

(iii) Patrician Carrying Busts – 2019

Photograph I on paper X shows a famous Roman sculpture.

(a) In what ways is this sculpture typical of a Roman portrait sculpture?

The sculpture depicted in photograph I is that of a Roman patrician carrying two ancestral busts in what could possibly be a funeral procession. This is a full-length statue. Dating from the 1st century AD or BC, the making of such statues helped to develop the Roman art of portraiture. The first way in which the sculpture is typically Roman is in its detail. Distinctness or originality is a Roman feature. The detail and realism of the faces as well as the details in their typically Roman togas [the folds and creases] make it a typically Roman portrait sculpture. Each face looks individual and distinctive. They have not all been given a generic face, which tended to be common among Greek statues and portraiture but look as though they could be related.

In addition to this, the *veritas* present in this statue cannot be denied. The men are clearly not “airbrushed” or “idealized”. The wrinkles on all three heads, as well as the receding hairlines and contours in their ears are all apparent. These men have not been altered to appear as perfect men. Flattery was never the intention of Roman art, realism was, and these men's imperfect appearance makes them look more like real people. The Romans believed in documenting the truth rather than creating a flattering image, which makes this sculpture so typically Roman.

The solemn appearances of the man in the toga are also worth noting as typically Roman. The Roman's notions of *gravitas* are evident in this statue. Once again, focusing on the realistic and the specific, the men are solemn and serious rather than just having a generic expression. They look as though they are in a funeral procession rather than some other event. The furrows on the forehead and the prominent bone structure conveys that there is wisdom and experience in their faces, once again hinting at Roman values.

Finally, the Romans we're interested in the realistic and specific. This statue was made to depict and preserve the real-life appearance of this patrician during a funeral procession and was not intended to overcompensate his appearance. Romans we're far more interested in personality

rather than type which is why they focused on the emotional details of the face rather than a flattering physical appearance. Unlike the Greeks, they didn't tend to use flattery or strive for perfection as it would just distract from the subject of the sculpture as well as the character of the person involved.

(b) What does this sculpture tell us about Roman family customs?

The man in the toga appears to be carrying the heads of his ancestors in what is believed to be a funeral procession. This was a Roman custom. It is believed that the busts of the family ancestors were displayed in the family's atrium and were carried to demonstrate that all members of the family were present. Storing death masks became Roman tradition.

It shows that the Romans were devoted to their ancestors as they would display portraits of them and carry their portraits at important occasions. The Romans worshipped the 'genius' and an important petition would often look to his powerful ancestors to give him strength in his hour of need. This is probably why realism was so important to them; they were preserving their family's legacy.