The absentminded visitor drifts by chance into the Hall of Architecture at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, where astonishment awaits. In part, the surprise is the sheer number of architectural fragments: Egyptian capitals, Assyrian pavements, Phoenician reliefs, Greek temple porches, Hellenistic columns, Etruscan urns, Roman entablatures, Gothic portals, Renaissance balconies, niches, and choir stalls; parapets and balustrades, sarcophagi, pulpits, and ornamental details. Center stage, a three-arched Romanesque church façade spans the entire width of the skylit gallery, colliding awkwardly into the surrounding peristyle. We find ourselves in a hypnotic space fabricated from reproduced building parts from widely various times and places. Cast from buildings still in use, from ruins, or from bits and pieces of architecture long since relocated to museums, the fragments present a condensed historical panorama. Decontextualized, dismembered, and with surfaces fashioned to imitate the patina of their referents, the casts convey a weird reality effect. Mute and ghostlike, they seem programmed to evoke the experience of the real thing. For me, the effect of this mimetic extravaganza only became more puzzling when I recognized—among chefs d’oeuvre such as a column from the Vesta temple at Tivoli, a portal from the cathedral in Bordeaux, and Lorenzo Ghiberti’s golden Gates of Paradise from the baptistery in Florence—a twelfth-century Norwegian stave-church portal. Impeccably documenting the laboriously carved ornaments of the wooden church, it is mounted shoulder to shoulder with doorways from French and British medieval stone churches, the sequence materializing as three-dimensional wallpaper. Less famous perhaps than many of its fellow exhibits, the portal of the Sauland church sparked questions: How had it traveled all the way to Pennsylvania? Who had made it, why, and when? Above all, in what kind of world could this this patchwork architectural spectacle make sense?

If the immediate impression is shaped by the sheer size of the objects, a closer look conjures a strangely distorted experience of scale.
Introduction

At the Acropolis, the Temple of Nike Apteros appears tiny compared to the Parthenon, balancing on the verge of the rock. The Erechtheion temple, on the other hand, seems rather big, with its larger-than-life caryatides floating high above the ground. In the Carnegie Hall of Architecture they appear matched in size. The porches of both the Nike Apteros and the Erechtheion are dwarfed by the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, which they flank—a structure that despite its massive base does not appear especially imposing scale-wise in its urban context in Athens.

Similarly, both the Greek temple fronts look diminutive in comparison with the immense façade of the twelfth-century abbey church Saint-Gilles-du-Gard, the cornerstone of the Pittsburgh collection (figure 1).

If anything, this staged encounter of objects from faraway times and places prompts comparison. Yet comparing one exhibit with another, while bearing the real monuments in mind, is perplexing. Except for one scale model in the gallery—a reconstructed Parthenon with a label stating that it is executed at 1:20—most of the plaster monuments come without indication of scale or provenance. Despite their massive presence, they stand as transparent signifiers, devoid of the medium specificity that genre definitions such as “oil on canvas,” “albumen print,” or “bronze” routinely bring to museum pieces. Realizing that the little label by the stave-church portal dates the church to the wrong century and states that the original is “at its place of origin,” while actually it was demolished in the mid-nineteenth century, the viewer confronts the limited value of the modest museum paratext.

The Hall of Architecture prompts more questions. For instance, why does the Nike Apteros pediment appear flawless in comparison to its Athenian referent (even in its most recent 2010 version, designed by the Acropolis Restoration Service, which after decades of vigorous building is still in the process of reshaping both the singular monuments and the full skyline of the Athenian Acropolis)? Lost in anachronistic deliberation, vaguely recollecting the little temple’s complicated trajectory of falling in and out of existence across history, I could at least conclude that the ancient structure at no point could have looked exactly like this, and that this plaster monument must be depicting something other than a ruin in a particular state of ruination (figure 2).

The first impression of these casts teaches us a lesson, namely, that both monuments and their representations are in constant flux. Cross-historical referencing “does not happen in frictionless ways,” as Alexander Nagel observes: “History is effective and real even as chronology is bent and folded. New configurations of problems and objects are taking shape before our eyes.” Strange constellations and bewildering juxtapositions cause time and space to bend and fold inside the four walls of the Hall of Architecture, walls that themselves testify to a startling inversion as the
architectural frame slowly reveals itself as an abstracted reconstruction of the imagined exterior of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, turned inside out. The odd effect of this representation of a memorial once counted among the Seven Wonders of the World is intensified when in a corner one spots a convincingly patinated replica of a column from the same structure, looking strikingly real in front of a Beaux-Arts interpretation of its own vanished totality.

Much of my astonishment that day in Pittsburgh was due to the epiphanic association evoked by this assembly of plaster monuments, namely, of a literary landscape structured precisely by epiphanies in the guise of mémoires involontaires. The room made me think of a dazzling scene in Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. As a young boy, the main character, Marcel, visits the Trocadéro Museum in Paris, particularly admiring a plaster portal from the medieval church in the fictitious Norman town...
Balbec, imbued, as I remembered it, with the alluring epithet “Persian.” Marcel becomes increasingly impatient to experience the totality of the church firsthand. Yet when he at long last finds himself in front of the real building, it appears to represent nothing but an oppressive “tyrannie du particulier.” The actual church seemed arbitrary, while its plaster version in Paris appeared perfect, universal, and timeless.

There is nothing timeless about the Hall of Architecture in Pittsburgh. Neither the individual casts nor the installation as a whole would be likely to stir ideas of perfection or universality. Even the accidental visitor—unaware of the fact that objects like these once furnished galleries from Moscow to San Francisco—will likely find the display old-fashioned, a relic of a bygone museum paradigm. The whole ensemble conveys a backstage ambience, appearing, in all its beauty, like a depository of artifacts of ambiguous provenance, lost in both time and space. The dizzying sensation of time travel was inescapable, but not to the monuments’ original times or places. Evoking multiple times and numerous places, the reproductions hover somewhere between depiction and construction. A premodernist world unfolds before the present-day visitor, a time capsule containing the reminiscing present of a historicist culture, ordering, elaborating, and presenting the past. Virtually unchanged since its inauguration in 1907, the Hall of Architecture is a monument in its own right. It is a mausoleum-as-museum, an epitaph of a nineteenth-century mass medium. Up until the first decades of the twentieth century, when most cast collections were consigned to storage, destruction, and oblivion, these plaster monuments traveled the world at high speed, reifying architecture for wide audiences.

