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THE ATTITUDE OF MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO TO GREEK ART*

This great orator, philosopher, scholar and at the same time a statesman, is one of the best-known figures in the period of the Late Republic owing to the fortunate preservation of his rich and diverse works until the present time. That is why ancient historians refer to his testimony in many of their studies. When investigating the problems connected with the Late Republican art, it is essential that we focus attention on the views and attitude of this eminent representative of *nobilitas* towards Greek art.

In his speeches, and oratorical and philosophical works Cicero reveals two somewhat different attitudes towards art. When he tries to be more of an advocate and moralist in the spirit of Roman traditionalism and practicalism, he shows detachment from the matters of art. For example, he finds it right to worship the statues built in memory of the citizens who served the Republic well¹ but he adds that the works of painters and sculptors are not essential for the fame of eminent people². In another work he says that equally unreasonable are those who delight too much in statutes, paintings, decorative silver articles, Corinthian vases, and sumptuous houses³, even if they wish to emphasize their dignity and position in the State in this way. At this point he points to L. Mummius, *who scorned all of Corinth*⁴. This statement requires an extensive comment: Mummius spurned the magnificent works of art from Corinth, having kept nothing for himself but bringing these spoils to Rome to adorn the temples and squares in the capital. He did so not because he was coarse and uncouth as Velleius Paterculus (I 13,4) claimed but because that was the prevailing custom at that time

* A Polish version of the article was published as *Marek Tulliusz Cynceron a sztuka grecka*, [in] *Terra, mare, et homines: volumen in memoriam Thaddei Łoposzko*, ed. H. Kowalski, W. Śladkowski, Lublin 1994 („*Annales UMCS*”, s. F, 49, 6, 1994), 97–114.

¹ Cic., *Phil.* IX 2,4.

² Cic., *fam.* V 12,7.

³ Cic., *Par. St.* V 2,36.

⁴ *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

i.e. in the 2nd century BC. All Roman commanders did so, even open-minded and educated P. Cornelius Scipio the African. Mummius' attitude was regarded by Cicero as positive. Regrettably, in the 1st century BC such conduct was only a nostalgic memory.

Cicero sees the difference between the Greeks and the Romans: the Greeks feed on words and art, the Romans, conversely, on institutions and laws⁵. Regarding fine arts as an inferior form of human activity, he admits, however, that *the measure of the value of art has to be objective for it is regarded more highly than ordinary craftsmanship production*⁶.

An extreme view is to assume the stance of a stoic sage: one should not be the slave of one's own passions. In practice, however, dignity and solemnity, which he shows when propagating his theories, give way to spontaneous admiration and keen interest in arts and even in the whole of Greek culture. Cicero, despite his profound patriotism and attachment to old republican ideals, had the dispassionate and inquiring attitude of the mind, open to all achievements of Hellenic science and culture. Sometimes he appears to regret that the Romans, with all their great political and military achievements, reveal gaps in their knowledge of culture, which was perhaps less interesting in public activities but important for the development of civilization.

He accentuates his admiration for art from a typically Roman standpoint: through art we can reflect fame, which rouses souls and gives us incentives in the process of creation⁷.

This dual attitude concerning art is seen particularly clearly in Book IV of *In Verrem – De Signis*. When describing the rich collections of art in Sicily, he observes at one point that *it is impossible to imagine what pleasure the Greek take in these things that we disdain (...) in the oddities that we find trivial and they – precious*⁸.

Cicero emphasizes clearly that he supports the views of the overwhelming majority of the Romans about these matters. When he was questor in Sicily, however, he meticulously examined with pleasure and admiration the old sanctuaries full of magnificent works of art, and he got to know the large and famous cities in this island that were adorned with numerous statues. He knows the two oldest temples of Ceres (Cerere) in Sicily: in Henna and in Catana, the age and appearance of their statues of Ceres, Proserpine, and Triptolemus (Triptolemos)⁹. He describes Sicily, showing knowledge of the city, naming all the most beautiful

⁵ Cic., *De rep.* II 4,7.

⁶ Cic., *Brut.* 73,257.

⁷ Cic., *TD I* 2,3.

⁸ Cic., *Ver.* II 4,132.

⁹ *Ibidem*, II 4,99; 104.

temples and indicating the most beautiful works of art that adorn the city. These are the temple of Diana and Minerva near the palace of Hieron, the temple of Jupiter Imperator, the temple of Fortune in the part of the city called Tyche, and two others in Neapolis¹⁰.

The works of art that Cicero names include a large and beautiful statue of Apollo Temenidos, the gallery of portrait paintings in the temple of Minerva (Hera), the statue of Sappho by Silanion in the prytaneum, the statue of Jupiter in his temple, and even a *splendid head made of Paros marble*, which he often looked at in the temple of Proserpine (Persephone).

