Neo-neo Art in the making —
Analyses of a globalised phenomenon

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Abstract This paper focuses on a globalised phenomenon: references to Greek and Roman antiquity in contemporary art. The study derives from a seven-year PhD research project centred on Greek and Roman antiquity in contemporary art from the 1980s to the present day. Results have been collected in a database which includes more than 1100 artworks produced by more than 150 artists, from 1980 to 2017.

Keywords: antiquity, art market, contemporary art, globalisation, visual arts

Introduction
Since the 1980s, references to Greek and Roman antiquity have been a frequent occurrence in the work of contemporary artists. Some examples include: a new series of painted photographs representing gods, goddesses and heroes of Greek mythology started in 1988 by Pierre & Gilles.1 Later, between 2009 and 2015, Jeff Koons produced the Antiquity and Gazing Ball series: the first combined on canvas various figurations of sculptures from the Classical period with other major creations of Western culture; the second consisted of plaster copies of antiquities with a blue glass sphere.2 Since 2013, Xu Zhen has created hybrid artworks consisting of major ancient sculptures fitted with fragments of Buddha statues.3 In May 2021, in New York, Sanford Biggers presented a similar artistic process with his sculptures, transplanting African masks onto marbles of Aphrodite and Hercules.4

1 Besnard 2018. See, for example, Pierre et Gilles, Mercure (Enzo Junior), 2001, painted photograph, 226.6x163 cm, private coll.
2 See, for example, Jeff Koons, Antiquity II, 2011, oil on canvas, 259.1x350.5 cm, private coll.; Belvedere Torso, 2013 cast and glass, 181.5x75.7x89.2 cm, private coll.
3 See, for example, Xu Zhen, Eternity (Greek Parthenon East Pediment Statues, Chinese Ancient Buddha Statues), 2014, fiberglass, concrete, 152x15x34.8 cm, MadeIn Company, Shanghart Galery, China.
4 Sanford Biggers, Lady Interbellum, 2020, marble, 157.5x114.3x104.1 cm, Marianne Boesky Gallery; The Ascendant, 2020, marble, 119.4x27.9x22.9 cm, Marianne Boesky Gallery Caniggula, 2020, marble, 118.4x43.2x38.4 cm, private coll.
These productions are formally and stylistically diverse. Véronique Gély rightly calls this ‘matière antique’. She thus defines a malleable substance, sometimes fluid and discreet—the name of a god inscribed on a canvas, like the works of Cy Twombly; sometimes solid and explicit—where the title takes up a very well-known sculpture or even the choice of its title leaves no doubt (for example, *The Crouching Venus* by Meekyoung Shin). Between these two extremes, a whole range of possibilities can be deployed by the artists. Antiquity today constitutes a rich and stimulating universe which artists use with freedom, with more or less respect. Some works can be serious: the installation *Odyssey* by Ai Weiwei denounces the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean; others can be more parodic: *Antique Not Antique: Pedicure*, by Francesco Vezzoli presents a fragment of a marble foot dating from the first–second century AD with painted toenails.

I use the formulation ‘Neo-neo art’ to describe this artistic movement, which can be regarded as a kind of new neoclassical movement. This is not just a European artistic phenomenon, as a long cultural tradition might suggest. It also concerns American and Asian artists (and, to a lesser extent, artists from other continents). They play with an ancient world that is iconic and identifiable by all. Seven years of PhD research—including the compilation of a database on the subject—revealed that between 1980 and 2017, no fewer than 160 artists produced more than a thousand artworks (sculptures, paintings, photographs) inspired by Greek and Roman antiquity. By means of this database, it is possible to quantify and analyse this singular topic. I will focus here on this globalised aspect, and will attempt to explain its success. It seems important to consider this topic within a global history of reception, in time (from 1980 to the present day) and in space (from Europe to America and Asia), to finally understand Neo-Neo art in the making.

