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Emperor in his Own Castle: Francis' I *Translatio Imperii* to Fontainebleau

Abstract: After his defeat in the battle of Pavia in 1525, the French king Francis I adopted the strategy of importing Italy to France and building his own new Rome in Fontainebleau, that would eclipse the old Rome in virtuosity, differentiation, and modernity. This Translatio Artis expands to an imperial claim to power in the sense of the Translatio Imperii. A demonstrative act of the import of Romanità is the commission to Primaticcio to cast those Roman antiquities that were linked to the highest papal claim to representation: the statues in the Cortile del Belvedere, whose power-politically highly charged semantics are used for his own demonstration of power. Fontainebleau thus becomes a "state as a work of art", for there the French king created a cosmos of art, over which he could dispose at any time in the sense of interpretive sovereignty as an act of rule. These strategies can be seen most clearly in the Galerie François I^{er}, whose programme focuses on an aesthetic of intellectually overwhelming the viewer through iconographic sophistry. The Roman-German Emperor Charles V, to whom this message of overbidding was directed, was expectedly overchallenged by this decoration, which repeatedly trumped up with imperial iconographies.

We know next to nothing about the political appropriation of the Grande Galerie in Fontainebleau by the French king Francis I for the purpose of demonstrating imperial claims to power – at least not if we wish to rely exclusively on written sources in exploring its representative and emblematic use in the ritual of visiting the château by high-ranking guests.[1] A single visit by a foreign diplomat to the French court is documented in the first half of the sixteenth century which provides some important information for our question, that of Henry Wallop, the ambassador of Henry VIII of England, who visited Fontainebleau in 1540 and was accorded an extraordinary honor; on 17 November, the owner of the castle himself led him through the representative heart of his main residence – through the

1 For this and the following Christine Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis. Die Kunst der Politik und die Kunstpolitik am Hof von François I^{er}* (Berlin: Akademie, 2009), chapter 6: "*Arcana Imperii et Artis:* Die *Grande Galerie* und die königliche Deutungshoheit," 195–289; id., "Die politisch-zeremonielle Nutzung der Grande Galerie in Fontainebleau durch François I^{er}," in *Die Bildlichkeit symbolischer Akte. Symbolische Kommunikation und gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme*, ed. Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger et al. (Münster: Rhema, 2010).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111229591-002

gallery (Figure 1) which was built in the course of the redesign of the castle complex in the years following 1528 and decorated in 1533–39 by the Florentine artist Rosso Fiorentino and his assistants (Figure 2).[2]

Figure 1: Rosso Fiorentino and Collaborators, Galerie François I^{er}, Fontainebleau castle, around 1534/39 (Neil Rickards – originally posted to Flickr as DSC01529, CC BY 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4279131).

2 On the construction of the gallery see Maurice Roy, *Artistes et Monuments de la Renaissance en France*, vol. 1 (Paris: H. Champion, 1929), 226–37; id., "La Galerie de François I^{er} à Fontainebleau," *Mémoires de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France* (1914): 205–24; Sylvia Pressouyre, "Le cadre architectural," *La Galerie François I^{er} au Château de Fontainebleau. Numéro spéciale de la Revue de l'art* 16–17 (1972): 13–24; Françoise Boudon, Jean Blécon and Catherine Grodecki, *Le château de Fontainebleau de François I^{er} à Henri IV: les bâtiments et leurs fonctions* (Paris: Picard, 1998), 31–33, 150, 156; Eugene E. Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino. Drawings, Prints, and Decorative Arts*. Exh. Cat., (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987), 222–26; Henri Zerner, *L'art de la Renaissance en France. L'invention du classicisme* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 66–67.

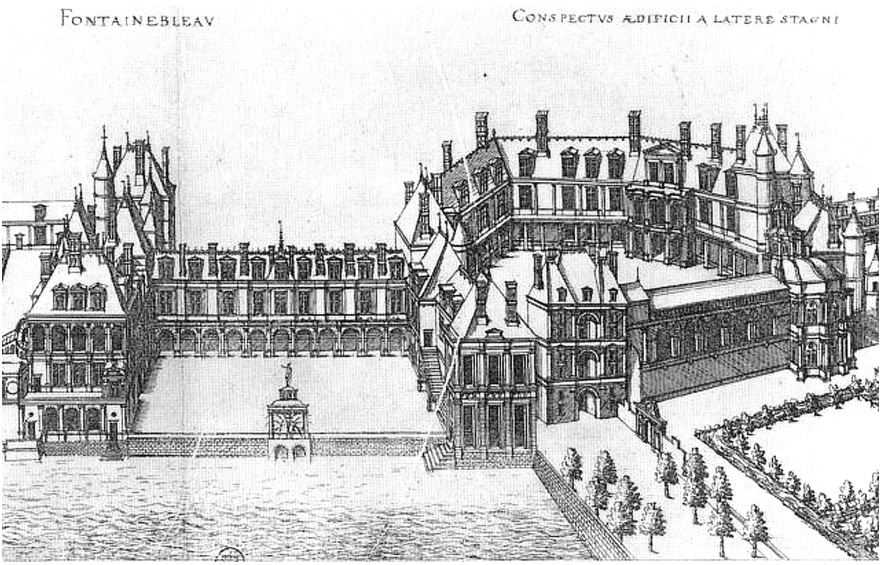

Figure 2: Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, Château de Fontainebleau, Veues du logis du coste de lestang, from: Les plus excellents bastiments de France, 1576–79 (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, fig. 29).

In the forefront of the visit, the French king first inquires in great detail about the furnishings of the English royal castles Windsor Castle and Hampton Court, thus documenting his competitive relationship with Henry VIII not only with regard to precedence in the European power system after 1515, but also with regard to building activities. In general, the French king does not seem to have overestimated (and therefore taxed accurately) the artistic sensibility and iconographic knowledge of the diplomat he led, since his tour emphasises more the material value of the gallery than its genuinely artistic value:

> [He] took grete pleasure to commen with me therin, showing me He hard saye that Your Majestie did use muche gilding in your said howses and specially in the rowffes, and that He in his buylding used litle or none, but made the rowffes of tymbre fyndly wrought with dyvers collers of woode nautrall, as ebeyne, brasell, and certayne other that I can not wel name to Your Majestie, whiche He rekeneth to be more riche then gilding, and more durable.[3]

3 Wallop's account on his visit to Fontainebleau was published by William McAllister Johnson, "On Some Neglected Usages of Renaissance Diplomatic Correspondance," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 79 (1972): 52–54, here: 53.