During his walking tours of Sicily he employed guides *who would lead foreigners to show them works of art, explaining each individual one*¹¹. When describing the huge statue of Diana of Segeste, he recalls *when I was questor, this statue was the first to be shown to me*¹². By getting to know art, Cicero learned the past of Sicily, the beliefs of its inhabitants, the Greek civilization of the island, which flourished there long and abundantly, of which there were many pieces of evidence also in private houses. Amazed, he writes: *It is incredible how many objects and so beautiful we can see in the residences of rich Sicilians*, and then *When Sicily was rich and important, I believed that many works of art were created there (...) and although many of them were taken away by adverse Fortune, those remained that wanted to preserve religious feeling*¹³.

His interest in Sicily's past even turned Cicero into an archeologist for a while because he was looking for the tomb of Archimedes, long forgotten by the Syracuseans. What helped him identify the tomb was the epigram, known from tradition, with the image of a sphere and cylinder beneath the text¹⁴.

While he criticizes Verres' passion for works of art, Cicero reveals his interest in art in many places although he ostentatiously tries to emphasize that he is a layman in this field. When describing the private sanctuary of Heius of Messana, whose house, full of works of art, was the real pride of the city, he pretends that he does not remember the names of the creators of the statues standing there. Yet later he expertly assesses one of them – the statue of Eros sculpted by Praxiteles, pointing out its resemblance to the famous original in Boeotia, *mainly for which everybody visits Thespieae*. He also provides more facts: this Eros was spared by L. Mummius, who took from Thespieae only the statues of the Thespiades, now standing in front of the Felicitas' temple in Rome¹⁵.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, II 4, 122–130.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, II 4,131.

¹² *Ibidem*, II 4,74.

¹³ *Ibidem*, II 4,46.

¹⁴ Cic., *TD* V 23,64.

¹⁵ Cic., *Ver.* II 4,5.

Cicero does the same when he wants to stress the artistic position of the statue of Jupiter Imperator taken by Verres from Syracuse. He compares it with the Jupiter placed on the Capitoline Hill, emphasizing that these were two of the then three well-known statues of that deity, having a similar shape and workmanship¹⁶.

Cicero often attended the auctions of art works in Rome and knew the prices of the works made by the best Greek masters. Infuriated by the fact that Verres bought from Heius of Messana the statues sculpted by Praxiteles, Myron, and Polykleitos (Polycletus) at a very low price of 6500 sestertii, he exclaims: *I am glad that the famous names of those masters, which the connoisseurs and lovers praise to the skies, went down in price owing to the assessment by Verres!*¹⁷, and he goes on: *which of us does not know how these works are priced? Didn't we see a small bronze statue at 120,000 sestertii at a public auction?*¹⁸

In Agrigentum Cicero admired the bronze statue of Hercules (...) *I could say I have never seen anything more beautiful*, but he stresses: *although it's not so much that I know these things as I have seen them*¹⁹. In Thermae he looked at many statues from Himera captured by the Carthaginians, among which he names three, regarded as works of art. He writes about the last one: (...) *and even we who do not know much about such things, were able to find out about the merits of this work*²⁰.

In Syracuse he was impressed by the ornate door to the temple of Minerva (Hera), but when he was to describe it in front of the judges, he made an introduction: *I am afraid that those who did not see it might think that I am exaggerating and magnifying their beauty*, and he stated *I can assure you that a more splendid door elaborately set with gold and ivory could not be found anywhere in any temple*. To weaken this impression, he refers to the opinion of the Greeks, *it is incredible how many Greeks wrote about the beauty of this door, perhaps admiring and extolling its beauty too much*²¹.

Cicero writes about the statue of Sappho sculpted by Silanion, put in the prytaneum in Syracuse, with such enthusiasm that he seems to share the grief *that this Sappho taken away by Verres left behind*, as, on account of its beauty, it was worthy of being placed in the most important art galleries in Rome²².

As a lawyer constrained by the circumstances of the trial and as a statesman, for whom, as tradition demanded, it was not appropriate to be interested in art, Cicero bases his main argumentation in Book IV of *In Verrem* on a characteristic

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, II 4,130.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, II 4,12.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, II 4,14.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, II 4,94.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, II 4,87.

²¹ *Ibidem*, II 4,125.

²² *Ibidem*, II 4,127.

principle – the religious and sacral mission of art: *these objects, so beautiful, are not made for human greed but to adorn temples and towns in the way that they would present themselves to us and our descendants as the monuments to faith and religious worship*²³. That is why Cicero repeatedly emphasizes the violation of sanctity (*sanctitas*) and the insulting of religion (*religio*), which Verres perpetrated when he robbed works of art from Greek temples on the islands of Delos, Samos, Malta, in Asia Minor, and in Sicily²⁴. He can understand the feelings of the inhabitants who lost those works of art, *we can thus understand from their complaints that they find this most painful*; however, he thinks it appropriate to add, *which we might regard as trivial*²⁵.