Plaster Perfection

My first encounter with the Hall of Architecture, in 2008, was purely serendipitous. I was making my way in a rented convertible to see Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater, a popular pilgrimage site for architectourists from all over the world. The Hall of Architecture, by contrast, is not considered a must-see even for architecture and exhibition historians, and it is only sporadically and peripherally commented on.

I was soon to become entangled in a nineteenth-century web of monument production, exchange, and curatorial efforts, and to undertake visits and revisits to extant cast galleries, as well as storage spaces, and archives in Europe and the United States. But first I returned to Proust before going back to the Carnegie archive, and was surprised to discover the institutional and biographical connections between the French novel and the Pittsburgh museum. Industrialist Andrew Carnegie had a world-class architecture collection installed in his hometown at the very moment when these displays were falling out of vogue. Most of the items were ordered from an extensive assortment of catalogues, issued by European museums, such as the Louvre and the British Museum, with unparalleled collections of antiquities, and from plaster cast companies from Cairo to Oslo. The French monuments in the Hall of Architecture were produced in the workshop of the same museum in which the young Marcel, within the frame of a novel, was admiring the Balbec cast. Whereas most
of the casts that arrived in Pittsburgh were at the time staples in the plaster monument trade—a booming marketplace in the last decades of the nineteenth century—the façade of the pilgrimage church Saint-Gilles-du-Gard was a singular sensation. It was the result of what might euphemistically be termed a resolute diplomacy to get around French monument legislation, made possible by Andrew Carnegie’s unparalleled wealth and power. One of its kind, it was manufactured for the Hall of Architecture by the Trocadéro’s experienced molders. The same molders spent the summer of 1906 assembling the monument that had arrived in two hundred crates, shipped by four steamers across the Atlantic before traveling by train from New York to Pittsburgh.

More precisely, Proust’s Trocadéro Museum is the Musée de sculpture comparée. Opened to the public in the Palais du Trocadéro in 1882, it was founded on the initiative of Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, and many of its major pieces were made during his restorations of French medieval monuments. Heralded as a “complete series,” the casts merged to produce an unprecedented panorama of a national architecture as an evolutionary continuum, and were intended to show a totality inaccessible in the fragmented reality of the quotidian world. However, as museums on both sides of the Atlantic purchased these serialized national monuments, the casts were transplanted into new agendas and curatorial programs. Accordingly, their meaning and function changed.

Proust praised the timeless perfection of a plaster cast while deeming the real church “reduced to nothing but its own shape in stone.” This inversion of modern hierarchies of originals and copies is indeed immanent in Proust’s aesthetics. Still, read historically, the novel’s portrayal of the perfect copy and its ambiguous original goes to the core of architectural cast culture, at the moment of its demise. Just as Proust’s novel was published, many museums were deaccessioning their casts. The reasons for dismantling these collections were, as we will see, various and local. Yet overall, such displays became an intellectual and artistic embarrassment in modernist culture, and were over a few decades subjected to neglect, denial, and violent destruction. A late occurrence is the assault on the exhibits in the Cour vitrée at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in May 1968. Among the monuments salvaged from the turmoil was the colossal ruin of the Temple of Castor and Pollux from the Roman Forum (see figure 29). Rebuilt in Versailles in 1976, a century after its first erection in Paris, it testifies to the history of construction, destruction, and reconstruction at work in the world of plaster architecture.

Prior to this twentieth-century iconoclasm, plaster monuments had been advocated by scholarly elites as a medium par excellence for teaching and disseminating historical architecture. Conceived as providing ideal exhibits rather than second-class substitutes, the cast business was orchestrated by prominent museum directors, archaeologists, architects, art and architecture historians, and antiquarians. While selecting architectural pieces for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, architect Pierre Le Brun in 1885 confirmed a particular nineteenth-century topos when he claimed that cast collections represented “a completeness and unity not found possible in museums of originals.” One might be forgiven for assuming that this was a particularly American sentiment. After all, US museums in the late nineteenth century hardly had sufficient
Introduction

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the introduction of the Amazonomachy frieze on the international cast market, while the marble fragments were installed in London, Newton concluded that the “great principle of chronological arrangement” was achievable only through a “well-selected Museum of casts.” Claiming that only reproductions could depict the history of monuments “in one syn-optical and simultaneous view,” he launched an ideal of perfect historical sequences to be admired by large audiences.

The impressionable material of plaster proved capable of presenting flawless editions of individual works; as we will see, the opinion that a good cast, “identical with the original,” afforded “the same satisfaction to the cultivated eye” was commonsensical. Indeed, a perfect cast was considered more valuable than an inferior original. “I should presume that casts are preferable to originals, because they cast a purer and more direct shadow, whereas in a fragment of ancient sculpture you can hardly distinguish the dirt, as it were, from the shadow,” opined W. R. Hamilton at the British Museum in 1853. While a cast could reveal qualities that were lost in deteriorating marbles, the relation between the original and the reproduction could also become more complex. In fact, some instantly canonical works existed in plaster perfection only. After the French excavations at Delphi in the 1890s, the unearthed artifacts remained in Greece. The Louvre’s atelier de moulage (plaster-cast workshop) boldly translated the debris from the porch of the Treasury of the Siphnians into a Greek monument that premiered at the 1900 Exposition universelle in Paris. Until the modernist refurbishment of the Daru stairway in 1934, it proudly marked the entrance to the Louvre alongside the Nike of Samothrace. This modern French invention—initially a copy without an original—soon traveled to museums around the world, serving to showcase developments in early Greek architecture by denoting a nonexistent structure in Greece (figure 3).

Plaster Monuments: Architecture and the Power of Reproduction looks into the ways in which monuments were shaped and enhanced off-site, how major architectural works were presented, invented, documented, preserved, circulated, traded, and exhibited in the ephemeral material of plaster, and how the casts shaped notions of origins, originality, and authenticity in the life of monuments.