**The Odyssey of the ancient references**
The phenomenon of the revival of Greek and Roman antiquity in contemporary art is not tied only with Europe. Pierre & Gilles are French, Jeff Koons and Sanford Biggers are American, Ai Weiwei and Xu Zhen are Chinese and Meekyoung Shin is Korean. Thanks to the inventory of nationalities of the artists making up the database, it is possible to report that there is a worldwide interest in ancient

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7 Ai Weiwei, *Odyssey*, 2017, lithograph, 1400m², private coll.
9 Besnard 2018.
10 Unfortunately, space does not allow all the aspects of the reception of antiquity in contemporary art to be discussed here. For further details see Besnard 2021 (PhD manuscript).
11 Compiled between October 2014 to December 2017, my Filemaker Pro Advanced database contains 1143 artworks produced by 158 artists between 1980 and 2017. Each inventory sheet
references in the artists’ artworks. A more detailed analysis tracking the nationalities over ten-year periods indicates a progressive phenomenon of globalisation (Figs 1–4).

As a reminder: a European antiquity
The use of antiquity by European artists is unsurprising. Antiquity has been disseminated, from its ‘rediscovery’ in Italy during the Renaissance, to its use in the service of moral, civic and political virtues in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mythology and the ideal of beauty formed a ‘model’. Thus, myths and their representations are part of the European cultural heritage. French artist Léo Caillard said, ‘We find there the foundations of our civilisation, whether from a scientific, philosophical or even societal point of view’.12 This heritage is spread from childhood, through literature, cartoons, games, video games, and visits to museums and at school. Pierre & Gilles referred to schoolbooks when I asked them about their relationship with classical antiquity: ‘Everything comes from our childhood. In history lessons, all of these civilisations made us dream through the reproductions of paintings and sculptures in schoolbooks’.13 Museums are part of the dissemination process of antiquity: at the Louvre Museum, Gilles ‘discovered Classical Sculptures in white marble, with perfect bodies, where nudity is not taboo’. Museums have been – and still are – places of learning. Artists discover, observe and copy ancient sculptures. That is why sculptures used by the artists are from European Museums (for instance: the Louvre, the Vatican Museums and the British Museum). Of course, images of the Venus of Milo, Laocoon or Belvedere Apollo circulate and are available on the internet, but some artists have decided to return to museums to select marble for their future artworks. Greek painter Achilleas Droungas visited the National Archaeological Museum of Athens to produce End of an Era and, more recently, Athlete Crowning himself. We can identify the Head of a statue of Zeus or Asclepius and the Votive relief representing the Athlete preparing to dedicate his crown in these two productions.14

Neo-academism in Russia
Despite a conflicting relationship to the learning of so-called classical techniques, we have to consider another way of broadcasting antiquity: the academies. The training offered by these academies is essential because they share classical theories and the Greek ideal. These schools are not limited to southern Europe. The Imperial Academy

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12 Age of Classics ! L’Antiquité dans la culture pop 2019, 209.
13 Age of Classics ! L’Antiquité dans la culture pop 2019, 209.
14 Achilleas Droungas, End of an Era, 1990, oil on canvas, 160x130 cm, private coll.; Head of a statue of Zeus or Asclepius, 150 BC, marble, H: 88 cm, National Archaeological Museum, Athens. Achilleas Droungas, Athlete Crowning Himself, 2004, oil on canvas, 45x58 cm, private coll.; Athlete preparing to dedicate his crown, 460 BC, marble, H: 48 cm, National Archaeological Museum, Athens.
of Fine Arts in St Petersburg is one example. Founded in 1757, this Academy has served since 1989 as a museum for the neo-academic movement. Neo-academism was born in 1991: the Russian artist Timur Novikov wrote the manifesto, ‘Some reflections on the strange phenomenon of neo-academism’, in which he promotes the ‘beauty’ in art and the return to the classical (Fig. 2). Among the artists affiliated with this movement are Georgy Gurjanov, Olga Tobreluts and the duo Oleg Maslov and Victor Kuznetsov.15 ‘Closely linked to Novikov, the movement only ceased to exist after his death in 2002’, says Ekaterina Nemenko.16 Neo-academism as an artistic movement no longer exists, but the artistic practices persist. Olga Tobreluts continues to create photomontages, like the *Légionnaires* series (2006).17 This ‘resistance’ is also embodied