When grading the seriousness of the points of the indictment after describing how Verres forcibly took away the statue of Mercury from the Tyndarians, Cicero rates godlessness only as the fourth charge. The first three charges against Verres are: 1) depriving the allies of money because it was a very expensive statue; 2) depletion of public funds because the statue was appropriated from Roman spoils (the ones of Scipio the African), and 3) the crime of high treason because it was the memorial to the famous war exploits of [our] State²⁶. In order to strengthen the impression of sacrilege committed by Verres, Cicero often contrasts his actions with the conduct of such famous commanders as Publius Scipio, Titus Flaminus, Lucius Paulus, and Lucius Mummius, who adorned with gifts and statues the whole of Rome, all temples of deities, all parts of Italy, having left nothing in their houses or gardens²⁷. When Flaminus took the huge statue of Zeus Imperator from Macedonia it was only to put it in the Capitoline Hill²⁸. The captor of Syracuse, Marcus Marcellus, *saw and left there* the statue of Jupiter standing in his temple *for the inhabitants will worship and the visitors will look at and admire it*²⁹. This commander *left intact and full of ornaments* the temple of Minerva in Syracuse, and he did likewise towards other temples in that town, which were later desecrated by Verres³⁰. Mummius took from Thespieae only the images of the Thespiades and other not consecrated statues from this town, but because the statue of Eros was consecrated, he left it where it was³¹.

²³ *Ibidem*, II 4,98.

²⁴ Delos (Cic., *Ver.* II 1,47); Tenedos (Cic., *Ver.* II 1,49); Perge (Cic., *Ver.* II 1,53); Segesta (Cic., *Ver.* II 4,78); Agrigentum (Cic., *Ver.* II 4,48); Engyon (Cic., *Ver.* II 4,97); Catana (Cic., *Ver.* II 4,104); Henna (Cic., *Ver.* II 4,110–112).

²⁵ Cic., *Ver.* II 4,132.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, II 4,88.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, II 1,55.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, II 4,129.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, II 4,130.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, II 4,122.

³¹ *Ibidem*, II 4,5.

When listing the spoils gathered by Verres, Cicero describes the temples and towns not only in Sicily but also in Greece and in Asia Minor. He knows these places from the time he traveled extensively (in 79–77 BC). The main purpose of the journeys of then 27-year-old Cicero were philosophical and oratory studies. Having had Greek teachers and being pervaded with Greek culture since his childhood³², Cicero must have had many personal encounters with the architectural and art monuments connected with the famous past of those lands³³.

He was able to easily name the most famous and most valuable works of Greek art: the marble Venus of Regio, Europe on the bull from Tarentum (Tarent), the sculpture of Satyr from the Vesta temple in this town, Eros of Thespieae, or Venus of Knidos. The pictures included Venus on the island of Kos, Alexander the Great of Ephesus, those of Ajax and Medea of Cyzicus (Kizikos), Ialysos of Rhodes, and there was also the marble Bacchus of Athens and a bronze cow, which stood in front of the Acropolis in Athens³⁴.

Satisfied with these works, Cicero suggests that he knows much more, *it would take long and unnecessary time to name what is worth seeing in each town in all Asia and Greece*³⁵.

Cicero does not give the names of artists, probably believing that they were well-known through the fame of their works. Indeed, when comparing Cicero's opinions with other sources, and taking into account the opinions of today's scholars, we can admit that his choices were right. The image of Aphrodite of Asklepeion on Kos, painted by Apelles, was the most admired picture in ancient times as it is mentioned by numerous Greek and Latin authors³⁶. Cicero himself mentions this picture five times³⁷, but he probably never saw it, otherwise he would have surely left its description. The portrait of Alexander the Great by Apelles was kept in the pinacotheca of the temple of Diana of Ephesus. It showed the ruler with a thunderbolt in his hand and reputedly made an amazing impression³⁸.

³² K. Kumaniecki, *Cyceron i jego współcześni*, Warszawa 1959, 84.

³³ G. Becatti, *Arte e gusto negli scrittori latini*, Firenze 1951, 74.

³⁴ Cic., *Ver.* II 4,135.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

³⁶ Apelles' picture stayed on Kos for 300 years until Emperor Augustus bought it from its inhabitants for the huge sum of 100 talents (2,400,000 sestertii; Strabo XIV 2,19). Pliny writes (*NH* XXXV 91), that in the days of Nero the lower part of the picture was damaged, and with the work being so famous, no one could be found who would be willing to repair it. Nero replaced the original with a copy painted by Dorotes. The further history of the picture remains unknown. For sources, see A. Reinach, *Textes grecs et latins relatifs à l'histoire de la peinture ancienne*, Recueil Milliet, Paris 1921, I, 314–360.

³⁷ Cic., *Div.* I 13,23; *Att.* II 21,5; *ND* I 27,75; *Orator* 2,5; *Ver.* II 4,135.