The famous scene in which the king even offers his hand to his visitor as he climbs a bench so that the latter can appreciate the materials up close also speaks for Wallop's fixation on materials, which is likely to have corresponded to the average visitor to the castle:

> And for bycause in suche my communication had with Hym before, I did not gretely prease the mattyer and stuff that the said borders was made of, geving no good luster, the said Frenche King requiered me to go uppon a benche to feele the said matier and stuff; unto whom I saied, 'Sir, the benche is to highe, and shal hardly gett upp,' and began tassaye. He, lyke a good gratiouse Prince did help me forward with his hande, orelles, to be playne with Your Majestie, I shuld hardly have gotton upp; and likewise at my cummyng downe stayed me agayn [. . .]. And if in case the Frenche King or he had myslyked my said Lordes going, I shuld neither have ben holpe upp ne downe the benche, nor yet have cume in his gallerey [. . .].[4]

Should the English king want to know more about the gallery's decorations, Wallop recommends in his report to Henry that he ask his own court artist Nicolò Belin da Modena, who had worked on the gallery decoration in Fontainebleau before he fled to England around 1535/37. Wallop himself does not feel sufficiently learned for the iconographic subtleties and thus gives hardly an accurate account of what he thinks he sees, for example, when he mistakes a Venus for a Lucretia: "[. . .] betwixt every windowe standes grete anticall personages entier, and in dyvers places of the said gallerey many fayre tables of stories, sett in, very fynely wrowght, as Lucretia, and other, as the said Modon can muche better declare the perfytnes of the hole to Your Majestie, then I."[5] Obviously, the king did not consider him as worthy of a more detailed explanation of the subject due to his subaltern rank. He would never have been able to adequately pass on such a thick description to his employer anyway.

The fact that the *Grande Galerie* in Fontainebleau was a representational space deliberately stylised as a private space is shown, amongst others, by Wallop's remark that the French king himself kept the key to his sanctuary of art and thus strictly guarded accessibility with help of his personal key power.[6] In the ceremonial process within the castle, the gallery becomes a kind of private *studiolo* (and not so much a place of passage and connecting corridor, as would correspond to

4 McAllister Johnson, "Neglected Usages," 53–54.

5 McAllister Johnson, "Neglected Usages," 53–54.

6 "[T]he Frenche King [. . .] browght me into his gallerey, keping the key therof Hym self, like as Your Majestie useth, and so I shewed Hym, wherewith he toke plesur" (McAllister Johnson, "Neglected Usages," 53). See Zerner, *L'art de la Renaissance*, 83; Carmelo Occhipinti, "Il 'camerino' e la 'galleria' nella Villa d'Este a Fontainebleau ('Hôtel de Ferrare')," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* 4, no. II (1997): 632.

the usual spatial function of a gallery) in that it directly adjoined the king's bedroom, the *chambre du roi*. The famous *studioli* of the Renaissance in the Northern Italian courts had exactly this function of a carefully selected collection of paintings, whose presentation in the sense of a pronounced act of rulership was – despite our particular case of documentation – not an isolated occurrence, but common practice.[7] Of course, the honorable gesture of a royal private tour did not apply to the minor diplomat, but took place exclusively with regard to a more deserving recipient of the representative message conveyed here eye-catchingly, i.e. it was obviously addressed to his master, the English king.

The gallery in Fontainebleau follows the ancient spatial type of the *ambulatio*, which in Vitruvius' *De Architectura* refers to a peristyle or an elongated ambulatory in the sense of the Greek Stoa.[8] This already outlines the function of the location as a space for aesthetic experience in leisurely and purposeless strolling to and fro, on the one hand, and as a setting for political or philosophical conversation, on the other. In terms of "internal politics," the small elite of court society had access to the gallery and the social play of its interpretation. The sovereign could distinguish himself in the circle of his courtiers as the wittiest interpreter and sign reader of his works of art and at the same time entertain his court society with wit and irony at the highest level.[9] Especially in diplomatic dealings, however, and thus in "foreign policy," Francis I knew how to make use of his gallery and demonstrate that intellectual competition and outdoing were both artistic and political categories for him.

The appropriate attitude of reception in the face of such a pictorial enigma would be – physically speaking – a twofold one: the aforementioned *ambulatio*, i.e. the vagrant walking around, in search of motifs and formal analogies, on the one hand, and the concentrated viewing of individual paintings, sitting on the bench placed opposite the painting (today the situation has changed), on the other. A narrative sequential structure thus interacts with a spatially fixed way of

7 Andrew Carl Weislogel, in his otherwise very informative work, underestimates the political instrumentalisation of the gallery when he places it exclusively in the *studiolo* and art collecting tradition and assumes that the king devoted his leisure time to "solitary musing over the gallery's mysteries" (Andrew Carl Weislogel, *Rosso Fiorentino, Benvenuto Cellini and Clement Marot. Court Artists and Poets at Francis I's Fontainebleau (1530–45)* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Diss., 2000)), 63. Zerner, *L'art de la Renaissance*, 67, also inaccurately refers to the gallery as a "promenoir privé."

8 Vitr., *De Arch*. 7.5; Wolfram Prinz, *Die Entstehung der Galerie in Frankreich und Italien* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1970), 7; Frank Büttner, *Die Galleria Riccardiana in Florenz* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1972), 129–32.

9 Wolfgang Brassat, *Das Bild als Gesprächsprogramm. Selbstreflexive Malerei und ihr kommunikativer Gebrauch in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 197–202.

viewing. Two people could sit on the benches at a time,[10] and thus the ideal-typical viewing mode of the royal art chamber is predetermined by the limited seating space; the king could lead only one of his high-ranking visitors through the gallery at a time, explaining to him what was on display in an in-depth conversation. The gallery decoration relies on an aesthetics of phenomenologically and also intellectually overwhelming the viewer through iconographic finesse and subtle quotations as well as richness and mixture of materials. The refusal of a thoroughly accessible thematic program, according to my thesis, is programmatic here and is purposefully employed as the main function in the ceremonial use of the gallery by the king.[11]

These interpretations stand in strict opposition to earlier attempts at unequivocal decoding the content of the gallery, in that they emphasise the aspect of the political use of art as the main characteristic of the gallery's decoration as opposed to a purely iconographic interpretation. Short-circuited reductions of formal descriptions and content-based biographical interpretations have so far provided little insight into the functioning of this space in the context of the French king's exercise of power. The assumption of the Panofskys that the king, in private self-absorption, had moments from his biography and specific contents of his family life depicted in antiquarian-iconographic guise misses the actual artistic and political intention of this decorative ensemble. This interpretation was also based on the false assumption that the starting point of a "correct" tour of the gallery complex was on its west side and not, as more recent research has convincingly demonstrated, in the east, starting from the *chambre du roi*.[12]

In 1539, a year before Wallop's visit, an even more illustrious guest had visited Fontainebleau: Emperor Charles V, with whom Francis I and Henry VIII had competed for the imperial dignity in 1519, as is well known. The Roman-German Emperor's journey through France in the winter of 1539/40 was a sensation for the European public; no one had expected that he would ever enter the country

10 William McAllister Johnson, "Once More the Galerie François I[er] at Fontainebleau," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 103 (1984): 128–29; 137; Elisabeth Ann Loeffler, *The Arts in the Court of Francis I (1515–1547). A Comparative Study of Selected Examples from Poetry, Music and Visual Arts* (Athens, Ohio: Ann Arbor University Diss., 1983), 293.