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15 All four were brought in 2001 to Ostend (Belgium) for the exhibition *Between earth and heaven.* New Classical movements in the art of today. On Maslov and Kuznetsov in particular, see for example, Goscilo 2019. On Tobreluts, see Platt 2019.
16 Nemenko 2013.
17 Olga Tobreluts, *Légionnaires*, 2006, photograph print on metal, 120x80 cm, Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow.
in the figure of another artist, Alexey Morosov. He creates art that can be described as syncretic because his sculptures associate Soviet aesthetics with Greek and Roman antiquity.\textsuperscript{18} From 25 June to 31 August 2016, his artworks were displayed at the National Archaeological Museum of Napoli in an exhibition called PONTIFEX MAXIMUS. This title summarises the artist’s reflection. As a reminder, in ancient Rome, the Pontifex Maximus was charged with the maintenance of the Sublicius Bridge. Alexey Morosov chose the metaphor of the bridge to evoke a shared heritage between past and present, but also between Eastern and Western Europe.

\textit{An Americanised antiquity}

The interest of American artists in the ancient references within their artworks becomes apparent when the artists’ nationalities are plotted on the map (Fig. 1). It appeared here in the 1980s, and this interest increased over the years. Today we can say American artists are the leading producers of neo-neo artworks. America, this ‘colossus with Greco-Roman feet’\textsuperscript{19} continues to claim its heritage, as Thomas E. Jenkins testifies in \textit{Antiquity Now. The Classical World in the Contemporary American Imagination}.\textsuperscript{20} The use of antiquity in the past was the work of descendants of European

\textsuperscript{18} See, for example, Alexey Morosov, \textit{Kourus Igneus}, 2013, bronze, 16x10x55 cm, private coll.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Age of Classics! L’Antiquité dans la culture pop} 2019, 116.

\textsuperscript{20} Jenkins 2015.
settlers who sought to establish legitimacy for their new country. It is not the same in twenty-first century America. Antiquity is no longer Greek or Roman: antiquity is ‘Americanised’. The most visible examples are in movies and TV series. Whether it is to tell stories of a gladiator, a Helena in love with a young Paris, a conquering Alexander or Spartans fighting against the Persian invader at Thermopylae, everything comes to serve the American cause. The role played by the American film industry in the dissemination of a phantasmagorical antiquity is considerable. The worldwide interest shown by artists over the last twenty years is constitutive of the release, distribution and repercussion of neo-peplums, in particular Ridley Scott’s Gladiator. An analysis of the database indicates a significant increase of neo-neo artwork productions since 2000 (Fig. 3). Many young American artists alter Greek and Roman references. Examples include the serigraphs carried out by Rachel Livedalen or, in the field of sculpture, the work of Nick Van Woert and Tony Matelli. The artwork of

Fig. 3 Frequency of the nationalities of the 61 artists who produced neo-neo artworks in the period 2000 to 2009, and referenced in the database on 1 January 2018.

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21 See Aziza 2008; Dumont 2009; Aknin 2009.
22 See, for example: Rachel Livedalen, It Girl (Agrippina the Younger), 2015, serigraphy on print paper, 95.3x73.7 cm, Erin Cluley Gallery, Dallas; Nick Van Woert, Reappear, 2012, fiberglass, polyurethanes, 215.9x109.2x38.1 cm, Grimm Gallery, Amsterdam; Tony Matelli, W’arrior, 2015, bronze, concrete, 55x21x13 cm, private coll.
Adam Parker Smith might also be considered. His sculptures look like those of Jeff Koons because he also uses stainless steel to imitate poor materials, such as aluminium balloons. Among his most recent creations, six sculptures in particular hold our attention. They consist of fake balloons inflated with helium. Some take the form of amphorae, others of busts. The faces of the Farnese Hercules and Laocoon are reproduced there. Another one reproduces the ornamentation of the so-called Nikoxenos painter’s amphora.23

Antiquity in the East: the case of Asia

The use of Classical antiquity in contemporary art, in Europe and then in the United States, is the result of a Western heritage. It is not the same process for Asia, where Greek and Roman heritage comes from cultural transfer. In this case in particular, transfer involves a translation. Translation defines the work of the Korean artist Meekyoung Shin.24 She understands, with this word, migrations, cultural transfers and receptions of antiquity between Asia and Europe.