³⁸ Alexander the Great was recognized in 332 BC by the oracle of Zeus Ammon in Libya as the son of the said god, which started the process of his deification (Plut., *Alex.* 4). That is why he

Ialysos was reputedly the most famous picture by Protogenes, whose talent was discovered and admired by Apelles³⁹. Cicero mentions him two times⁴⁰. Although he visited Ephesus and Rhodes, we do not know if he saw the two works of art. The pictures of Ajax and of Medea of Cyzicus are sometimes ascribed, after Pliny, to the painter Timomachos of Byzantium⁴¹. As for the sculptures, two statues by Praxiteles were extremely famous in the ancient times: the nude Venus of Knidos and Eros of Thespieae⁴². Bacchus of Athens, mentioned by Cicero, may be identified with the sculpture by Praxiteles, described by Pausanias, and now known in over 20 copies⁴³. In antiquity, a widely admired art work was the bronze cow made by Myron. Some scholars believe it is shown on the denarius of Emperor Augustus, who had it put in front of the temple of Palatine Apollo⁴⁴. The author of the group in bronze: Europe on a bull of Tarentum was, according to Marcus Terentius Varro (*De lingua latina*), Pythagoras of Samos⁴⁵. Endeavors have been made to reconstruct the original, basing on the group in the British Museum and the statue from the Metropolitan Museum in New York⁴⁶. Other sources do not mention the Satyr statue of Tarentum and Venus of Regio. They might have been the works of Pythagoras as the artist worked mainly in Sicily and is regarded as one of the most original Greek sculptors⁴⁷.

Apart from the painters Apelles and Protogenes, and the sculptors Myron, Pythagoras and Praxiteles, Cicero mentions 22 names of other Greek artists in his

had a thunderbolt in his hand in the picture (Pliny, *NH* XXXVI 92); on the artistic qualities of the picture see R. Bianchi-Bandinelli, *Storicita dell arte classica*, Firenze 1950, 201.

³⁹ Ialysos was a Rhodian hero, a grandson of Helios (Diodor Sic., *Bib.* V 35); Protogenes is mentioned by Pliny (*NH* XXXV 101–102).

⁴⁰ Cic., *Orator* 5; *Att.* 21,4.

⁴¹ Pliny, *NH* XXXV 136.

⁴² A full list of numerous copies of Venus of Knidos by Praxiteles is given by A. Furtwangler, *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture*, trans. E. Sellar, London 1895, 322; the youthful Eros by Praxiteles, regarded by the sculptor himself as the most important work of his life, (Paus. I 20,102) was placed in Thespieae donated there by Phryne to the temple of the Muses. Soon it became one of the most famous sculptures admired and extolled in many literary works. It remained in Thespieae until the reign of Augustus or Caligula. Both sculptures – Venus and Eros – are mentioned by Pliny (*NH* XXXVI 20–22).

⁴³ The interpretation difficulties with the unclear text of Pausanias are discussed by E. Pizzo, *Prassitele*, Roma 1932, 22sqq.

⁴⁴ Paus. VIII 379; Procop., *BG* IV 21; *Anthologia graeca* I 165,42; E. Gabrici, *Studi e materiali di archeologia e numismatica*, Firenze 1902, II, 168, fig.20.

⁴⁵ Pythagoras of Samos lived in the first half of the 5th c. BC. He was also mentioned by Paus. VI 18,1; Pliny, *NH* XXXIV 59; Diog. Laër. VIII 46. The latter two distinguish between Pythagoras of Samos and Pythagoras of Regio. This was one artist born in Samos, who later worked in Regio.

⁴⁶ A. H. Smith, *Catalogue of Greek Sculpture in the British Museum*, 1892–1904, III, pl. 1; *Metropolitan Museum Handbook*, New York 1930, 142 fig.100.

⁴⁷ A. H. Griffiths, *Temple Treasures. A Study Based on the Works of Cicero and Fasti of Ovid*, Philadelphia 1943, 41; G. M. Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks*, Oxford 1950, 203.

works. They are painters – Echion, Nikomachos of Thebes, Polygnotus (Polygnotos), Timantes, Aetion, Zeuxis, Parrhasius (Parrhasios), Aglaophon, and Sopolis, and sculptors – Myrmecides, Silanion, Lysippos, Phidias, Alkamenes, Polykleitos (Polykletus), Kanachos (Canachus), Chares, Kalamis, Scopas, Pasiteles, Mentor, and Boethos⁴⁸.

Cicero knows the Greek representatives of fine arts not only by name, he can characterize and compare their achievements in arts⁴⁹. He especially admired the chryselephantine works by Phidias: Olympic Zeus and Athena Parthenos⁵⁰.

In painting he clearly notices the differences between two styles: the old one with subdued colors and with the predominance of shape, and the new one with a greater amount of light, showing superior painting achievements. He personally prefers the former style because the new painting, *despite the fact that it carries us away at first glance, cannot delight us for a long time, while the austerity and unobtrusiveness of old paintings constantly attract us*⁵¹. H. Jucker rightly supposes that such observations can be made by a person who frequently looks at pictures and is aware of his/her feelings⁵². The great orator was aware that in Greek civilization art occupied a special position, that is why he focused his interests also on art theory, apart from philosophy, theory of literature and elocution⁵³.