11 Rebecca Zorach, in her research parallel to mine, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold. Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 2005), came to similar conclusions independently of my observations: 38–48, esp. 45: "Obscurity itself could serve a particular purpose, bolstering the king's authority as a controller of meaning"; see also Zerner, *L'art de la Renaissance*, 81; 84–85.

12 Erwin and Dora Panofsky, "The Iconography of the Galerie François I[er] at Fontainebleau," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 52 (1958): 113–90.

of his greatest enemy and rival voluntarily and without belligerent intentions.[13] On 25 December, Christmas Day, the French king led the Emperor into the centerpiece of his residence – the gallery. Beforehand, he had made every effort to have its decoration completed by the time of the Emperor's visit. But the recipient, for whom all this had been staged with the utmost effort, did not show the desired reactions; in his comments on the events in France, the Emperor did not mention a word about the decorations of the castle and the temporary festive arrangements, on which the King had spent a great amount of money and effort. The only thing that seems to have impressed him were the hunting grounds of the forest of Fontainebleau with their rich game population. He was obviously overwhelmed by the Grande Galerie and its overpowering aesthetics – as can be concluded *ex silentio* – however he spent more than two hours there alone with the king.

His visit to the French king's favourite residence is staged from the very beginning as a *rite de passage*, as the entrance into a *monde à l'envers*, into a realm of illusions. The *château de plaisance* Fontainebleau is a territory *à part*, subject to its own laws, which is already evident from the fact that the Emperor was received at the fringe of the forest, the actual place of transition between civilization and uncultivated nature, by a crowd of courtiers dressed as satyr-like forest gods. A preliminary drawing by the court artist Francesco Primaticcio for the costumes of this kind of "*ballet rustique*"[14] with fauns and panes has been preserved.[15] This marks the first step into the bosqueresque-antique and thus pagan scenery of a country estate surrounded by hunting grounds; already this satyrs' charade identified Fontainebleau as the abode of wild and untamed antiquity, inhabited by satyrs, nymphs, and other Bacchic creatures. The scene at the rim of the forest, which clearly took its cue from the handing over of the keys of the visited towns in the traditional ruler's *entrée*, but at the same time satirised the normed sequence of every *entrée*, brought a first moment of bewilderment to the Emperor's visit.

The final rite of passage then takes place when the visitor passes through the *Porte dorée*, the castle's representative entrance portal (Figure 3); the picturesque decoration of its portico clearly indicates that the visitor is now leaving the ordi-

13 Robert Jean Knecht, "Charles V's Journey through France (1539–40)," in *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance. Art, Politics and Performance*, ed. James R. Mulryne et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 168–69; Léon Deroy, "Charles-Quint chez François I^{er}," in id., *Les chroniques du château de Fontainebleau* (Paris: P. Roger, 1925); Charles Paillard, "Le voyage de Charles-Quint en France en 1539–1540 d'après les documents originaux," *Revue des questions historiques* 25 (1875).

14 See Louis Dimier, *Le Primatice* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1928), 53.

15 *Primatice. Maître de Fontainebleau*. Exh. cat., ed. Dominique Cordellier (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004), 124–25; Monique Chatenet, *La cour de France au XVI^{e} siècle. Vie sociale et architecture* (Paris: Picard, 2002), 130.

Figure 3: Gilles le Breton, Porte dorée, 1528, Fontainebleau castle (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, fig. 60).

nary classic world and entering a realm of travesty, playful rivalry, and the conversion of all values. The fact that this triumphal arch, through which the Roman-German Emperor entered, was decorated with two frescoes based on drawings by Primaticcio of "Hercules and Omphale," (Figure 4)[16] a topic hardly suitable for the legitimation of imperial power, may be interpreted as a subtle humiliation of the visitor but also as a demonstration of the master of the house's skill at self-

16 Ov., *Fast.* 2.304–58; Raymond Lebègue, "Un thème ovidien traité par le Primatice et par Ronsard," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 55 (1960): 301–06.

mockery.[17] After all, Hercules was the main reference figure in the sovereign iconography of the Roman-German Emperor, whose Empire, in which the sun never sets, had offensively surpassed the Pillars of Hercules. The decoration of the Golden Gate thus represented a particularly pointed case of the iconography of competition cultivated at Fontainebleau. Hercules, who is dressed in women's clothes by Omphale and thereupon mistaken in bed at night by the lecherous Faunus, is a theme that refers to deception through false appearances, to failed efforts at identification, to the belittling of a masculine-dominated claim to power by female means of sensual confusion, to self-rule versus foreign domination, and finally to masquerade and travesty.[18] This *mésaventure* of Hercules could only provoke a Homeric laughter at all mighty men.

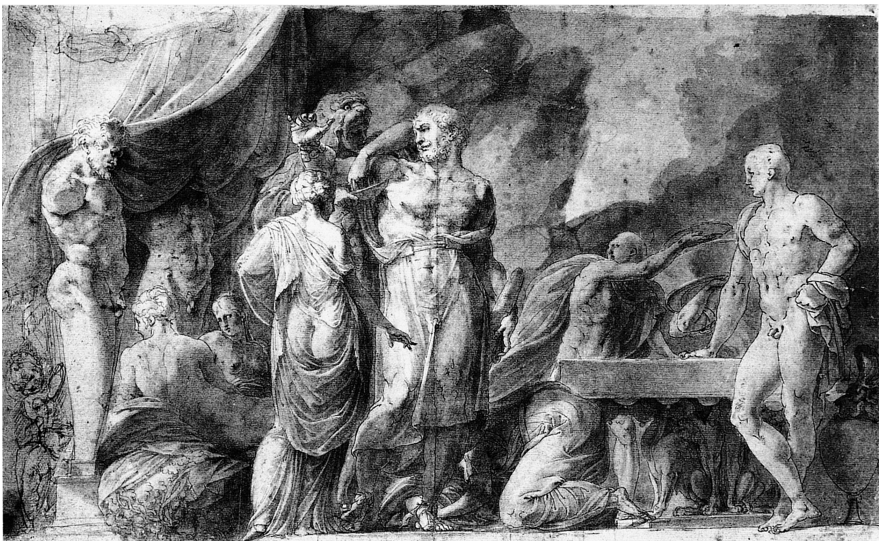

Figure 4: Francesco Primaticcio, Preliminary drawing for "Hercules and Omphale", around 1535, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, fig. 54).

