonaer Museum, Sammlung Martin Johann Jenisch.

Fig. 26. Detail, the Dresden plaster cast of the Venus of Stockholm. © Skulpturensammlung, SKD. Photograph: Christian Klose.

almost identical to the Venus of Stockholm. The drapery of the garment resting on the floor is also strongly reminiscent of that of the Venus of Stockholm, so it can be assumed that it also served as a model here.

The Venus of Stockholm as a model for Byström's own sculptures can thus be observed in different ways. Depictions of women, especially bathing women, were a recurring motif in his works, either as mythological representations in the form of depictions of Venus or nymphs or as ideal, contemporary female figures. Some of Byström's sculptures have features that have a clear correspondence with the Venus of Stockholm and which do not appear in other Venus sculptures, such as the detail of stepping on a garment. Although only a few of Byström's artworks have here been examined, they clearly show the influence of the Venus of Stockholm—seemingly considered ancient by Byström—on his own sculptures.

Conclusion

Even after some 150 years of scholarship, the Dresden plaster cast can be regarded as the only sculptural image of the Venus of Stockholm that is known to survive. The original sculpture must, unfortunately, still be considered lost. This text has shown how important plaster casts can be for archaeological and art-historical research. Although the source situation is very difficult without the original sculpture, the Venus of Stockholm has here been reinterpreted. It is more likely that the Venus of Stockholm was in its entirety a mirrored copy of the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, rather than an ancient torso restored using the Venus of Paris–Warsaw as the model. While at first glance it might seem likely that the Venus of Stockholm was created to be displayed as a pendant to the Venus of Paris–Warsaw in the Borghese collection, there is no evidence for this. Furthermore, the deviations between the Venus of Stockholm and the Venus of Paris–Warsaw, such as for instance the difference in scale, also speak against this hypothesis. By comparison with the Venus of Paris–Warsaw and by reference to literary sources, it is suggested that the Venus of Stockholm was created in its entirety between the middle of the 17th century and the beginning of the 19th century. If the stepping on the garment motif is inspired by Canova, a creation of the Venus of Stockholm around 1800 is more likely. The peculiarity of this imitation of an ancient sculpture is that it was mirror-reversed. While such copies are known from antiquity, the Venus of Stockholm occurred as an exception in modern times as a large-scale reversed copy and thus represents a remarkable case in the artistic reception of ancient artworks.

The sculpture also had a special influence on Johan Niklas Byström. The Swedish sculptor had acquired the Venus of Stockholm as a supposedly ancient original and apparently appreciated it so much that he made several copies in marble and plaster, including the plaster cast now in Dresden. At the same time, the Venus of Stockholm served as a model for his own sculptures, as seen, for instance, in the sculptures Venus och Kärleken, Segern, and Badande.

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