Cicero discussed among others the problems related to the art of creating a work and to the art (ability) of appreciating it. Cicero writes in *De Oratore* (III 7,26) that there is only one art of creation, both in sculpture and in painting. Myron, Polykleitos, Lysippos as well as Zeuxis, Aglaophon, and Apelles excelled in it. They were all excellent in their skill despite being different in talent and person-

⁴⁸ Apelles (Cic., *Att.* I 9,15; II 21,4; *Brut.* 73); Protogenes (Cic., *Att.* II 21,4), Myron (*Ad Her.* IV 6,9; *Brut.* 19,75), Pythagoras and Praxiteles (*Ad Her.* IV 6,9; *Div.* II 28,48), Echion (*Brut.* 18,70), Nikomachos (*Att.* II 21; *Brut.* 18,70), Polygnotus (*Brut.* 17,70), Timantes (*Brut.* 18,70), Aetion (*Par. St.* IV 23,37; *Att.* II 21,4), Zeuxis (*De fin. bon. mal.* II 34,115; *Brut.* 18,70; *De inv.* II 1,1), Parrhasius (*TD I* 2,4) Aglaophon (*De Orat.* III 7,26), Sopolis (*Att.* IV 18,4), Myrmecides (*Acad. pr.* II 38,120), Silanion (*Verr.* II 4,126; *Brut.* 296; *De Orat.* III 26; *Acad.* II 26,85; *Ad Herr.* IV 6,9), Phidias (*Orator* 8; *TD I* 15,34; *De Orat.* II 73; *Acad.* II 146; *De fin. bon. mal.* II 115; *Brut.* 257), Alkamenes (*ND I* 30,83), Polykleitos (*De Orat.* III 26; *Brut.* 18,70; *De fin. bon. mal.* II 34,115; *TD I* 2,4; *Ad Herr.* IV 6,9; *Par. St.* V 2,37), Kanachos (*Brut.* 18,79), Scopas (*Div.* II 21,48), Chares (*Ad Her.* IV 6,9), Kalamis (*Brut.* 18,70), Pasiteles (*D iv.* I 36,79), Mentor and Boethos (*Verr.* II 4,19; 3,32).

⁴⁹ Cic., *Brut.* 18,70.

⁵⁰ Cicero mentions Olympic Zeus in *Orator* 2,5; 2,9, and Athena in *Brut.* 257, *TD I* 15,34.

⁵¹ Cic., *Orator* 36; *De Orat.* 3,98.

⁵² H. Jucker, *Vom Verhältnis der Römer zur bildenden Kunst der Griechen*, Frankfurt am Main 1950, 146.

⁵³ For more on art theory in Cicero see E. Bertrand, *Cicéron amateur et critique d'art*, [in] Idem, *Études sur la peinture et critique d'art dans l'antiquité*, Paris 1893; G. Showerman, *Cicero's Appreciation of Greek Art*, TAPhA, 1903; P. Cayrel, *Auteur du «De signis»*, MEFRA, 36, 1993, 120–155; Jucker, *op. cit.*, 127–147; M. Swoboda, *Cyceron o poezji i sztuce*, „Meander”, 17, 1962, 80–83.

alities. It is precisely this that testifies to their individual greatness. The view on the unity of art with its different products and forms resembles, as M. Swoboda rightly observes, the stoic theory of unity and exclusivity of the material world, which, being composed of matter and motion, assumes diverse forms⁵⁴.

Several conditions have to be satisfied in the creative process so that a person could be regarded as an artist. First, the artist needs to have the ability to observe nature and its beauty⁵⁵. In his view on beauty, Cicero is clearly influenced by Plato's teachings on ideas, because he distinguishes both real beauty, inherent in nature and perceived by the senses, and ideal, non-sensory beauty, the idea of which is in the mind of every artist⁵⁶. This beauty, like in Plato, is immortal and innate. It guided for example Phidias when he created the statue of Zeus or Athena, because nature could not provide him with the desired model. Today we would say that Phidias had a definite artistic vision.

However, the artist is distinguished by having the idea of beauty alone since every person has it. Everybody is able to distinguish between beauty and ugliness or perfection and imperfection, both in fine arts and in poetry and music. Moreover, the artist must be able to observe real beauty inherent in nature. A universal beauty in nature is contained in the human form and this is the form that gods have in people's imagination. The beauty of the human form is expressed in the harmonious build of the body, its *specific grace* and in *attractive colour*⁵⁷. While creating an inanimate work of art the artist can, although he does not have to, use the help of living models. In nature, however, there is no being that accumulates ideal beauty, each has only a part of it⁵⁸. It is necessary therefore to use many models as did Zeuxis, for example. When painting the picture of Helen for the inhabitants of Krotona, the artist had five girls chosen, who were to pose for the image of the goddess⁵⁹.

A real work of art will not be produced by sheer imitation of nature. It is supposed not so much to mirror it as bring us closer to the truth hidden in nature. It should render its inner essence. This is done by bringing into a state of catharsis the artistic idealization of the world with many variable impressions. Catharsis, resulting in a synthesis of nature, lightens the complicated and dark reality. This is performed through intellect and inspiration⁶⁰.

Another condition that makes an artist is to have knowledge in the pursued field of art. Cicero states, *without knowledge there is no art*, whether practical

⁵⁴ Swoboda, *op. cit.*, 79.

⁵⁵ Cic., *De Orat.* III 50,197.

⁵⁶ Cic., *Orator* 8.

⁵⁷ Cic., *De Orat.*, 3,50,195; *ND* I 27,77; *Off.* I 28,98; *TD* IV 13,30–31.