Yang Maoyuan, Sui Jianguo, Hui Cao, Ai Weiwei, Xu Zhen are Chinese artists who refer to Classical antiquity in their productions. In ‘From Paris to Changchun’, Paul Demont attests:

Ancient Greece, the Roman world, ancient Egypt, and Assyria, this is what a small group of young Chinese teachers and researchers have been passionate about for decades. The analysis of these very ancient worlds in itself arouses their interest, but it is also, in their eyes, a privileged means of understanding the “global” world in which China aspires to play a central role.25

This last detail is very important because to play a central role, China must involve cultural appropriation, and Greek and Roman antiquity becomes the symbol of this global culture. It is possible to trace the diffusion of antiquity in China further back in time, before the twentieth century. Classical forms spread from Alexander the Great when he conquered the Achaemenid Empire. Alexander’s successors and settlers take part in this diffusion, and the Indo-Greek and Greco-Bactrian kingdoms, the Kushan Empire, is the most characteristic example. Is Xu Zhen’s Eternity Serie a tribute to what the two geographical areas have in common?26

‘Greco-Roman antiquity is one of the foundations of contemporary Japanese culture. Despite physical differences, geographical distance, scarcity of field experience, poverty of ancient collections, intellectuals and artists acquired in two centuries a remarkable knowledge of the Classical Culture’26 said Michael Lucken in Le Japon Grec. Culture et possession. Like China, Japan received a Classical artistic

23 Adam Parker Smith, Hercules, 2019, resin, fiberglass, steel, 76x38x25.5 cm; Laocoon, 2019, steel, 78x40x22 cm; Nikoxenos Amphora, 2020, steel, resin, 40x26x15 cm.
24 Shin 2009; Besnard 2018.
25 Demont 2018, 73.
education. From 1876 to 1882, Italian sculptor Vincenzo Ragusa taught in the first school of Western art in Japan. He imported more than two hundred casts of ancient and modern works. Casts of antiquities were the vector in the dissemination of images of Greek and Roman antiquity in Europe and Asia. They arrived at art schools a long time ago, and artists such as Yayoi Kusama have been able to use them for their new creations.

The emergence of a postcolonial antiquity

Europe saw the Renaissance, with the rediscovery of its ancient heritage. This is not the case for Maghreb countries, which have a complex relationship with Classical antiquity. These countries have wiped out the ancient past, in favour of the Arab-Muslim heritage. Religion can explain this absence. It is possible to make the same assumption with Near and Middle East countries. In these geographical areas, this absence can be explained by recent conflicts. Consider, for example, the Syrian civil war and the destruction of the archaeological site of Palmyra by ISIS in 2015. It is difficult for Syrian, Libyan or Iraqi artists to produce (neo-neo) artworks and to be discovered by galleries and collectors. Iraqi artist Wafaa Bilal (who emigrated to the United States) is one of the few contemporary artists to work on conflicts through antiquity. The exhibition Wafaa Bilal: Lovely Pink at the Driscoll Babcock Gallery (2015) consists of twelve small reproductions of famous Western sculptures, in particular Samothrace’s Victory. These resin miniatures are covered with black enamel and melted plastic films. The artist thus echoes the destruction of cultural and archaeological sites by a war that was fuelled by the possession of hydrocarbons in particular. These sculptures became the emblems of a culture and world heritage in danger.

