Project Group A4

Heroes and Heroizations in Public City Spaces. Italy and France from the Late Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period

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Project group A4 investigated the preconditions, forms, and concepts of statues of heroes and heroized individuals in public urban spaces in Italy and France in the Late Middle Ages and early modern period. The goal was to carry out a diachronic and comparative analysis (1300–1800) of a corpus as complete as possible of heroic statues of biblical, mythological and historical figures, including finished, planned (but not executed) and destroyed monuments. Furthermore, attention was given to the social, cultural and historico-political context in which the statues were erected, as well as to the performative acts carried out with regard to such monuments.

Our investigation shows that in the Late Middle Ages the papacy under Boniface VIII spearheaded the political use of images, pursuing a concrete program of erecting statues meant to communicate and demonstrate concepts of rule. The creative possibilities for heroization, however, were still quite narrow, and were limited mostly to the use of precious materials and specific regalia to denote visual sanctification (Hubert 2016).

The comparison of Italy and France, two politically and territorially disparate countries, revealed a clear difference in the visual portrayal of heroization. The way statues were set up – at least in the early phase of heroic monuments – depended fundamentally on the political structure of the community in which they were created. Thus, the erection of statues in Italy was quite varied. It was occasionally analogous to the portrayal of the heroic in French statuary, but in general it differed markedly.

In order to describe precisely how the heroic was expressed in statues, other visual media were also considered. The focus, however, was not limited to images created in a secular context, such as the well-known fresco cycles of *uomini illustri*. A rather broad examination of Italian funerary sculpture in particular was undertaken, since funerary monuments had developed their own style and iconography as part of their purpose to secure the memory of the deceased. This examination revealed an especially wide variety of triumphal motifs that were used above all in later, especially Baroque, statues of heroes and heroized individuals. Another characteristic of funerary art is the visual representation of the deceased's virtue, a feature that is also found in heroizing statues of the Early and High Renaissance. A prominent feature of public statues, however, whose chronological development was also studied by the project group, is that the heroic portrayal of historical figures only became possible gradually over time. The restrictive and hardly definable guidelines of *decorum* that governed the design of public statues in that time demanded that the visual representation of virtue and its embodiment in a single person be effected in the form of a biblical or mythological "representative". Thus, before it was even possible to portray historical figures as recognizable individuals in public statues, they were heroized in what can be called an indirect way (Hubert 2016). Therefore the portrayal of the heroic in public statues in the 15th century was at its core *disguised*, and the object of heroization remained hidden (Hubert 2013; Helm 2015a). In general, statues relied on the virtuous mythological or biblical heroes they portrayed as reference objects, whose positively connoted heroic qualities were then transferred to another person (on the theoretical underpinnings of this phenomenon, see von den Hoff et al. 2015).

Our research revealed, especially with regard to republican Florence, how controversial it could be to appropriate a collective virtuous hero who had initially been confined to the realm of communal political imagery. Claims to such reference figures entailed a great deal of competition. That such figures were all men is evident not only from the fact that the gender hierarchy was plainly mirrored in the great number of portrayals of male individuals. Furthermore, the fact that throughout the entire period studied only one free-standing statue of a woman was erected in public – and only temporarily and as a dislocated monument – speaks for itself. With regard to this unique case, the sources showed that, at least in republican Florence, women were not considered worthy of acting as heroically connoted stabilizers of normative order in public spaces. Since neither Italy nor France had any other publicly displayed sculptures of (heroized) women, this finding seems to be generalizable. This does not mean, however, that no heroines or heroized women were enshrined at all. This did indeed happen, but in less pronounced and less public visual media.

Another central finding of our research regards the spatio-semantic context of public statues. Individual analyses revealed that iconography and name analogies were not the only way to communicate specific messages. Rather, the site on which a statue was erected was also an important means to adding a level of semantic meaning. Erecting a statue on a freely accessible public square meant embedding it in an architectural context, and this usually entailed a deliberate attempt to enhance the message being conveyed in the statue (Helm 2015a; Helm et al. 2015b).

In addition to the practice of disguised heroization that especially marked the early phase of public statuary, in the sixteenth century northern and central Italian republics chiefly deployed a strategy of *imitative heroization*. This entailed portraying a historical figure as a different, timeless – that is, Biblical or mythological – representative of virtue, who was then endowed with some of the historical figure's physical features (Helm 2015a). Admittedly, in France the king was also portrayed with the attributes of Hercules, but this happened much later and under very different circumstances. For in France the heroic statue was reserved almost from the beginning for portraying the head of state, and such images were meant as an overt way of publicizing a political message from the French king. The way Louis XIV in particular outdid his predecessors in heroizing portrayals is unique. Yet the heroization of individuals in public statues in the Italian duchies in the seventeenth century also evinces a kind of one-upmanship, one that is chiefly expressed in portrayals of apotheosis and in the triumphal motifs mentioned above from the religious context. It is therefore clear that the portrayal of the heroic in public statuary lent itself to the expression of a political identity and to the assertion of geo-political interests, and that it tended to be reserved to singular individuals, especially princes and kings. Nevertheless, it is important not to underestimate the significance of the individual levels of meaning that were identified in our analysis of the formal conception of statuary. For the sum of meanings contained in a heroizing statue can only be recognized once they have all been grasped. Thus, our investigation engaged not only in formal but also in iconographical analysis (Hubert 2016). Research into statues that were planned but never executed turned out to be very difficult, since completed objects received much more attention and were thus written about more than unfinished ones. As a result, the initial plan to catalogue the full corpus of completed and planned statues in public spaces in Italy and France could not be carried out.