Exhibiting History

Often pictured as stable structures that give voice to the past across history, monuments are always in flux—styled and reframed in accordance with the taste and interests of shifting present moments. As Thordis Arthénus has shown, the invention of the modern cult of monuments dovetailed with discourses of conservation: “Exposed and vulnerable, always in need of reinforced protection,” they are both “lost and found.” With exceptions such as the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates and Trajan’s Column—erected for commemorative purposes—the monuments that appear in this book belong to the class labeled “unintentional.” In his influential monument taxonomy, Alois Riegl defined this category in terms of historical value, encompassing architecture that “constitutes an irreplaceable and irremovable link in a chain of development.” Most of
the plaster casts we are considering reproduce major ruins of antiquity, as well as buildings that were designated historical monuments by the bodies for the preservation of national heritage that emerged across Europe during the nineteenth century. In curated arrangements, recently unearthed ruins, reevaluated national buildings, and architecture from far-flung regions displayed timeliness and change. When the ancient gateway from the Great Stupa at Sanchi, cast on-site in India in the 1860s, landed at the South Kensington Museum, the canon was expanded in time and space (figure 4). The aggregate of casts from Indochina that first appeared in Paris in 1867 canonized Angkor Wat as an “eternal ruin,” while its restored plaster perfection off-site enabled its “inclusion in the colonizer’s own canon of cultural heritage,” Michael Falser argues. This book shows how architecture takes on major public importance “when uncoupled from its traditional grounding in real space,” as Richard Wittman puts it. It was through full-scale, three-dimensional fragments that an emerging global history of monuments could be experienced spatially, synoptically, and simultaneously. As we shall see, the entrepreneurs who orchestrated their exchange and exhibition referred to both the originals and the reproductions as monuments. This does not signify a lack of media sensitivity. Rather it testifies to the acknowledgment that monuments were no less curated in situ than in galleries. Monuments travel across media and materials, in space and in time, producing complex entanglements of copies and originals.

Plaster casts are not, of course, a nineteenth-century invention. Egyptian tombs and Persian palaces were clad with plaster, often in lavish ornamentation. In the first century BCE, Pliny the Elder accredited the fourth-century BCE Greek sculptor Lysistratus of Sicyon with the invention of taking casts from sculptures. In Greek and Roman antiquity, bronze and marble statues were imitated and disseminated in plaster, keeping lost originals alive. Since François I in the 1540s obtained permission to cast statuary in the Vatican and reproduce bronzes for his new palace at Fontainebleau, reproductions of classical sculpture proliferated in princely collections, glyptothecques, and academies, within a paradigm where copies and works presumed original coexisted harmoniously. The Art Academy in Berlin acquired plaster casts from the late seventeenth century, amassing an enormous collection that was augmented further when transferred to Friedrich August Stüler’s Neues Museum in 1855, where the grand stairway was crowned by the Erechtheion porch (figure 5). In 1755, before embarking for Rome, Johann Joachim Winckelmann published “Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture,” based on casts in Dresden. Goethe and Schiller studied antiquity in the form of reproductions in the Antikensaal in Mannheim, and, as Suzanne Marchand notes, not even academic classicists considered material authenticity essential. Appreciation of the artworks of antiquity depended on “their aesthetic value rather than their historicity.” Increasingly canonical and proliferating versions of statues such as the Laocoön, the Farnese Hercules, the Venus de Milo, the Dancing Faun, the Dying Gladiator, the Apollo Belvedere, and the Nike of Samothrace designated a subject matter for European art history.

While reproductions were crucial to the modern reception of the classical tradition, the casting of architecture is a historicist rather
than classicist phenomenon. The Berlin academy collection served as an “umbilical cord, connecting Berlin to Rome and the present to the past.”

Very differently, the diffusion of huge building fragments, made possible by new casting techniques invented in the mid-nineteenth century, was about connecting the past to the present. Different from the architectural ornaments and details that were part of academy and school collections, these bigger reproductions were about change and history, rather than serving as models for emulation and architectural solutions. An expression of what Stephen Bann has termed the “historical-mindedness” of the nineteenth century, the architectural casts had little to do with notions of timeless beauty or universal standards. The tradition of casting classical sculpture is centuries older than that of casting architecture, it survived longer, and it has been subject to much more scholarship. This book addresses the circulation of architecture specifically. It queries the way reproductions of building fragments resonate with nineteenth-century historical imaginations, within an intellectual horizon where full-scale architectural replicas were considered a powerful way of exhibiting architecture as a fundamental historical phenomenon.

Considering the scope of late nineteenth-century casting of architecture and the key role these objects played in shaping the architecture museum, surprisingly little is written on architectural cast culture. Placed within the emerging scholarly field of architecture exhibitions, Plaster Monuments draws on archival material, cast catalogues, and contemporary debates on these objects in the making, as well as contributions on individual monuments and specific collections. Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present, a 2010 volume edited by Rune Fredriksen and Eckart Marchand, an important milestone in the current reassessment of cast culture, includes a section on architecture. Recent decades have seen an uptick in the number of studies by curators and scholars—particularly those close to the Paris and London collections—among them Ian Jenkins, Christiane Pinatel, and Isabelle Flour. Contributions to the understanding of the architectural casts also appear in scholarship with different agendas, such as Michael Falser’s work on the French mediation of monuments in Indochina, Can Bilsel’s discussions of authenticity in regard to the Pergamon Altar, Jill Pearlman’s work on the American Bauhaus legacy and Timothy M. Rohan on Paul Rudolph, as well as Anne Middleton Wagner’s observations on the Cour vitrée at the École des Beaux-Arts in a monograph on a French nineteenth-century sculptor. To date, scholarship focused specifically on architectural casts has appeared primarily in articles. Further, this book aligns itself with recent studies on the architectural object as historical artifact, reflecting complex temporalities. The plaster monuments sprang from a worldview based on the presumption that history could be conceived of as a “systematic whole, constituted by distinct and homogeneous epochs, each with a particular character and a distinct style,” as Mari Hvattum aptly defines historicism.

Anne Bordeleau notes how, in the nineteenth century, architecture was “conceived against the temporal ground of a flowing history.” Such insights define a frame for the way these casts reflected changing ideas of the past, the present, and the future. This study of the power of reproductions shows how the increasing assortment of portable
monuments formed tangible iterations of historical awareness—exposing architecture as epoch-bound and site-specific, relative to time and place.