British and American post-colonial research in literature and theatre (in particular), shows the interest artists have had in Classical antiquity. For example, Athena is African and Ulysses is Black, like Dionysus and Aegeus. However, in the more specific field of contemporary art, works and artists are rarer. When they are identified, they immigrated in favour of countries such as the United States or the United Kingdom. This detachment from the country of birth allows artists to study and question their (country of) origin. This is the case of the British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare and the American Afro descendant Sanford Biggers. Since the early 1990s, Yinka Shonibare has questioned the notion of identifying construction between...
the European and African continents: he dresses in batik and waxes masterpieces of Western painting (from Gainsborough to Fragonard). For his new series, he uses the most famous Greek and Roman Sculptures (from the *Discobolus* to *Hercules*) but he has changed his process: wax and batik patterns are applied directly with paint to fibreglass replicas and the heads of sculptures are replaced with a terrestrial globe. Classical sculpture becomes the symbol of the globalisation phenomenon, just as Dutch Wax in the 1960s West African Market became a pan-African symbol.

Another artist, Sanford Biggers, uses antiquity in his productions to demonstrate that the Occident no longer has a monopoly position on it. In the spring of 2021 at Rockefeller Center (New York), he exhibited a monumental replica nearly 7 m high in bronze of *Oracle*, a sculpture he created two years earlier. This sculpture consisted of a reproduction in black marble of the Olympian Zeus of Phidias whose face is hidden under an African mask. This new ‘graft of civilisation’ is part of a series called *Chimera*. His replicas in marble of the *Aphrodite of Cnidus*, the *Crouching Aphrodite* and

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31 Yinka Shonibare, *Mr and Mrs Andrews without their Heads*, 1998, dummy, bench, shotgun, dog, wax printed on cotton costumes, 165x570x254 cm; *The Swing (after Fragonard)*, 2001, dummy, costumes, slippers, rope, artificial foliage, 330x350x220 cm, Tate Modern, London, inv. T07952.
32 Yinka Shonibare, *Discus Thrower (after Myron)*, 2016; fiberglass, painting, globe, 131.7x161x169 cm, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.
33 Sanford Biggers, *Oracle 2021*, bronze, H: 7 m, New York; *Oracle*, 2019, black marble, 90x36x28 cm, Marianne Boesky Gallery.
the Farnese Hercules present similar transformations. I find references to antiquity in contemporary art all over the globe (Fig. 4). This is the result of a heritage and, more generally, of the phenomenon of globalisation. But it is also necessary to see another reason, which is more commercial, even mercantile, and buyers and galleries must be considered as well. I therefore propose to see artworks as objects used for financial investments. Artists such as Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons and Xu Zhen flood the art market with their creations. Below, I explain why.

A profitable Neo-neo Art
In 2017, British Artist Damien Hirst exhibited his Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable in Venice.34 The artist hides behind an archaeological dream to mount a real financial operation. A sum of €58 million was needed to produce the treasure. Storytelling and mythologies seem to be a profitable investment: 60–70 per cent of the works were sold to collectors even before the start of the exhibition. Except for drawings on vellum and three sculptures, each artefact from the treasure was produced in triplicate plus two artists’ proofs. In other words, each artwork is produced five times. Finally, there were not 200 artworks, but almost 750 in the art market.

Artworks in series
Productions in series are very common and can be observed in Xu Zhen, Jeff Koons, Léo Caillard and Daniel Arsham’s artworks. All collaborate with outside companies, such as the Atelier des moulages (RMN) in France. When they use marble, artists are assisted by robots (which can shape the stone with extreme precision). That is why now it is no longer a question of thinking about a series of artworks, but artworks produced in series. Young collectors find in artists such as Léo Caillard, Fabio Viale, PichiAvo and Daniel Arsham the link between antiquity and pop culture. Both offer replicas of their own artworks in limited series for sale. For example, in December 2018, PichiAvo covered 250 plaster sculptures with aerosol paint. The series, Hybrid Psyche, was sold out in just a few hours. This flash sale had been announced a few weeks earlier on Instagram. More recently, Daniel Arsham proposed a limited edition of 99 boxes, each containing three prints from his series Paris, 3020 shown at the Perrotin Gallery. Entitled Eroded Classical Prints, the entire series found buyers in less than an hour on 18 June 2020.35

From artist’s studios to artists’ companies
Another aspect should be taken into account and concerns artists such as Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons and Xu Zhen. Artists decide, and assistants perform. This