⁵⁸ Cic., *Inv.* II 1.

⁵⁹ This anecdote is also quoted by other ancient authors, e.g. Pliny (*NH* XXXIV 63), who locates this event in Agrigentum. Cicero mentions it in *Inv.* II 1,1.

⁶⁰ Cic., *De Orat.* III 5,7.

or theoretical knowledge. Improving in one's art also means developing one's senses, *how many things that we cannot see are perceived by painters in shady or brightly lit places*. True art arises only from universal cognition⁶¹, which Aristotle already claimed⁶². Even such masters as Zeuxis, Phidias or Polykleitos drew upon philosophical knowledge, not contenting themselves with their talents⁶³.

The goal of each artist is to attain perfection in art but only few are successful. Some are hampered by the lack of talent, others lack wide knowledge in their chosen field of art. Such artists should know their limits and work within their capacities, *for it is an honour, when vying for the first place, to win second or third places*. In all the kinds of art the fame of one artist does not eclipse that of the others⁶⁴.

Finally, Cicero believes that in their work, artists need wide recognition, *recognition is conducive to art, while fame arouses everyone's enthusiasm for learning, whereas that which no one values lies fallow*. That is precisely what the Romans lacked, *wouldn't there appear many Polykleitoses or Parrhasiuses with us, had it been considered an asset for Flavius, a man of a highly eminent family, to be able to paint?*⁶⁵

The Romans did not seek fame in art, yet, *although Alexander was painted by Apelles, and cast in bronze by Lysippus, it was not because he was particularly kind to artists but because their art brought fame both to the artists and to the commander*⁶⁶. Artists covet this fame in their lifetime but also after death: *Why would Phidias have carved his picture on Minerva's shield, had he been allowed to engrave his name on it?*⁶⁷

When talking about the reception of a work of art Cicero says that this requires appropriate preparation and abilities, theoretical knowledge but also a practical knowledge of works of art. Reproaching Verres for his false connoisseurship, Cicero loses his temper, *You, without any knowledge of fine arts, without talent and refinement, without learning, want to be expert in it and judge?*⁶⁸ In his *Stoic Paradoxes* he writes that in order to see, experienced eyes are needed. This was one of the stoic views, also espoused by Epictetus⁶⁹. Artists have such practiced eyes, therefore they see more. Cicero repeats the same idea in another work, *(...) without highly developed refinement in art, which few attain (...) we cannot perceive or learn anything*⁷⁰.

⁶¹ Cic., *Acad.* II 47,146; II 7,20.

⁶² Arist., *Metaph.*, 1981.

⁶³ Cic., *Acad. pr.* II 47,146.

⁶⁴ Cic., *De Orat.* I 26,118; *Orator* 2,4.

⁶⁵ Cic., *TD* I 2,4.

⁶⁶ Cic., *fam.* V 12,7.

⁶⁷ Cic., *TD* I 15, 34.

⁶⁸ Cic., *Ver.* II 4,44.

⁶⁹ Cic., *Par. st.*, V 2,38; Epict., *Diat.* II 24,8.

⁷⁰ Cic., *Acad.* II 7,20; II 27,86.

When evaluating works of art we should apply an objective criterion, without considering their utility. For some arts satisfy living needs, while others – cultural ones. The artistic level of works of art is as different as is the talent of their authors. If we admire masterpieces, we can also appreciate the works of lesser importance⁷¹.

Cicero was also interested in art works in Greece and Asia Minor, he saw many of them in Sicily, and he also knew those that adorned Rome. He attended not only public auctions. He admired the Greek statues displayed in the Forum and Comitium, those collected in the Metellus Portico and in many temples in Rome⁷². He mentions the statues of Castor and Pollux that stood in front of the temple of Dioscuri in the Forum Romanum, and the statue of Jupiter Imperator in the Capitoline Hill⁷³. His works also mention the gilded statues from the temple of Juturna in the Campus Martius, the statues of Vesta near her temple and the statues of deities from the temple of Honos and Virtus⁷⁴.

Cicero also admired architecture. In 54 BC he writes enthusiastically to Atticus about the rebuilding of the Basilica Emilia and Basilica Julia in the Forum Romanum, about the draft of the new Caesar Forum and the Saepta Julia in the Campus Martius. He praises the expenses incurred to buy land for the forum, having also paid from his own pocket a considerable sum of 60,000 sestertii⁷⁵. G. Becatti even believes that Cicero had many opportunities to meet in Rome Arkesilas and Pasiteles, whom he mentions in *De divinatione*⁷⁶.

Cicero can also be included in the circle of collectors⁷⁷. Like every Roman aristocrat he had houses in town and several estates in the country⁷⁸, and he tried to decorate them according to his taste and financial capacity.

He especially liked to rest and work in his Tusculan estate, probably purchased after Sulla at the end of 68 BC⁷⁹. He soon started to extend the villa, furnish and decorate it appropriately. He also tried to enlarge the estate's area by buying new,

⁷¹ Cic., *Brut.* 257; *leg.* I 26; *Orator* 2,5.

⁷² On this see: Griffiths, *op. cit.*, 120.