17 Anne-Marie Lecoq, "La symbolique de l'état. Les images de la monarchie des premiers Valois à Louis XIV," in *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora, vol. 1: *La nation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 1244.
18 Sylvie Béguin, "François I[er], Jupiter et quelques belles bellifontaines," in *Royaume de Fémynie. Pouvoirs, contraintes, espaces de liberté des femmes, de la Renaissance à la Fronde. Actes du colloque de Blois 1995*, ed. Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier et al. (Paris: Garnier, 1999), 180: "Quant à Hercule, autre personnification de François I[er], vêtu de la robe d'Omphale à la Porte Dorée, il nous invitait, dès l'entrée du château de Fontainebleau, au déguisement, mais, aussi, à nous méfier des apparences et à aller au delà des faux semblants." See also Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier, "Women on Top at Fontainebleau," *Oxford Art Journal* 16 (1993): 34–48.

After passing through the gateway, the visitor enters the *Cour du Donjon* "through night to light." There he faces a motivic repetition of the triumphal arched facade in the Italianate staircase front, which at that time still had a two-flight ascent, and against whose setting the master of the castle confronts him (Figure 5).[19] The Emperor spends the transitional period "between the years," which is also liturgi-

Figure 5: Staircase front, around 1531, Cour du Donjon, Fontainebleau castle (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, fig. 62).

19 Albert Bray, "Le premier grand escalier du palais de Fontainebleau et les anciens escaliers de la cour ovale," *Bulletin monumental* 99 (1940): 193–203; André Chastel, "L'Escalier de la Cour Ovale à Fontainebleau," in *Essays in the History of Architecture Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, ed. Douglas Fraser et al. (London: Phaidon Press, 1967); Chatenet, *La cour de France*, 253: "deux images architecturales destinées à frapper l'esprit du visiteur, à le préparer à la rencontre avec le souverain."

cally indefinite, in the mannerist imaginary universe of Fontainebleau. His rival, the French king, and his representative Jupiter follow him at every turn, as we shall see, and signal supremacy by artistic means. One last time he encounters the father of the gods, who hierarchically surpasses his own Hercules identification, when leaving the castle; above the so-called *Porte royale*, which leads from the *Cour du Donjon* back to the vestibule of the *Porte dorée*, a bust of the king was probably already enthroned at that time between Minerva and Juno as a Jupiter surrogate.[20]

Probably the most important message of the ceremonial use of the gallery lay in the king's exclusive interpretive authority over his works of art. Written sources to support this hypothesis do not exist, so we are relegated to the artworks themselves and their structural and functional logic. Structurally, the *Grande Galerie* follows a strategy of purposefully deployed encryption and hermeticism, which could be used by the sovereign in the act of display as an instrument of domination and demonstration of political superiority and was used as such de facto – anew at the occasion of each viewing.

Let us for a moment experimentally imagine ourselves in the situation of someone who enters the gallery for the first time. Be warned from the very beginning – for the uninitiated, entering this art cosmos represents an extreme experience of crisis, which is at the same time an intensified aesthetic experience: completely unprepared, they are confronted with an accumulation of hermetic signifiers. Following the ceremonial itinerary through the castle, the visitors enter the gallery, as already mentioned, from its east end from the *chambre du roi*. Once the low entrance door, originally integrated unremarkably into the surrounding wooden decoration of the lambriere, has closed behind the visitors, they are confronted with an artistic richness such as hitherto not to be found at any other European court. If they first direct their gaze into the 64-meter depth of this edifice, they see that this sign-covered world of art is a closed microcosm, since the paintings and stucco decorations run around all four walls.

If they then turn their gaze to the right and to the left, they are relieved to discover that the artist has at least placed a hint in the stucco to the right of them for the correct starting point for the interpretive adventure (Figure 6); there, a monumental female figure turns to them and invites them as it were, to visit the gallery with her hand gesture pointing the way. She seems to trample on the "daily busi-

20 Cécile Scailliérez, *François I^er^ et ses artistes dans les collections du Louvre* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1992), 52–53; Janet Cox-Rearick, *Chefs-d'œuvre de la Renaissance. La collection de François I^er^* (Antwerp, Paris: Fonds Mercator, Albin Michel, 1995), 19.

ness" of warfare – represented by the stucco relief depicting a battle beneath her – with her right hand pointing to the culturally and artistically dominated counter-world of the royal gallery. Below the main fresco, a small *quadro riportato* – its oversized frame clearly marking it as a fictional painting – shows the viewers one last time where they are and the journey they have already made since entering the castle; the miniature elevation in the cartouche of the majestic *Porte dorée* with the gallery adjoining it to the west is the last orientation landmark slightly above the viewers' eye level and their last contact with the outside world.

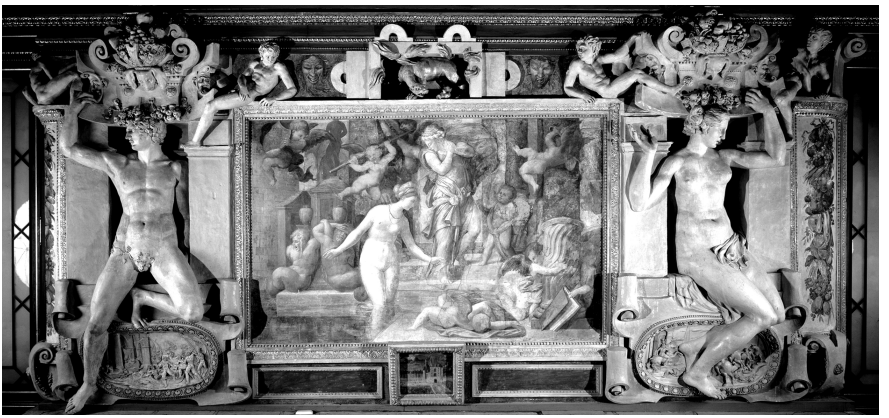

Figure 6: Rosso Fiorentino and Collaborators, so-called Venus, Galerie François I^{er}, Fontainebleau castle, around 1534/39 (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, pl. 24).

If they direct their gaze upward to the main fresco – which also appears framed and thus confronts them as if in the presentation of a collection – they are confronted with the first of many ambiguous and polysemic pictorial motifs. The graceful main figure (the very one Wallop had identified as Lucretia) to the left of the intricately reclining boy seems to be the painterly double of the lady in the stucco to the right. Previous interpreters have disagreed as to whether this is Venus punishing Cupid for abandoning Psyche,[21] or Cupid's education,[22] or Cupid

21 Père Pierre Dan, *Fontainebleau, le trésor des merveilles de la maison royale* (Paris: Res universis, 1990 [Reprint of the edition Paris 1642]), 91; Pierre Guilbert, *Description historique du château, bourg et forêt de Fontainebleau* (Marseille: Laffitte Reprints, 1978 [Reprint of the edition Paris 1731]), vol. 1, 92.