Regular and direct exchange with the art history project *Heroes of Art* (B3) proved to be especially fruitful. Together we discussed concepts of the heroic as well as problems, exceptional cases and specialist questions within the field of art history. Especially important and helpful, however, were stimuli from other disciplines. Specific lines of questioning were investigated in various workshops. In this context, Naïma Ghermani (Grenoble) gave a talk on

the heroizing performance of wearing armour, which was very important for a historically contextualized understanding of armoured statues. Ms. Ghermani also gave a guest lecture entitled "Der Fürst als Held: Rüstkammer und Porträts in Rüstung in Deutschland (um 1560 – um 1630)", which justified the ruler's self-image as an armoured individual fit and ready for combat and explained its importance for dynastic politics. The workshop "Sammlungen im Spannungsfeld von Gelehrsamkeit, Meraviglia und heroischer Repräsentation", organized with project group B3, also helped us reconsider a ruler's collecting activity as a kind of heroic self-portrayal. In addition, such questions were pursued in a broader, interdisciplinary context in the workshop "Krieg, Kunst, Wissen", organized with the project groups *The Scholar as Hero* (B2), *Heroes of Art* (B3) and *Competing Models of Heroism* (C2). This collaboration proved quite useful for the further development of the dissertation.

Participation in VAG 5 "Theorie" provided the opportunity to elaborate theoretical principles of the heroic more broadly and to integrate them into the analysis of the dissertation. Discussions with the project groups *Bonapartism* (B5), *The 'Éclat' of the Hero* (A5) and *Heroism as Noble Culture* (C1) in VAG 3 "Deheroisierung" allowed such questions to be developed transdisciplinarily. Heroization and deheroization were understood as indissolubly linked, complementary phenomena. A collaborative article on this topic, illustrated by case studies, was published in SFB 948's e-journal (Helm / Hubert [et al.] 2015b). Collaboration with the GRAFO work group, which dealt explicitly with the heroic in the seventeenth century, was also helpful in developing our work, especially in the initial phases.

To pursue the question of how studying forms of heroic appropriation could methodologically enrich the SFB, the project groups A3, A4, B1 and B3 organized the conference "Imitatio heroica", whose proceedings have been published (von den Hoff / Hubert [et al.] 2015).

In addition to collaboration within the SFB, the project groups A4 and B3 organized a two-semester lecture series entitled "Heroes of Art?". The lectures dealt with the application of heroic models to early modern and modern artists, as well as with the question of how heroization affects the art world and the status of the artist.

The positive resonance this promising topic enjoyed among the scholars invited to participate in the lecture series spurred us on to publish their papers. To prepare this publication, the participating project groups organized a workshop during which the contributions were fleshed out and brought into line both with one another and with the overarching questions of the edited volume. To expand the publication's chronological horizon, contributions were solicited from additional authors. The edited volume was issued by a publisher specialized in art history (Helm / Hubert [et al.] 2015c).

Publications produced by project group A4

Helm, K. 2015a: "In honore et exaltatione di Soa Excelentia" – Das Standbild des Andrea Doria in der Gestalt Neptuns von Baccio Bandinelli, in: R. von den Hoff / F. Heinzer / H. W. Hubert / A. Schreurs-Morét (eds.), *Imitatio heroica*. Heldenangleichung im Bildnis (Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen 1), Würzburg, pp. 137–154.

Helm, K. / Hubert, H. W. / Gelz, A. [et al.] 2015b: Phänomene der Deheroisierung in Vormoderne und Moderne, in: helden. heroes. héros. E-Journal zu Kulturen des Heroischen 3.1: Faszinosum Antiheld, pp. 135–149, DOI: 10.6094/helden.heroes.heros/2015/01/13.

Helm, K. / Hubert, H. W. / Posselt-Kuhli, C. / Schreurs-Morét, A. 2015c: Künstlerhelden? Heroisierung und mediale Inszenierung von Malern, Bildhauern und Architekten, Merzhausen.

Hubert, H. W. 2016: Sanktifizierung als Heroisierung? Die Statuen Papst Bonifaz' VIII. zwischen Bildnispolitik und Idolatrie, in: A. Aurnhammer / U. Bröckling (eds.), Vom Weihegefäß zur Drohne. Kulturen des Heroischen und ihre Objekte (Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen 4), Würzburg, pp. 59–84.

Hubert, H. W. 2015: Michelangelo – Vom Ausnahmekünstler zum 'Denkmal', in: K. Helm [et al.] (eds.), Künstlerhelden? Heroisierung und mediale Inszenierung von Malern, Bildhauern und Architekten, Merzhausen, pp. 132–178.

Hubert, H. W. 2013: Gestaltungen des Heroischen in den Florentiner David-Plastiken, in: A. Aurnhammer / M. Pfister (eds.), Heroen und Heroisierungen in der Renaissance (Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung 28), Wiesbaden, pp. 181–218.

von den Hoff, R. / Hubert, H. W. / A. Schreurs-Morét [et al.] 2015: "Imitatio heroica" – Zur Reichweite eines kulturellen Phänomens, in: R. von den Hoff / F. Heinzer / H. W. Hubert / A. Schreurs-Morét (eds.), Imitatio heroica. Heldenangleichung im Bildnis (Helden – Heroisierungen – Heroismen 1), Würzburg, pp. 9–34.