35 These are prints of three studies done in pencil in 2019: Study for Eroded Lucius Verus, 2019, graphite on paper, 61x45.7 cm; Study for Eroded Venus of Arles (detail), 2019, graphite on paper, 61x45.7 cm; Study for Eroded Melpomene (front view), 2019, graphite on paper, 45.7x61 cm. Each set was sold for $9500.
managerial conception of art creation makes them leaders in the art market. For example, Xu Zhen created the MadeIn Company in 2010, then the MadeIn Gallery four years later. They are two separate companies even if they operate together. The first allows a number of Chinese artists to produce works within a factory-like structure. The second offers artists the possibility to exhibit their recent works. In this way, this short circuit allows both rapid dissemination of the artworks and, for the artists, to meet the expectations and fluctuations of the art market.

The relationship with the art market is essential and even becomes the spearhead of creation. Indeed, European, and more generally Western, collectors are fond of works produced by Asian artists. The Annual Report on contemporary art produced and published by Artprice expressly proves this. The Chinese market is booming today. Proof of this is that Xu Zhen managed to climb among the Top 500 of the expensive contemporary artists in the world in 2016. Moreover, in 2019, the artist rose in the rankings, from 466 (in 2016) to 249. Therefore, it seems possible to put forward the following hypothesis concerning Xu Zhen’s choices to refer to Classical antiquity. Classical antiquity would be instrumentalised: beautiful, intellectual, reassuring and identifiable, it would be able to find buyers more easily. The motivations would therefore be guided by mercantile interests, at least in part.

Neo-neo art in (temporary) exhibitions
At the same time, museums organise new exhibitions with Neo-neo art: for example, Il classico si fa pop. Di scavi, copie et altri pasticcio (Palazzo Massimo/Crypta Balbi, Roma, 2019), Age of Classics! L’Antiquité dans la culture pop (Musée Saint Raymond, Toulouse, 2019), Fabio Viale. In Stein gemeißelt (Glyptothek, Munich, 2018), Igor Mitoraj a Pompeii (Pompeii, 2016) or Pontifex Maximus (National Archeological Museum, Naples, 2016). Archaeological museums create and host these exhibitions. They make it possible to present their collections in a new light and introduce a dialogue with contemporary art. Thanks to these exhibitions and advertising campaigns, museums are making themselves known to new audiences, and at the same time, attendance is increasing. Museums are no longer just temples of knowledge; they are developing an entrepreneurial vision. However, these exhibitions do not take place in contemporary art museums because conservators focus mainly on conceptual, performative and video art. They make an unequivocal distinction between antiquity and contemporary art. The most striking example of this observation concerns the recent acquisition of a Venus by the American artist, Jim Dine, at the Pompidou Centre. His Black Venus (1991) is not the result of a purchase, but of a donation by the artist to the museum. The best way to discover neo-neo artworks is to visit the most significant art galleries, like Gagossian, Templon and Perrotin. French gallerist owner Emmanuel Perrotin

36 Arprice 2016; Arprice 2017.
represents and exhibits artists such as Xu Zhen and Daniel Arsham. In 2017, Perrotin Hong Kong hosted *Fictional Archaeology*, a solo exhibition by Daniel Arsham, and Perrotin Paris presented *Civilization Iteration* by Xu Zhen. In Perrotin Paris in 2020, in *Paris, 320*, Daniel Arsham unveiled his antiquities encrusted with semi-precious stones. Over a very limited period, the gallerist organised three exhibitions of neo-neo artists, making him one of the major actors in the distribution of modernised antiquities.

The links that unite artists with the public and the current art market lead us to question the future of this global phenomenon. Indeed, reproduced, transformed with new meaning and presented in exhibitions, Greek and Roman references are no longer simple artefacts reserved for the observation of aesthetes. The dissemination of antiquity through new channels of social networks and major exhibitions contribute to its visibility. This phenomenon is accentuated even more when artists like Francesco Vezzoli or Damien Hirst invite an actress like Eva Mendes or singers such has Pharrell Williams and Rihanna to collaborate with them. This cooperation between artists and ‘receivers’ is part of the reason that Greek and Roman antiquity is no longer exclusively the domain of the elites: they are addressed to a young audience and followers of so-called pop culture.