22 Kurt Kusenberg, *Le Rosso* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1931), 65.

asleep,[23] – or even Venus abandoned by Mars.[24] The female figure wringing her hands, descending the central steps to the water basin, is also ambiguous; it could be Minerva, who joins and allies with Venus in cultural mission while Cupid sleeps,[25] but it could also represent a nymph, which would thematically "match" the water and the two purple-sculptured tritons on the left of the painting. In a playful way, the fresco at the same time suggests the theme of *arma et litterae;*[26] the flock of cupids on the upper left, no doubt an homage to Raphael's "Galatea,"[27] plays with weapons, while on the lower right, behind a column with a Solomon-twisted shaft, a cupid presents an only slightly open book. The weapons carried through the air refer – just like the two battle reliefs under the monumental antique stucco figures at the side of the fresco – to war and battle themes and thus stand in clear contrast to the other contents of the fresco.

To bring these heterogeneous elements into a meaningful context is not possible for the viewers. Since a sequential-immanent comprehension of what is depicted fails here, they will strive to find clues to a possible interpretation in the surroundings. Obviously, they will first look for comparable and similar elements in order to orientate themselves in the confusing variety. In this effort for clarification the viewer basically has two possibilities; either they follow the decorative units along the north wall where they began their tour, or they turn to the opposite unit of the decoration in order to try their luck there. The elaborate, three-dimensional stucco elements that frame and close the Venus fresco, but above all the "light barrier" of the adjoining window opening (which are no longer in their original state today), suggest that the search for meaning should continue on the opposite south side.

There, the viewers actually find a corresponding formal element (Figure 7); the male figure at the lower edge of the painting with its arm extended parallel to the frame mirrors the arm position of Cupid in the foreground of the Venus fresco – this is a typical example of Rosso's technique of formal transitions with a simultaneous heterogeneity of meanings.[28] The viewers have also encountered the theme of battle

23 Sylvie Béguin and Sylvia Pressouyre, "Documentation, descriptions, interprétations et exégèses," *La Galerie François I^er^ au Château de Fontainebleau. Numéro spéciale de la Revue de l'art* 16–17 (1972): 125; André Chastel, "Le système de la Galerie," *La Galerie François I^er^ au Château de Fontainebleau*, 143–50.

24 Guy de Tervarent, "La pensée du Rosso," in *Les énigmes de l'art*, vol. 4: *L'art savant* (Bruges: De Tempel, [1952]).

25 Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino*, 231.

26 See Claudia Brink, *Arte et marte. Kriegskunst und Kunstliebe im Herrscherbild des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts in Italien* (Munich, Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2000).

27 Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino*, 231.

28 Zerner, *L'art de la Renaissance*, 72: "Le rapport ici est plus thématique que morphologique. On assiste à une sorte de chassé-croisé, de contamination ou de mise en équivalence inattendue

before in the two battle reliefs. These coincidences, however, stimulate a hope for explanation that is not fulfilled. In general, on closer inspection, the differences between the two pictorial units facing each other predominate. Stylistically and with regard to the composition of the painting and the filling of the painted areas, the fresco "The Battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths" clearly contrasts with the "Venus." While the Venus painting and its decorations were characterised by Raphaelesque grace, now – both in the main fresco and in the reclining male figures blowing fanfares in the corner fields of the frame – Michelangelesque furor and Herculean forms prevail. The fanfare-blowing men seem to be direct persiflage of the daytime sculptures from the New Sacristy of S. Lorenzo in Florence: their leg poses in particular came into Rosso's ironizing visor. Thus, the two heroes of contemporary Roman Renaissance art in papal service are brilliantly outdone, with Roman *maniera modernissima* translocated to the French territory in a most possessive gesture.[29]

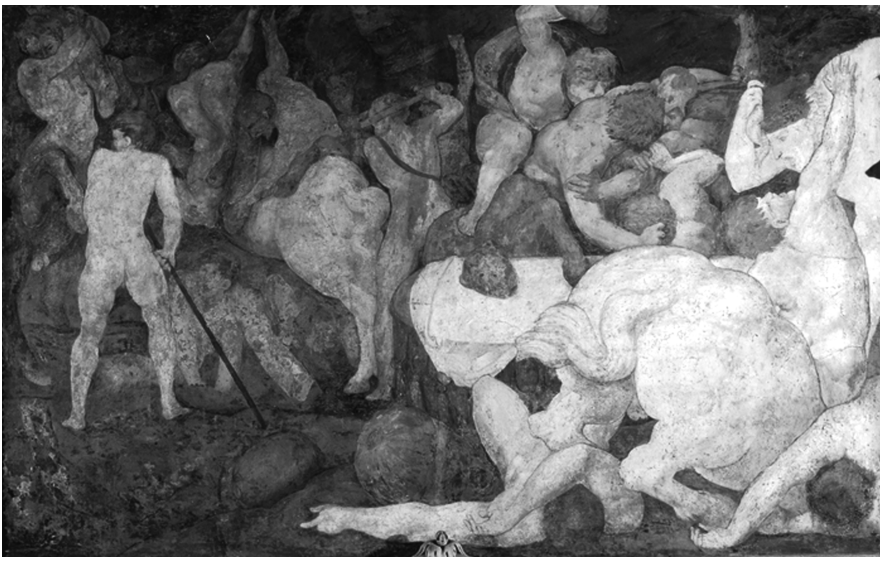

Figure 7: Rosso Fiorentino and Collaborators, so-called Battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths, Galerie François I[er], Fontainebleau castle, around 1534/39 (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, pl. 26).

entre l'aspect formel et l'aspect thématique des motifs dont on trouverait bien d'autres exemples."

29 Christine Tauber, "A *paragone* of Styles: The Mannerist Challenge to Raphael and Michelangelo at the Court of Francis I," in *The Translation of Raphael's Roman Style*, ed. Henk T. van Veen (Leuven, Paris, Dudley: Peeters Publishers, 2007).

Such virtuoso transformations, which often go hand in hand with shifts in meaning in an ironizing manner and thus signal intellectual superiority, reveal Rosso's art as an ideal symbiosis of genuine aesthetic freedom as well as the unfolding of artistic autonomy in the tradition of the revaluation of artistic imaginative activity as an innovative force with the political intention of the king. Mannerism as a genuinely modern style perfectly suits Francis' modern notion of politics. In his representation of power, he thus deliberately relies on an art that is autonomous and open to the future and paradoxically promises him the highest legitimacy for all time. The ambiguity of the gallery, with its degree of hermeticism varying from fresco to fresco, is programmatic, denying the viewers a continuous narrative approach to meaning. With each new gaze, they engage in a dynamic process of constant shifting of meaning, enrichment of significance, and constant recontextualization of supposedly already conclusively interpreted elements.