The plaster monuments belonged to what Malcolm Baker has labeled a nineteenth-century “reproductional continuum.” Developing in parallel, architectural casting and photography met in complex interactions. The three-dimensional reproductions were photogenic and capable of taking the place of extant or extinct originals in surprising ways. When the British Egyptologist Flinders Petrie in the late 1880s published *Racial Photographs from the Egyptian Monuments*, he propelled 190 sepia photographs of stone carvings, mostly from the Theban Necropolis into circulation more than a decade before important casts from Luxor appeared in museums. However, the objects depicted in the photographs were actually casts, “therefore far clearer than if [taken] directly from stone.” What this suggests is that material authenticity might not be the best means to grasp the epistemology of monuments as cultural and historical artifacts. Further, it hints at the interrelationship of casting and photography at work in many of the collections discussed in this book. Seen as “complementary,” casts could represent at full scale and in three dimensions what the scale-less medium of photography could only capture in two, and became “indispensable to the complete comprehension of an art fundamentally one of the sense of touch.”

The emphasis on sensation made the finishing of the casts critical. As we will see, the question of patina bristled with profound theoretical concerns insofar as the surface not only anchored the monument in time, but also prompted questions regarding the temporality of the plaster monument itself. Painted surfaces realized the assumed color schemes of ancient architecture and brought scholarly debates on polychromy to the attention of popular audiences. Another take on presumed original states resulted in assemblies of pristine white casts, heralding perfection as a property of the reproduction, while a third strategy was to imitate the current state of the weathered originals. The passion for truthful presentation was at the core of all these different takes on patina and surface, authenticity and history. Across collections, the casts’ styles spanned a range from ahistorical abstraction to empirical documentation, bespeaking both idealized origins and deteriorating presences.

In this way, the casts showcased the intricate relations between ever-changing originals and their serialized reproductions. When in 1929 the *Illustrated London News* published “The Parthenon Frieze: Effects of a Century of Decay,” new shots of the frieze in Athens were juxtaposed with the British Museum’s casts made in 1802 (figure 6). The photographs documented drastic corrosion and revealed “how much the sculptures have suffered in the intervening period.” The casts had been made for Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to Constantinople, while he was assembling what was to become the eponymous collection of Parthenon marbles that the British Parliament secured for the British Museum in 1816. The readers in 1929, exposed to the frieze shot from a scaffold raised for the Greek archaeologist Nikolaos Balanos’s restoration work, could hardly miss the point. The casts in London were clearly closer to the original than the eroded marbles in Athens. Yet if this piece of illustrated journalism rehearsed the moral justification of confiscation as conservation—an argument that has followed the Elgin Marbles through two
THE PARTHENON FRIEZE: EFFECTS OF A CENTURY OF DECAY.

1. As it was in 1801: A plaster cast of a figure of a warrior laying his sandal—a bas-relief in the frieze of the Parthenon. (Detail from No. 11 on page 341.)

2. As it was in 1816: One of the plaster casts made for Lord Elgin from part of the frieze of the Parthenon left in position on the temple. (Detail from No. 11 on page 341.)

3. As it is today: The original head from which the plaster cast seen in No. 3 was made. Signed by exposure to the weather. (Detail from No. 12 on page 342.)

The illustrations on pages 340 and 341 show how these parts of the Parthenon frieze still left on the temple have decayed during the last 128 years. The effects are made clear by the juxtaposition of plaster casts (now in the British Museum) made for Lord Elgin in 1816, and recent photographs of the original bas-reliefs from which the casts were taken. The above illustrations, which reveal the damage in greater detail, are enlarged sections of Nos. 11 and 12 on the double page. No. 1 shows the head of the left-hand figure in the plaster cast seen in No. 11, while No. 2 shows the head of the same figure in the original sculpture seen in No. 12. Similarly, Nos. 3 and 4 above bear the same relation to the central figure in Nos. 11 and 12. It may be recalled that in 1801 Lord Elgin, the British Ambassador in Turkey, obtained permission from the Sultan to remove some of the Parthenon sculptures, and took most of the metopes, the pediments, and the frieze. Their conveyance to England cost about £6,000. In 1816 they were bought by the British Government and are in the British Museum. Lord Elgin that saved most of the precious sculptures from the decay which, as our illustrations show, has since overtaken the remainder.

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Introduction

The marbles were also imperiled within the presumed protective space of the museum at a time when most museums were heated by coal. No less controversial than Balanos’s interventions on-site is the infamous event in conservation history that simultaneously took place at the British Museum. The art dealer Joseph Duveen wanted the Elgin Marbles’ surfaces “restored” to a classicist white when installed in the new Duveen Gallery, leading to a cleansing process in 1937–38 that forever changed their patina. A laboratory for understanding the fragments’ lost totality and original architectural setting, the Parthenon galleries at the British Museum “remained a repository of casts,” until a new “minimalist approach to museum display” demanded their removal.

In fact, the monument that perhaps best captures the issues at play in the cast courts is the Parthenon, an edifice fluctuating on-site as well as in reproduction. Rarely has the evocative power of the architectural fragment been more lucidly encapsulated than by Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, reporting from the Temporary Elgin Room in 1818 (figure 7). In the 1790s, Quatremère had critiqued Napoleon’s despoliation of masterpieces in conquered countries and portrayed the decontextualized artworks in Parisian museums as lifeless and imprisoned. It is surprising, then, that he should be the source of one of the most noteworthy reasons presented for the superiority of experiencing architecture in the museum. The Elgin Marbles were, by any measure, the result of profound disintegration—parts of the structural ornaments had even been cropped to facilitate transport to London. Quatremère, a specialist on Greek antiquity, had never been to Greece. Exposed to this apotheosis of Greek antiquity, he concluded that fragments assembled in a gallery offer a more genuine understanding than the building itself. “In a finished building, each sculptural object, seen in its place, loses some of its grandeur; considered together with everything that accompanies it, it can be examined only from one side and in one respect.” Whereas individual features drowned in the completed structure, the fragment in the museum drew the admiring eye to the painstaking execution of architectural details. By the power of the imagination, the relocated fragment could evoke otherwise ungraspable totalities.