*Antiquity’s “Beauté de consommation”*

In a world of images, everything must be beautiful. Conception of beauty is proving to be decisive. It facilitates sales, which is why I must also consider a beauty that Umberto Eco describes as ‘consummation’. At the same time, it seems appropriate to consider the decorative function of neo-neo artworks. The decorative aspect can disturb the historian and the critic of contemporary art, but cannot be avoided today. Ancient sculptures offer contemporary artists the possibility of creating works with aesthetic qualities. The Spanish duo PichiAvo creates graffiti, but since 2017, they have produced oil and aerosol paintings on canvas as well. In the exhibition *In Gods we Trust*, PichiAvo (2017, The Unit Gallery, London) presented their ‘Urban Mythology’ which allowed collectors to dress the walls of their apartments in bright colours. The following year, PichiAvo collaborated with luxury brand Bulgari to create the

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38 See Francesco Vezzoli, *La nuova Dolce Vita (from the birth of Venus Ludovisi to Eva Mendes)*, 2009, photograph, 145x235 cm, Collection Prado, Milano. Busts of Pharrell Williams as pharaoh and Rihanna as Nefertiti was visible in the Damien Hirst’s treasures.

39 Eco 2010, 41.

40 Souriau 1955, 76; Michaud 2010, 8.

41 See, for example, PichiAvo, *Athena Pallas*, 2017, aerosol painting, acrylic on canvas, 120x90 cm, private coll.; *Hermes the golden messenger*, 2018, aerosol painting, acrylic on wood, 120x140 cm, private coll.
storefront of Bulgari New York. Contemporary art joins decorative trends: so-called ‘neo-antic’ or ‘new antic’.42

**Conclusion and Perspectives**

Greek and Roman antiquity have never been so far from us in time. However, its forms survive and continue to provide material for thinking and creating. What could be the future of all these creations? It seems difficult to predict the future of the neo-neo artworks. Nevertheless, Daniel Arsham still provides us with some answers. Through his latest exhibitions *Paris, 3020* and *Time Dilation* (Perrotin New York, 2021), Daniel Arsham has shown new archaeological fictions (uchronies), in which he questions the passing of time, and the lives of sculptures. To that end, he realised sculptures and painted ten large canvases. *Cave of the Sublime, Iceland*, is one of them.43 With a subtle shade of blue, the artist has depicted a frozen cave in which sculptures are abandoned, such as ‘his’ *Arles’s Venus*, ‘his’ *Milo’s Venus* or even ‘his’ *Hamadryad*. His painting looks somewhat like the cave of Tiberius at Sperlonga. References to art history, literature and popular culture are many, although the artist does not explain them. When he presented for the first time *Cave of the Sublime, Iceland* in a video posted on *Instagram* (6 March 2020), he mentioned *capricci* (which appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century) as inspiration. The archaeologists that find the cave are recognisable by their little silhouettes and look like travellers in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich.44 They seem to discover the ruins of a lost civilisation characterised by cultural exchanges and globalisation. Indeed, in *Cave of Rome Deified*, spectators can identify among ancient sculptures a… *Pokemon.*

I have focused here on the globalisation phenomenon of Classical antiquity in contemporary art productions from 1980 to the present. Another aspect should be analysed in the near future: marble in actual artworks. Italian sculptors such as Massimiliano Peletti and Jago use this metamorphic rock in their hyper-realistic productions. This ‘return’ to Classical material and the use of new technology to carve marble deserve attention. Frequency of the nationalities of the 38 artists who produced neo-neo artworks in the period 1980 to 1989, and referenced in the database on 1 January 2018.

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43 Daniel Arsham, *Cave of the Sublime, Iceland*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 213.5x305.4 cm, private coll.

44 See, for example, Caspar David Friedrich, *Kreidefelsen auf Rügen*, 1818, oil on canvas, 90.5x71 cm, Kunst Museum Winterthur, inv. 165.

45 Daniel Arsham, *Cave of Rome Deified*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 320x457.2 cm, private coll.
References


Catalogues


PhD Manuscript