

Torben Melander: Bronzes of Antiquity, Something of the Most Superb

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In 1827, when Thorvaldsen was considering making a “Victoria” in bronze for a museum for his works and collections, he was not uninfluenced by the bronze sculptures of antiquity. “He had often been convinced that mastery had created them,” as Thiele relates in his biography of Thorvaldsen.

But when had Thorvaldsen been convinced that they were created by mastery, and what antique bronzes did he have in mind? The restoration of antique bronze statues (*Mars from Todi* and the *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius* were restored by Thorvaldsen) may have been one of the sources of his insight. Another may have been private moments with his collection of bronzes at home in his apartment in the Via Sistina. Thorvaldsen himself never left any mention of such moments, which increases the value of the unfortunately highly laconic statements which others have left concerning the collection, how it grew and was kept – or not kept.

A few examples of superb bronzes in Thorvaldsen’s collection are followed up by some views on Classicism’s principles for exhibiting bronze statuettes.