These fragments-as-exhibits, then, provoked a temporal displacement, an imaginary time travel that propelled the observer back to their moment of creation and to the ateliers of the makers of the Parthenon. The resemblance between ruins and construction sites has fascinated architects throughout modernity. The twin nature of the ruin, says Stanislaus von Moos, implies “the past as well as the future, in short its contradictory relation to the course of time.” In the history of architecture, the occurrence of scaffolding marks newness and decline: ruination, restoration, and building. In the history of monuments, scaffolding offers privileged moments of close-up inspection, as captured in Lawrence Alma-Tadema’s painting of Phidias showing Pericles, Socrates, and Alcibiades the fresh Parthenon frieze before the scaffolding was dismantled and the frieze would forever rest in shadow twelve meters above ground (figure 8). Reporting from a provisionary gallery at the construction site of the British Museum in Bloomsbury, Quatremère, among the Parthenon ruins, found himself “on the building site or even in the studio itself; you have your hands on the objects, they appear before you in their real dimensions,
you move around each of them.” Here, the imaginary ancient workshop and the modern museum fuse, presenting to the visitor an ancient, hyper-famous novelty. For the first time since the fifth century BCE, the fragments of the Parthenon were reclaimed for aesthetic appreciation, with the pediment sculptures placed on plinths and the frieze and metopes mounted at eye level.

Quatremère was talking about originals. More important than the distinction between copy and original, however, is the strikingly historicist perspective that emerges through the figure of the *pars pro toto*, a trope that became instrumental for the curating of history in plaster. The museum setting dissociated the fragments from an unachievable totality, revealing instead a work in the making (figure 9). Rather than displaying the remains of a timeless monument, the plaster Parthenon traveled
the world loaded with historical aspirations. Fragments evoked the lost building; their arrangement vivified the history of architecture. The casts created order from disorder by presenting coherent sequences of buildings “inevitably separated in reality,” as the curator of the biggest Belgian collection of architectural reproductions put it in 1902. They served as “milestones” on the itinerary through history, during which the visitor would “unite in the mind” the totalities conjured by the fragments.\textsuperscript{34}

Portable Monuments

“There are cathedrals one would like to place in museums,” exclaimed Napoleon, according to Victor Hugo, when visiting the cathedral at Auch.\textsuperscript{35} Still, architecture, owing to its physicality, site-specificity, and seemingly immovable presence appears inherently resistant to both displacement and display. “There are numerous antique monuments which cannot be dragged into museums—great architectural works whose meaning is so profoundly interwoven with the place where they were erected that removing them will cause serious loss,” stated the founders of the Society for the Preservation of Norwegian Ancient Monuments in 1845.\textsuperscript{36} The difficulties of curating architecture have been persistently rehearsed, not least by the pioneers in the field: “Buildings are made to remain fixed on the spot where they are originally erected, and are of such a scale that they cannot be collected together in any gallery, however large,” according to James Fergusson, who compared the display of capitals, cornices, and architectural details to “a collection of fingers or toes of sculpture, or eyes or ears out of paintings.”\textsuperscript{37} Harald Hals, head of the planning department in Oslo and the curator of numerous architecture exhibitions, echoed this sentiment in his unrealized proposal for a Norwegian architecture museum in 1934: “A building is unsuitable as a museum exhibit. It cannot be moved around and be ‘placed’ like a piece of furniture, a painting, or a sculpture, and it is unreasonably space consuming. If several buildings were to form a collection, it would soon expand beyond every thinkable border.”\textsuperscript{38}

Yet architecture travels, and not only through mediations. Marcel Breuer’s House in the Garden at the Museum of Modern Art in 1949 is described by Barry Bergdoll as “one of the most influential of all exhibitions mounted by the Museum in its more than seventy-five years of exhibiting architecture.”\textsuperscript{39} In the 1960s, Cold War geopolitics and the construction of the Aswan High Dam turned a number of so-called surplus temples into portable exhibits: at the Metropolitan, the Roman era Nubian Temple of Dendur was in 1978 euphemistically labeled “a gift from Egypt” and encased in a mammoth glass vitrine to be admired also from Central Park.\textsuperscript{40} Since 2000, two prototypes of Jean Prouvé’s Maisons Tropicales, lifted from Brazzaville, Congo, and Niamey, Niger, have been circulating through auction houses, museums, and cities on two continents.\textsuperscript{41} Inclined toward the singular rather than the typical, these examples share with the open-air museum’s assemblies of vernacular buildings the desire to stage authenticity despite decontextualization in time, place, and function.
The plaster monuments posed different claims to authenticity. They were conceived within a paradigm that believed in the value of reproductions and assumed that "true copies" would bring masterworks "fully within the reach of all as printing does good books." They were authorized and authored by formatori, skilled artisans who would ideally make the molds from the original as part of the authentication process of the plaster monument. Ghiberti's doors should be purchased from Florence, the Pergamon slabs from Berlin. Otherwise, authenticity was rarely a problem. The subsequent displays of the Pergamon Altar in Berlin, combining marbles and plaster casts, "demonstrated that authenticity could lie in the architectural experiences (however theatrical) newly constructed inside the museum rather than in concrete referents outside of it," as Wallis Miller asserts. At the relocated Crystal Palace at Sydenham, the ten architecture courts inaugurated in 1854 made the earliest and most ambitious attempt to display a progressive history of architecture in plaster monuments, recording "the rise, progress, and fall of mighty kingdoms, whose monuments are reproduced within its walls." Here, concerns about "the inauthenticity of plaster" were addressed only in terms of its "supposedly inauthentic new audience," as Kate Nichols has shown. Also in the case of reproductions of monuments where the manipulation of the subject matter was substantial, authenticity was part of the effect of the displayed objects. For the French casts from Angkor Wat, the "so-called authenticity of these often deceptive reconstructions" was supported by "the faithfulness usually granted to the plaster cast medium," according to Isabelle Flour.

"Buildings could not travel, so people had to," writes Mario Carpo when discussing how the invention of print allowed for "a new availability of trustworthy, portable, and inexpensive printed images of architecture." In many respects, the traveling monuments belong to this tradition. As full-size image-objects they acted as space-time complexes, replacing the grand tour for those who could not trek through Europe and experience the monuments firsthand. "The few who travel much fail to remember that the masses of the people travel but little," Andrew Carnegie mused at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition where casts from the Trocadéro were exhibited. "If they cannot go to the objects which allure people abroad, we shall do the best to bring the rarest of those objects to them at home," he pledged, assuring his fellow Pittsburghers that they could safely pursue their workaday lives while enjoying "some of the pleasures and benefits of travel abroad."