⁷³ Cic., *Pro Scauro*, 24,46; *Ver.* II 4,4; *ND* 2,31,79; *Ver.* II 3,129.

⁷⁴ Cic., *Pro Cluentio*, 36, 101; *De Orat.*, III 3,10; *ND* III 32,80; II 23,61; 31,79.

⁷⁵ Cic., *Att.* IV 16,14.

⁷⁶ Cic., *div.* 1,36,79; Becatti, *op. cit.*, 73.

⁷⁷ On Cicero's collecting activities see S. Valenti, *Cicerone collezionista*, „Atene e Roma”, 1936, 4, 3sqq.

⁷⁸ About Cicero's estates see O. E. Schmidt, *Ciceros Villen*, „Neue Jahrbuch für Deutsche Klassische Altertums”, 1889, 3, 328; V. A. Magee, *Cicero's villas and their relations to his life*, „Proceedings of the American Philological Association”, 1932, 65; P. C. Fartner, *Cicero's town and country houses*, „Classical Weekly”, 1934, 27; G. McGracken, *Cicero's Tusculan villa*, *CJ*, 1935, 30; J. Wikarjak, *Warsztat pisarski Cyserona*, Ossolineum 1976, 32–96.

⁷⁹ On this date the Tusculanum first appears in Cicero's correspondence to Atticus (I 5,7).

adjacent estates⁸⁰. Because it was to be a villa meant for rest and work, for philosophical debates and meditations, Cicero wanted to arrange its spaces in a practical and beautiful way. He combines these qualities in especially carefully furnished parts of the villa, called in Greek gymnasium, palaestra, xystos, academy, and lyceum with the library⁸¹. These are Greek terms but their Roman construction did not fully correspond with the Greek names. Transferred to private Roman estates, the Hellenistic models had to be transformed because of different functions they now had to perform. Only those of architectural solutions were adopted that were practically and esthetically compatible with resting, strolls, and intellectual work, e.g. the peristyle with the garden⁸² or gymnasium⁸³, which became a garden with porticos⁸⁴, the xystos⁸⁵, sometimes with the library⁸⁶.

Cicero had such gymnasia-gardens in Tusculanum. They were situated on two terraces lying on different levels⁸⁷: academy on the upper level, with the lyceum and library below⁸⁸. Their appearance and names were to remind him of Greece and his beloved Athens.

Cicero wanted to decorate Tusculanum with works of art as soon as possible. In order to do that, he asks his friend Atticus, who is staying in Greece, to help him

⁸⁰ Wikarjak (*op. cit.*, 45–56) believes that Cicero had three estates in Tusculanum: the first purchased in 68 BC, the second purchased shortly before his exile, and the third purchased possibly after Kuleon.

⁸¹ Cic., *Att.*, I 5; 8,2; 10,3;11,3; *Acad.* 1,17; *Div.* 1,58; *TD* 2,9.

⁸² The problem of the peristyle in Roman houses and villas is discussed by P. Grimal, *Les jardins romains*, Paris 1969, 203–244.

⁸³ The construction of the Greek gymnasium is described by Vitruvius (V 11). Both in one part of it – palaestra, and in the other – the gymnasium proper, the most important were square or rectangular peristyles. In the palaestra, there should be single porticos on three sides, whereas on the fourth side, i.e. on the south, there should be a double portico. In the three single porticos, ample exedras had to be designed with seats, where philosophers and rhetoricians, and all those who love learning, could discuss things at will while sitting (Vitruv. V 11,1–2).

⁸⁴ Grimal distinguishes the following elements in Roman gardens: 1 gymnasia sometimes with the library and xystos, 2 stadia and hippodromes, 3 hidden alleys, 4 thermae, 5 diaetae.

⁸⁵ Xystos – the Greek term denoted a portico in the gymnasium. In Rome it had a somewhat different meaning: it was used to denote „paths and places for rest, paved in the signitia-like way”, i.e. bricks laid by herringbone pattern, between grove trees.

⁸⁶ The Romans established private libraries already in the 2nd c. BC. The most important ones come from the times of Cicero, known from written sources and excavations in Herculaneum and Pompeii. The term library applied not only to a collection of books but also the place meant for scholarly study. Sometimes it was a room, sometimes a building, whose construction was particularly looked after (Vitruv. VI 4,1). Apart from private libraries, first public ones were set up in the 1st c. BC; in 39 BC the library of Asinius Pollion, and in 28 BC two others, established by Emperor Augustus in the temple of Apollo Palatinus and in the complex Opera Octaviae.

⁸⁷ Grimal, *op. cit.*, 248

⁸⁸ Cicero had book collections in Rome, Antium, Arpinum, Pompeianum, Cumanum, and Astura (Wikarjak, *op. cit.*, 104–105).

choose something suitable at his (Atticus') own discretion⁸⁹. Atticus acts swiftly, because already a month later in December 68 BC, Cicero writes to his friend, *I wish to have as soon as possible that which you bought for me and packed*⁹⁰.