Numerous motifs in the gallery's last three *travées* indicate that Francis I had by no means abandoned his imperial aspirations, despite the disastrous military defeat at Pavia and the unsuccessful competition with Charles V for the title of Holy Roman Emperor in 1519. This was already evident in the telling coffered vaults of Chambord Castle (built 1518/19–1530), in which the omnipresent royal salamander was surmounted by the imperial arched crown. But the rear part of the Fontainebleau Gallery, in particular, offers more references to the era of the Roman Empire, which is equated with its own time in an identificatory way. Imperial Rome is omnipresent here, for example in the depiction of Caritas Romana below the fresco "Cléobis et Biton" or in the Roman architectures in the stucco cartouche next to it – although once again these are not outright quotations but witty variations of antique models; for example, the relief spiral of Trajan's column is shown mirrored in comparison to the actual column (Figure 8). Already stylistically, the gallery decoration has imperial-Roman (and not Roman-Republican) connotations due to Rosso's relief-like style based on sarcophagi, as can be seen in the comparison of the "Battle of the Centaurs" with the relief by Michelangelo (Figure 9). This imperial program culminates in the last fresco of the gallery, the so-called "Ignorance chassée." This also represents an ironic commentary on the futility of the viewers' attempt to discover meaning, and thus a demonstration of his inferiority to the omnipotent lord of the castle, which Charles V must not have failed to notice.

Only at second glance do the viewers recognise that the place central to the interpretation of this fresco is occupied by the small figure facing the brightly lit door in the background (Figure 10). As in two frescoes before, the king appears here in person in a portrait; he enters the Capitoline temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus as *ex utroque* Caesar (with book and sword) and Divus Augustus alike (recognizable from the barely visible inscription on the portal lintel "OSTIUM IOVIS").

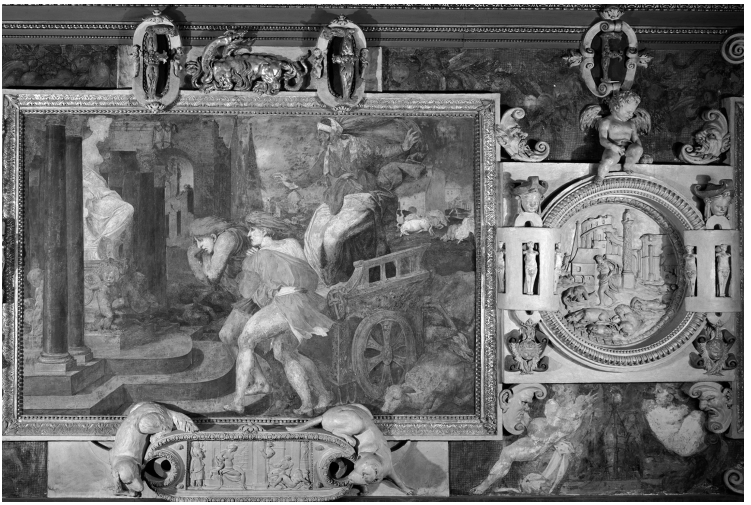

Figure 8: Rosso Fiorentino and Collaborators, so-called Cleobis and Biton, Galerie François I^{er}, Fontainebleau castle, around 1534/39. Beneath the Caritas Romana, on the right Trajan's column with inverted shaft (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, pl. 35).

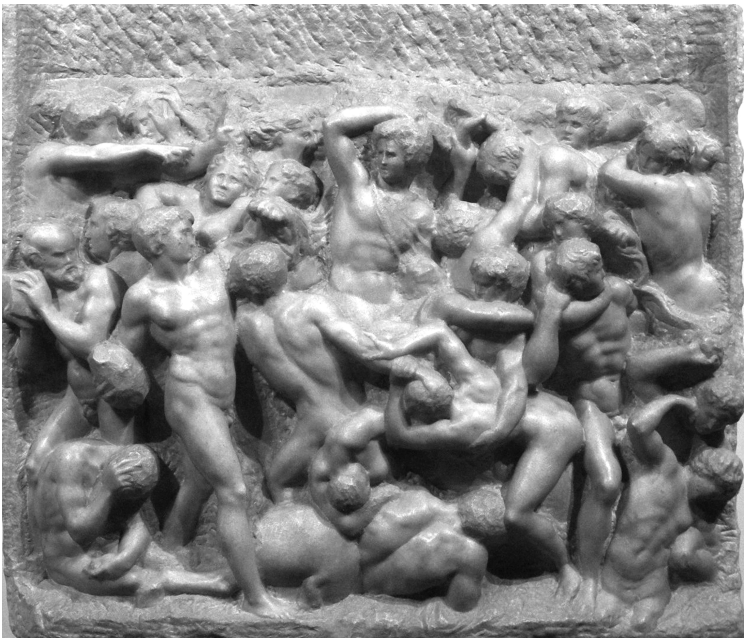

Figure 9: Michelangelo, Battle of the Centaurs, 1492/94, Casa Buonarroti, Florence (Sailko, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7344643).

The book under his arm, the book that seems to have wandered from the Venus fresco all through the gallery in its diagonal to the very end,[30] contains perhaps the solution for the enigmas of the hieroglyphs in the gallery,[31] perhaps also the never written program. But it is closed, for the king as his fictitious author does not need this reading aid himself. The sword, as well, is not drawn to fight man against man, but only symbolises sovereign potency. Francis I does not rely on military strength and the martial arts; rather, he shows himself in the end as the educated ruler, as intellectual and *litteratus*, who drives the ignorants – recognizable by their blindfolds – out of his realm. But at the same time, as the most educated, he keeps an elitist-intellectual and absolute distance from his subjects as well as from the foreign diplomats, a distance that renders him unreachable as a ruler and thaumaturgical interpreter of signs and thus in the highest degree legitimised.

Figure 10: Rosso Fiorentino and Collaborators, so-called Expulsion of Ignorance, Galerie François I^{er}, Fontainebleau castle, around 1534/39 (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, pl. 40).

30 John Shearman, "The Galerie François Premier: A Case in Point," *Miscellanea Musicologica. Studies in Musicology* 11 (1980): 2.

31 See Ulrich Gaier, "Vielversprechende Hieroglyphen. Hermeneutiken der Entschlüsselungsversuche von der Renaissance bis Rosette," in *Ägyptomanie. Europäische Ägyptenimagination von der Antike bis heute*, ed. Wilfried Seipel (Wien, Milan: Skira, 2000).