Yet the idea of the cast courts as a surrogate for the grand tour sprang from the very core of elitist grand tour culture. While creating his home museum, John Soane was in 1812 fantasizing about what posterity would make of his plaster heaven at Lincoln's Inn Fields: "It is difficult to determine for what purposes such a strange and mixed assemblage of ancient works or rather copies of [cast from] them, for many are not of stone or marble, have been brought together—some have suggested that it might have been to the advancement of Architectural knowledge by making the young Students in that noble & useful Art who had no means of visiting Greece and Italy some better ideas of ancient Works than would be conveyed thro: the medium of drawings or prints." Similarly, the Architectural Museum in London was established to give "art-workmen
an opportunity of studying reproductions of works, the originals of which neither their time nor means would allow them to visit.”

Metaphors of traveling also pertained to the portable monuments at Sydenham, offering a virtual grand tour into what had hitherto been “unattainable, except by laborious foreign travel,” and an architectural experience in which tourists could effortlessly inspect the most celebrated buildings in the world.

Antiquities as Novelties

During the summer of 1847, while preparing for his return to England, Austen Henry Layard mused melancholically that the “ruins of Nimroud had been again covered up, and its palaces were once more hidden from the eye.” Looking back at years of excavations, he could at least feel some satisfaction: “Scarcely a year before, with the exception of the ruins of Khorsabad, not one Assyrian monument had been known.”

After having been “buried for nearly twenty-five centuries beneath a vast accumulation of earth and rubbish,” the unearthed bits of the temple-palaces became contemporary sensations. In 1852, the Nineveh gallery opened at the British Museum, and two years later the Assyrian court premiered at Sydenham (figure 10).

This plaster assembly turned an archaeological
Figure 11.
Pergamon casts offered from the firm Gebrüder Micheli, Berlin. From LVI. Ausstellung der Königlichen Akademie der Künste zu Berlin, 1883.

Copien der Pergamenischen Bildwerke.
Ausgrabungen 1878—1880.


Die Copien, von der Originalgruppe von A. Tumán in ihrer Beleucht haben Kunstgebrüder in Berlin Museum in Modell form sind, 43 cm. breit und 25 cm. hoch. mit Rahmen 45 cm. breit, 31 cm. hoch. (Mit Oben zum Aufhängen).

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contemporaneity into an imaginary architectural totality: “The court is not a complete restauration of any particular Assyrian building. It has been the endeavor to convey to the spectator as exact an idea as possible of Assyrian architecture,” Nineveh’s excavator explained in the handbook to the Assyrian court. The Crystal Palace popularized archaeology and antiquity, presenting history in the making. Up to two million visitors yearly promenaded through space and time, immersed in environments that oscillated between archaeological accuracy and atmospheric imagination.

The German excavations at Pergamon provide another illustration of the proximity between archaeology and casting. According to Alina Payne, the find sent “the whole archeology and art history world into shock,” by turning “the received aesthetic of the Greek Winckelmannian ideal” upside down. One person affected by this shock was the American critic Charles Callahan Perkins, who in 1881 reported on the first public display at Schinkel’s Altes Museum of the fragments that had arrived in Berlin two years earlier, and that were later constructed and exhibited as the Pergamon Altar. His article was generously illustrated with plans, reconstructions, and details. Yet, realizing that the Pergamon marbles relied on spatial effects inevitably lost in two-dimensional representation, he announced his urgent longing “for the day when we shall see casts from them added to the collections of Art Museums in America.” His wish was soon fulfilled, and the Pergamon casts made their triumphant way even to smaller American towns. In 1899, for instance, the popular panel showing the goddess Athena fighting a giant was in place at the Horace Smith Collection in Springfield, Massachusetts, where it is today accompanied by a rare wall label verifying its origin: “Plaster cast by the Formerei der Kgl. Museen, Berlin, Germany” (figure 11). Both the British excavations in Halicarnassus in the 1860s and the German archaeological mission at Pergamon resulted in the appearance of long-lost, brand-new Hellenistic monuments. Slabs from the Amazonomachy frieze from Halicarnassus and the Gigantomachy frieze from Pergamon could elucidate the transition between Greek and Roman antiquity in galleries across the Western world. Just as the Parthenon and the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus were catapulted out of London and into an international orbit of exhibition, the circulating Pergamon casts originated in Berlin.

A key initiative in this distribution of monuments was the Convention for promoting universally Reproductions of Works of Art for the benefit of Museums of all Countries. During the 1867 Exposition universelle in Paris, Henry Cole, director at the South Kensington Museum, had fifteen European princes confirm “their desire to promote” the production and exchange of national monuments. Practical and procedural, global in scope, brief in phrasing, and aiming at immediate action, this visionary document theorized plaster monuments as an architectural mass medium, as rapidly developing reproductive technologies allowed for the dissemination of architecture on an unprecedented scale (figure 12).

In encouraging the serialization of monuments, the Convention looked to the future as well as to the past. The envisioned flow of reproductions would not only present the progress of art; it would constitute a source for future artistic production. As importantly, the Convention consolidated national pasts by recommending that each country select
CONVENTION
FOR PROMOTING UNIVERSALLY REPRODUCTIONS OF
WORKS OF ART FOR THE BENEFIT OF
MUSEUMS OF ALL COUNTRIES.

Throughout the world every country possesses fine Historical Monuments of Art of its own, which can easily be reproduced by Casts, Electrotype, Photographs, and other processes, without the slightest damage to the originals.

(a) The knowledge of such monuments is necessary to the progress of Art, and the reproductions of them would be of a high value to all Museums for public instruction.

(b) The commencement of a system of reproducing Works of Art has been made by the South Kensington Museum, and Illustrations of it are now exhibited in the British Section of the Paris Exhibition, where may be seen specimens of French, Indian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Swiss, Russian, Hindoo, Celtic, and English art.

(c) The following outline of operations is suggested:

I. Each country to form its own Commission according to its own views for obtaining such reproductions as it may desire for its own Museums.

