

ICONOGRAPHIC CHOICES AROUND THE FORUM AT *LUCUS FERONIAE*

The phenomenon of copies in the Roman world is the basis to reconstruct the past and often allows us to know who is portrayed in its iconic function too (beyond its socio-cultural dimension), besides documenting the knowledge and skills already acquired in the sculptural production. These factors are useful when the portrait heads are damaged or lost: In fact, the body on which a portrait was mounted, and its role, contribute to the overall message of a monument too.

So, starting from specific iconographies of Roman sculpture, the paper will present an interesting case study on data provided by the four headless female statues from the Temple of *Genius Coloniae*, built in 12 BC by the *gens Volusia* on the so-called “Sacred Terrace”, on the northern side of the *forum* at *Lucus Feroniae*, near Rome. These larger free-standing statues are of high quality and show a similarity in production and style of carving distinctive enough to suggest that they all come from a single marble workshop (maybe located in the capital city) and date to the age of Caligula.

Therefore, they record well-known iconographic statue types that are purely Roman in their conception and meanings, because they are creative imitations rather than real copies, although the derivation from Greek originals is undeniable: the “Eumachia-Fundilia”-type (suitable for a *matrona*, already dead), the “Orans-Gestus”-type (with a strong solemnity), the “Kore”-type and the “Small Herculaneum woman”-type (both more appropriate to young ladies). It is clear how much the choice of dress-iconography depended on a local context and ideology. It is no coincidence that women were often extolled for their devotion, family loyalty and public role, for that the way in which they were portrayed may often have been a reflection of their affinity to a specific virtue, with whom the original statue type may have been associated: and the iconographies used in the four statues make a visual discourse that speaks, amongst other things, about the values of family unity, modesty and dignity. For this reason, iconography played an important role in the selection of sculptural types and Roman copies are therefore of considerable documentary value. In the end, taking into account all available factors (place of sculptures discovery, stylistic observations, chronology, comparisons of the copies, *Volusii Saturnini*'s local patronage), this research will show that these female statues seem to represent

some ladies of the Julio-Claudian imperial family (specifically the family of the Emperor Caligula), all of them perfectly in line with the iconographic programme expected by the establishment. In this way, it will show how efficiently the Roman copies can contribute to the reconstruction of the past, despite gaps and uncertainties in our understanding of it.

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