Only the sovereign, as the "Expulsion of Ignorance," seems to teach the viewer, has access to the *Arcana imperii*, and is thus the Master of the interpretations of the hieroglyphs that symbolise these *Arcana* in enigmatic encryption. He maintains his interpretive sovereignty because he does not share that secret of ruling with anyone and strictly limits elitist access to the hieroglyphs, which give hermetic hints about the foundations of his power without divulging the whole truth. He does not take the blinded ones, who desperately stretch out their hands to him, into the illuminating enlightenment, but demonstratively ends the sightseeing tour by his departure into higher spheres, breaking off the communication one-sidedly and taking leave majestically into the divine sphere. The king alone has the authority of interpretation in his gallery, determining not only the itinerary of the visit, but also the time the visitors are allowed to spend in front of the paintings. Knowledge is power, and explanation of the incomprehensible is a proof of sovereign grace. The Sovereign arbitrarily exposes the levels of meaning and may explain them according to his respective intentions, since they cannot be conclusively interpreted. The decisive factor is not whether the sovereign himself actually understands the encrypted signs or merely presents himself as a perceiver; rather, it is decisive whether he can successfully suggest to those around him that he has insight into all the secrets of his imperial power.

Mannerist art had proceeded even more extensively in this strategy of overdetermination, occasionally allowing itself to merely simulate meaning, to present drolleries as containing meaning. In this way, it unmasked the system of supposedly unambiguous assignment of meaning and replaced it with a more complex system of encryption, ironic volte-face, and virtuoso use of any artistic means imaginable. It was precisely the artificiality of the style patronised by the king that guaranteed that the means of representation could be mastered. On the other hand, this form of virtuosity always included the possibility of doing something completely different. Arbitrariness here becomes an intellectual aristocratic instrument of power. The arbitrary handling of pagan as well as Christian traditions and the dissolution of the aesthetic norm of mimesis, which guaranteed the verifiability of artistic achievement by means of truthful depiction, gives the king the autonomy to arrange his signs in a way that suits his representational purposes. He is the master of the transformational laws in his gallery, and thus he dominates the viewers and delimits for them the scope of their understanding. He has the key power, and he situationally reserves the decision as of what is to be central and what is to be peripheral in this (albeit small and restricted) cosmos of art,[32] which is completely

32 Françoise and Pierre Joukovsky, *A travers la Galerie François I^er^* (Paris: Champion, 1992), 174: "Cet art de l'illusion est essentiellement dynamique: tous ces artifices tendent à repousser l'espace, à aller plus loin, pour métamorphoser en empire une galerie d'un château français."

dominated by him. His interpretative authority and power of command gives him absolute sovereignty – at least over the artistic centerpiece of his kingdom.

The staged control of the keys and the authority of interpretation are flanked by another powerfully played out monopoly of rule: that of reproduction sovereignty over the art commissioned by the king.[33] He not only offers the English diplomat mentioned at the beginning of this article that Henry is welcome to obtain marble from the newly explored French quarries, but also seems willing to have another set of casts of antiques made from the famous molds that his court artist Primaticcio is currently making for him in Rome in the Belvedere Court – the first identically large bronze casts of the Belvedere Antiques, which were then cast in bronze in Fontainebleau in a specially equipped workshop.[34] Wallop obviously took this offer seriously, because in the course of his account he goes so far as to claim that the French king would surely also be happy to have his entire gallery's interior duplicated for the English court: "An in the gallerey of St James the like wold be wel made, for it is bothe highe and large. Yf your pleasure be to have the paterne of this here, I knowe right wel the Frenche King woll gladly geve it me."[35]

What the English ambassador still formulated as a wishful thinking – a reproduction of the entire gallery – actually existed in rudimentary form; six tapestries preserved today in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna show a sequence of the gallery's *travées* with their decorations (Figure 11).[36] So here we have a case

33 For this and the following see Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, chapter 7: "Strategien der Souveränität: Antikenimport und Reproduktionshoheit," 291–338; id., "*Translatio Imperii*? – Primaticcios Abguß des Laokoon in Fontainebleau," in *Laokoon in Literatur und Kunst*, ed. Dorothee Gall et al. (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2008).

34 Sylvia Pressouyre, "Les fontes de Primatice à Fontainebleau," *Bulletin monumental* 127 (1969): 223–39; Bertrand Jestaz, "Les moulages d'antiques fondus en bronze au XVI^{e} siècle," in *Les moulages de sculptures antiques et l'histoire de l'archéologie*, ed. Henri Lavagne et al. (Geneva: Droz, 2000); Regina Seelig-Teuwen, "Large Bronzes in France During the Sixteenth Century," in *Large Bronzes in the Renaissance*, ed. Peta Motture (New Haven, London: Yale U.P., 2003); Suzanne Favier, "Les collections de marbres antiques sous François I^{er}," *Revue du Louvre* 24 (1974): 153–56; Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique. The Lure of Classical Sculpture (1500–1900)* (New Haven, London: Yale U.P., 1981), 1–6; Cox-Rearick, *Chefs-d'œuvre de la Renaissance*, 319–61; *Primatice. Maître de Fontainebleau*, 137–54.

35 McAllister Johnson, "Neglected Usages," 53.

36 Louis Dimier, "La tenture de la Galerie de Fontainebleau à Vienne," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 16 (1927): 166–70; Bertrand Jestaz, "La tenture de la Galerie de Fontainebleau et sa restauration à Vienne à la fin du XVII^{e} siècle," *Revue de l'art* 22 (1973): 50–56; Gerlinde Gruber, "Les tentures à sujets mythologiques de la Grande Galerie de Fontainebleau," *Revue de l'art* 108 (1995): 23–31; Sylvia Pressouyre, "Problèmes de style. Le témoignage des tapisseries," *La Galerie François I^{er} au Château de Fontainebleau. Numéro spéciale de la Revue de l'art* 16–17 (1972): 106–11; Sophie Schneebalg-Perelman, *Les chasses de Maximilien. Les énigmes d'un chef-d'œuvre de la tapisserie* (Brussels: Chabassol, 1982),

in which the French king powerfully exploited his reproductive sovereignty. And who would have been more suitable as the addressee of such a demonstration of art-political power than the Roman-German Emperor? It is highly probable that at least the commission for these materially and artistically extraordinarily valuable tapestries was motivated by Charles V's visit to Fontainebleau in 1539. It was only in this act of reproduction that the elitist access-restricted representative space of the gallery gained political impact beyond Fontainebleau – the same applies, of course, to print reproduction. The choice of the incredibly elaborate and cost-intensive medium of tapestry for the gallery's "second version" also points to the emperor, who was a leading figure in Europe in terms of patronage of the arts, especially in the (conservative) medium of tapestry; all the other European rulers tried to emulate him in this domain. Royal copyright thus became an imperial privilege, used in diplomatic intercourse at the highest level. It serves equally as a demonstration of *largesse* and as proof of superiority; for the dissemination of Fontainebleau's genuine, original, and unique style represents the demonstration of power of a new *Leitkultur* (leading culture) that takes confidently from the "model Italy" what it needs without slavishly following it.