II. The Commissions of each Country to correspond with one another and send information of what reproductions each causes to be made, so that every Country, if disposed, may take advantage of the labours of other Countries at a moderate cost.

III. Each Country to arrange for making exchanges of objects which it desires.
Figure 12.
Convention for promoting universally Reproductions of Works of Art for the benefit of Museums of all Countries, 1867. Norwegian original copy.

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its most venerable “historical monuments” to be duplicated. This idea of codifying historical monuments with an eye to potential reproductions highlights the reciprocity between canonization and mediation. When nations catalogued their heritage, canonization became both invention and reinvention. Detached from their place of origin, important buildings were made movable representatives of a national past. Recommendations were given for the formation of national commissions to establish procedures for the exchange of desired objects between museums, and members were advised to correspond closely to “take the advantage of the labours of other Countries at a moderate cost.”

A version of such an imaginary museum was demonstrated at the British section in the 1867 Paris Exposition universelle, showing “specimens of French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Swiss, Russian, Hindoo, Celtic, and English Art.” Massively augmented, this collection was in 1873 installed in the two new Architectural Courts at the South Kensington Museum—in 1899 renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum. The courts’ dimensions were determined by the width of the three-arched Portico de la Gloria, cast on-site in the mid-1860s at the cathedral at Santiago de Compostela, and the half-height of Trajan’s Column—cast in its totality from a mold commissioned by Napoleon III and made in Rome in 1864—installed in two pieces to fit under the skylight. In all their variety, the eclectic collection at South Kensington and the display of French monuments at the Trocadéro remained the primary references for most cast courts planned over the next decades.

Cole’s will-to-circulation sparked a proliferation of new plaster monuments. Yet his optimistic belief that casting would not cause damage to the originals was soon disputed. Acknowledging how molding injured the colors and patina of artifacts, many museums banned the making of new casts from their treasures. By the 1890s, the Assyrian casts formerly sold out of the British Museum had become rare and were much in demand. Today the extant plaster monuments cast in nineteenth-century molds have become irreproducible originals in their own right.

Reassessing a Space in Time

Plaster might, as Goethe claimed, lack the magic of marble and appear “chalky and dead.” But Goethe could also appreciate the particular magic of a fresh cast. “What a joy it is to enter a caster’s workshop and watch the exquisite limbs of the statues coming out of the molds one after the other,” he enthused while roaming the workshops of Roman formatori in the 1780s. Over time, connotations of dust and death have outlived dreams of freshness and birth. “Plaster casts. The words carry an apologetic sibilance, and the associations are terrible: cheap reproductions, broken legs,” wrote art critic Calvin Tomkins in a 1986 piece entitled “Gods and Heroes,” portraying the Laocoön as tennis player John McEnroe’s classical alter ego. The parallel between the desperately struggling Trojan priest and the notoriously ill-tempered athlete had a local and clearly metonymical purpose. In 1986 the US Open took place in Queens, New York, not far from the Queens Museum where the Laocoön and other casts from the Metropolitan’s storerooms were reintroduced.
Monuments in Flux

25

into public space. While the show The Heroic Spirit: Classical Sculpture from Ancient Greece to Michelangelo marked an early reappraisal of the remnants of nineteenth-century cast culture, Tomkins’s article also afforded an interesting glimpse behind the scenes, revealing the Metropolitan’s storage spaces that pitilessly reflected the sudden undesirability of these former objects of desire. More recently, French casts made from temples in Indochina from the 1860s onward were found “covered in poisonous mushrooms and dissolving back into powder,” and were painstakingly restored before being exhibited in Paris in 2013.

Slowly recirculating, and even traded, these discarded objects draw us back to a time when casts merited scholarship, money, and pride. In 1822, a set of the Parthenon casts made in Athens in 1802 was offered to “the lovers of Antique, Architects, and Others” at Christie’s in London. The auction announcement spurred debate among a civic-spirited London elite of “patrons and professors of architecture,” and it was suggested that the British Museum should acquire them and make them “a nucleus for one of the most splendid architectural museums of which the world can boast.” In 2006, panels from Ghiberti’s doors and reliefs from the Pergamon Altar were among the works offered at Sotheby’s in New York (figure 13). Appearing at Christie’s in London in 2012, they were identified by provenance as well as authorship. Credited “Historic plaster cast from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,” lot 136, “Twelve sections from the Parthenon frieze after the antique attributed to D. Brucchi past years Co., probably late 19th early 20th century,” fetched £67,250. Domenico Brucchi—who’s business was renamed D. Brucchi & Co. after he passed away in 1880—was the master plaster caster for both the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum, selling casts from a gallery in Covent Garden and from constantly updated sales catalogues. In 2014, other Brucchi Parthenon casts changed hands at the “Forever Chic” auction at Christie’s in New York, yet another event symptomatic of the current reevaluation of nineteenth-century casts.

“As the trend away from theory’s abstraction has moved the tectonic plates of research more and more towards materiality, so has its manifestation in ‘things’ attracted greater interest,” states Alina Payne. Yet the theoretical backdrop that enables the current reassessment of objects, buildings, and spaces is also a more particular one. The destabilization of the original/copy dichotomy has meandered from the realm of texts to a wide territory of objects. In lieu of ideas of permanence, origins, and authenticity, we are witnessing a new sensitivity concerning how objects behave, change, move, work, and fluctuate in time and space. The plaster monuments hint at a substitutional paradigm, resembling early modern practices explored by Christopher S. Wood, when “copying was the normal way to make new things,” and when the meaning of an artifact was found and preserved “across a chain of mutually substitutable artifacts,” rather than by the authority of historical origins and first versions.

Reproductions are not only part of the works from which they are derived, but artifacts that in their own right warrant inclusion in the history of art and architecture. “No copies, no originals,” write Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe when proposing how a work’s aura might migrate from a corrupted original to contemporary high-end facsimiles. “To stamp a piece with the mark of originality requires the huge pressure that only
a great number of reproductions can provide." This book aims at showing how the architectural casts belonged to value systems that were obscured when the casts were deemed obsolete, and how they kept historical structures alive for new audiences, while defining their original monuments as, precisely, originals.

From the extant cast collections, and in the traces of the lost ones, emerges a “history of things,” George Kubler’s 1960s coinage. Kubler was interested in reuniting “ideas and objects under the rubric of visual form.” Products of scientific aspiration, historical imagination, and aesthetic appreciation, the architectural casts reflected empirical preconditions and theoretical speculation. This history of things included “both artifacts and works of art, both replicas and unique examples, both tools and expressions,” and, as Kubler beautifully put it, “From all these things a shape in time emerges.” The monuments and documents surviving from nineteenth-century cast culture testify to the intellectual culture that formed their transient habitats, appearing as a Kublerian shape in time of their own, as conflations of ideas and objects expressed in visual form.

The replicated monuments appearing in this account are of a far more concrete kind than the ones that Kubler saw flowing through a global history in formal sequences. The time span in question—a few decades at the turn of the twentieth century—is but a brief moment compared to Kubler’s vast durations, and while he found that “the notion of style has no more mesh than wrapping paper and storage boxes,” style formed a solid subject matter in nineteenth-century cast culture. Still, the complex handing down of “things of great generative powers, in the category of the Parthenon, or of the portal statues at Reims,” informed the desires and dreams of the architectural cast industry before it faded into obscurity. In retrospect, the exploration of history through plaster monuments emerges exactly as a cultural “self-image reflected in things”—a portrait given to posterity.

*Plaster Monuments* anatomizes various monuments, documents, collections, and episodes in the history of architectural casts, objects produced and distributed within a historicist worldview preoccupied with totalities, invention, and perfection. Its main aim is to illuminate the ways the plaster monuments worked, or were meant to work. It draws on archives in London, New York, Pittsburgh, New Haven, Oslo, and Bergen; on extant or reinstalled collections in London, Paris, Pittsburgh, Rome, Copenhagen, Basel, New Haven, and Norwich, Connecticut, as well as casts in storage at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels, and the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo.

The first chapter anchors the itinerant monument within the context of the architecture museum, spanning a range of curatorial ideals from the atmospheric and picturesque to the scientific. It begins with the Temple of Castor and Pollux, a monument quintessential to European grand tour culture, serving various purposes in its travels across media, scale, and temporalities—from ruined fragments to reimagined perfection. But if monuments traveled, visionary plaster curators also did. The itinerary of the grand tour into the “province of reproductions” that the archaeologist Edward Robinson embarked on in the summer of 1891 provides a unique overview of European cast culture, its main institutions and protagonists.
Commissioned to make the collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art number one in the world, he aimed at compiling an assortment of monuments that would draw European scholars “to New York as they now go to Rome, Athens, or the other great centers of the study of art.”

Marcel Proust did not share his contemporaries’ increasing distaste for plaster. Taking *In Search of Lost Time* as a point of departure, chapter 2 shows that the monument’s irreducible particular does not reside in its material authenticity. Rehearsing the supposition that architecture is best appreciated in the museum, Proust’s portrayal of the relation of a deteriorating original outside curatorial control and a perfect reproduction mirrors the early historical, scientific, and aesthetic objectives of the Musée de sculpture comparée. Further, Proust’s thinking on reproduction challenges the notions of aura developed by his German translator Walter Benjamin, inspired by the theories of origins and patina that were realized in displays at the Trocadéro.

Chapter 3 considers the ordering of history that the plaster monuments promised. To be sure, the efforts to create a continuous historical space were constantly undermined by the sheer size and immovability of the objects when they were installed in the galleries—frustrating curators and confusing the audience. The only place where order could be attained was in the catalogue, which in many cases became the collection’s ideal paper version. This chapter explores a world where galleries were edited and catalogues curated in an attempt to fix in place the monuments that soon proved just as unruly as architecture outside the museum. Still, if the shaping of perfect chronological trajectories proved utopian, their plaster counterparts enhanced the monuments in situ. The Norwegian stave churches provide one example of architectural structures that were designated as monuments—serialized on paper and in plaster—at the very moment that their originals were being destroyed.

Even before the museum had opened, a critic warned that the hasty assembly of architectural casts at the Carnegie Museum might result in “the most conventional of ready-made collections.” In hindsight, it is precisely this ready-made quality that makes the Hall of Architecture so captivating, reflecting the decreasing supply of casts at the time of its making, when molds were worn out, staples were out of stock, and new legislation prevented the making of additional molds. Chapter 4 takes the Carnegie collection as a prism to refract the mundane factors involved in the making of a collection of plaster monuments, including the effort to ship these enormous fragments across half the world.

The final chapter analyzes the cast collection established at the Yale School of Fine Arts in the 1860s. The Yale collection offers an extraordinary case study of how historicism rubs against modernism, and of the rupture of Beaux-Arts and Bauhaus teaching. The surprise here is not so much that it was Bauhaus instructor Josef Albers who destroyed Yale’s collection. Rather, what is startling is that Paul Rudolph, who came across the survivors of Albers’s exorcism while designing the Art and Architecture Building in the early 1960s, mounted these objets trouvés throughout the school, repurposing them as projective instruments—pointing to the future. Promoting the unfulfilled potentials of the Beaux-Arts, Rudolph deprived the casts of their chronological and pedagogical intentions, awakening polychronic effects in a brutalist structure while
echoing picturesque displays and prechronological interests in the plaster monuments.

Finally, the coda elaborates on the dismantling of the cast collections and discusses their present-day, budding reevaluation—not only as rare objects but as entanglements of theory, materiality, and history. As such, it suggests continuities between nineteenth-century cast culture and contemporary reproductions in new media that give voice to artifacts of the past, for the future.

The contemporary observer’s response to a plaster monument differs from, say, that of Proust’s Marcel at the turn of the twentieth century. When looking at different editions of casts, we see neither a perfect reproduction salvaged from the destructive work of time, nor a replica documenting a monument at a particular moment, but irreproducible historical objects, impregnated with age value. The remnants of nineteenth-century cast culture interrogate concepts of originality, authenticity, and authorship, forcing a reconsideration of received ideas of monuments and permanence. The idea of the precious original, the tenacious cult of authenticity, the obsession with indigenous materiality, the modernist ideology of honesty, and essentialist conceptions of site-specificity are all challenged by the historical patina of the traveling monument. The material banality of the plaster monument presents to us the enormous effort involved in their production as well as their profound historicity.