Figure 11: Tapestry "Cleobis and Biton", around 1540–47, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, pl. 47).

117–54; Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino*, 246–49; Wolfgang Brassat, *Tapisserien und Politik. Funktionen, Kontexte und Rezeption eines repräsentativen Mediums* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1992); Andrea Stockhammer, "Cat.nr. 55: 'The Unity of the State'," in *Tapestry in the Renaissance. Art and Magnificence*. Exh. Cat. ed. Thomas P. Campbell (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002); id., "Tapestry Production in France (1520–60)," in *Tapestry in the Renaissance.*

In the years from 1515 to 1525, Francis I had recourse to a genuinely French arsenal of motifs for self-representation, since at that time he still believed that he could maintain the French *Regnum Italiae* in Italy itself. Only after 1525, after his disastrous defeat by the imperial army in the Battle of Pavia, when the "Italian Dream" had failed, did he adopt the strategy of transferring Italy to France, and building his own Italy there – above all in Fontainebleau – whose aspirations, however, went far beyond the mere transfer of culture: the French king wanted to outdo Italy in France through his targeted import of artists and build a *Nuova Roma* that was supposed to eclipse Ancient Rome in virtuosity, sophistication, and modernity. This ambition also included the imperial claim to power, which was not abandoned, but rather proclaimed in an artistically sublimated form.

A particularly demonstrative act of importing *Romanità* is the aforementioned commission to Francesco Primaticcio to cast those Roman antiques that were inextricably associated with the highest papal claim to representation: the statues of the Cortile del Belvedere, whose highly charged semantics of power politics the French king used for his own demonstration of authority. The dictum of Fontainebleau as a new Rome goes back to Giorgio Vasari:

> [. . .] Primaticcio was recalled from Rome. For having embarked with the said marble statues and molds of the antiques, he returned to France, where before all other things he cast, according as they were in the said molds and forms, a great part of those antique statues; which come so well, that they seem to be the antiques themselves, as may be seen in the *Jardin de la Reine* at Fontainebleau, to the greatest satisfaction of the king, who almost transformed the said place into a new Rome.[37]

What is meant in the context of Vasari's *Vita* of Primaticcio is that the casts of the Belvedere antiques created a second Belvedere and consequently a second Rome on French soil. Vasari, as an Italian, however, immediately diminishes this claim to a *"quasi nuova Roma"* by calling it a copy that only "almost" comes close to the original. But with this he misses the specific novelty of this French *Roma renovata* in Fontainebleau, which consisted in the accentuation of the *renovatio* idea by means of reproduction; the integration of these antiques into the iconography of Fontainebleau documented a right to transformation, which at the same time equaled a complete appropriation. It uses the ideological surplus of the papal statue staging, but

37 Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. Paola Barocchi et al., vol. 6 (Florence: Sansoni, 1987), 144: "[. . .] fu richiamato da Roma il Primaticcio. Perche imbarcatosi con i detti marmi e cavi di figure antiche, se ne tornò in Francia, dove innanzi ad ogni altra cosa gettò, secondo che erano in detti cavi e forme, una gran parte di quelle figure antiche; le quali vennono tanto bene, che paiano le stesse antiche, come si può vedere là dove furono poste nel giardino della reina a Fontanableò, con grandissima sodisfazione di quel re, che fece in detto luogo quasi una nuova Roma."

through new contextualization creates something genuinely new, which is something else (and therefore implicitly something always superior to Ancient Rome).

This *translatio artis* of the Belvedere Antiques amounted to a *translatio imperii* to the new Rome of Fontainebleau – especially with the sculpture of Laocoon (Figure 12), which in its new home refers to the autochthonous founding myth of France, which traces itself back to Troy and thus to a time before the founding of Rome. The public display of statue ownership by collectors in the sixteenth century is a proof of power, which in the hardly republican Fontainebleau became a kind of evidence of imperial power. Moreover, the mere material iconography of the bronze has Roman imperial connotations. The reproduction and subsequent disposition of works of art for purposes of power politics in the arrangement and reinterpretation of the casts obviously meant more to the French king than the possession of original antique marble statues. Furthermore, the cast produced in the mode of "technical reproducibility" created a second version, a new original with autonomous artistic pretensions, which was not considered deficient compa-

Figure 12: Francesco Primaticcio, Laocoon, 1543, Galery of Diana, Fontainebleau castle (Tauber, *Manierismus und Herrschaftspraxis*, 2009, pl. 44).

red to the model, but on the contrary superior. The pope had probably not taken this into consideration when he so generously dispensed his copyright.

A comparable process of appropriation of Roman art into the French context occurred in the *Grande Galerie*, which showed a multitude of transformations of the greatest Roman art models, both ancient imperial Roman and papal. The total appropriation of the art models gives the new owner the right to reproduce them all over again, transforming them and making them subservient to his interpretations. The casts, as mobile cultural objects, are entirely subject to the sovereign's power of disposal; he can transfer them at his will. The new frame of reference of copies – which negates the original context of the reproduced originals – is the collection, whose owner subjects the reproductions to a new order of objects. The king himself is the custodian of his collection, arranging his pieces according to his representative needs and ruling unrestrictedly over his self-created art cosmos as a powerful connoisseur.

However, this form of modern, intellectualised practice of power and government is conceived too exclusively to be successful in terms of power politics. It already structurally anticipates its failure. It is not effective on the mass level and thus cannot be imposed in terms of *Realpolitik*, and it is significant that neither French Mannerism or the so-called Fontainebleau School nor Francis' I specific understanding of sovereignty found a genuine posterity. Developments in both the political and the artistic spheres took a very different trajectory in the centuries to come. Court ceremonial as a means of exercising arcane power, as it blossomed in highly artificial ways at the French court in the first half of the sixteenth century cultivating artificial paradises in which power manifests itself as a ritual and enigma to be deciphered, is now increasingly deprived of its mystery by ceremonial science, and fixed tools for interpretation are canonised. Reversely, this disenchantment and loss of charisma corresponds to a greater communicability and efficacy of ruling power. Symmetry, order, and predictability, coupled with military power, were supposed to make France a world power after the Wars of Religion. The witty use of irony, disruptions, ambiguities, and disturbances of order no longer had a place in this new absolutist regime.

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All abbreviations of ancient sources are according to the Oxford Classical Dictionary, 4th edition.

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