In mid-February he pays Atticus' representative L. Cincius 20,400 sesterii for *Megarean statues*⁹¹. He is also glad of Atticus' other purchases in Greece, which he knows only from descriptions: hermae in Pentelicon marble with bronze heads⁹² and statues with twin heads of Hermes and Heracles, called hermaclae. He intends all these statues to be used as adornments of the porticos in both gymnasias, and he cannot wait for them to be brought in. Cicero is impatient, he keeps urging Atticus to send them at his earliest convenience. He does not need to hide anything before his friend. He writes straightaway about his taste for works of art, his passion as a collector who will not skimp money and does not even care about what others think of him: *my craving for possessing these things is so great that even though other people should reprove me for this, you must help me to satisfy it, and then, whatever you will have of this kind, that which you will find worthy of my academy, do not hesitate to send and trust my purse. I have a fondness for this*⁹³. He makes also more specific orders, asking for two bas-reliefs to decorate ceilings and for two carved well-covers⁹⁴. Finally, the statues arrive at Caieta near Formiae, where Cicero had a country house. Unfortunately, Cicero is busy in Rome (he is after all running for the praetor's office), so he could not examine them, he only sends money to pay for transport and, content, he thanks Atticus: *You are a darling to have sent them to me so quickly and to have bought them so cheap*⁹⁵.

He soon learns about the next purchase by his friend, the statue of Hermathena. Praising his choice, he writes, *it will be the proper pride of my academy, because Mercurius statues are put everywhere while Athena goes particularly well with the room devoted for study, that is why I wish you to decorate the place with many more art works, as you write me, and finally, almost sorrowfully, he informs him, I have not yet seen the statues, which you sent me some time ago and which are in my house near Formiae*⁹⁶. When they were at last placed in the Tusculanum, Cicero especially admired the Hermathena, *Your Athena makes me very happy, it is so well placed that the whole gymnasium seems to have been built for it*⁹⁷.

⁸⁹ Cic., *Att.* I 6,2.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 1,7.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, I 7; 8,2.

⁹² *Ibidem*, I 8,2; I 10.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, I 8,2; 9,2.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, I 10.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, I 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, I 4.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, I 5.

Among the hermae in the garden (*in the meadow grown with grass*) there was an effigy of Plato⁹⁸. It may have been a copy of Silanion's work, placed in the Athenian Academy ca. 360 BC, now being identified by M. Bieber with the original herma from the Altes Museum in Berlin⁹⁹. Apart from it, there are 17 known copies of Plato's portrait, the best of which being the replica of the philosopher's head from the Boehinger Collection in Geneva¹⁰⁰.

In 61–60 BC Cicero also completes the villa in Tusculanum, at the same time making extensions to the family country house in Arpinum and a new villa in Pompeii, which cost considerable sums of money¹⁰¹. In June 60 BC Cicero informs Atticus, *I like my Tusculan and Pompeian houses very much, only I, who saved so many creditors, ran into debt up to my ears on account of building them*¹⁰². In 58 BC, when Cicero was in exile, these estates, like others, were destroyed. The decorations and furniture from Tusculanum were seized by consul Gabinius. Nor were the gardens spared¹⁰³.

After Cicero returned to Rome, the senate, by a resolution of 1 October 57 BC, awarded him among others half a million sestertii in damages for the destroyed estate in Tusculanum. Although this sum did not cover the losses, Cicero decided to rebuild or even enlarge the villa in order to make it even more splendid¹⁰⁴.

This time, in buying works of art, the middleman was Cicero's and Atticus' friend, M. Fadius Gallus. Although Cicero never doubted his good taste, he was not always satisfied with the choice. He did not want the statues of Bacchantes bought for him although Gallus emphasized their beauty, almost matching the statues of the Muses, which were in Metellus' possession. Cicero, who knew the Bacchantes and most certainly Metellus' Muses, is indignant at this comparison, explaining to Gallus that he would after all prefer the Muses, because these *would eventually come in handy for my library and would be suitable for my scholarly occupations. But where is the room for the Bacchantes?*¹⁰⁵

Similarly, he responds with irony to the purchase of a Mars statue, *what does a peace lover have to do with the god of war? Mercury would be better, he might help me more in my business*, then he stresses, *I am in the habit of buying such statues that I need to adorn my palaestra, following the example of Greek gymnasia*¹⁰⁶.

⁹⁸ Cic., *Brut.* 6,24.

⁹⁹ Paus. VI 4,5; Diog. Laert. III 25; M. Bieber, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age*, New York 1961, 42.

¹⁰⁰ Bieber, *op. cit.*, fig.116–119.

¹⁰¹ Cic., *Att.* I 16; II 1,11.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, II 1,11.

¹⁰³ Cic., *De domo sua*, 24,62.

¹⁰⁴ Cic., *Att.* IV 24; *Q. fr.* II 6,3.

¹⁰⁵ Cic., *fam.* VII 23,2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, II 3,2.

Cicero criticizes not only the themes of the statues but also their too high prices, *Not knowing what I thought, you bought these four or five at a higher price than I value all statues all over the world.* A trapezophoron cost so much that Cicero says, *for this sum I would prefer to buy an inn in Tarracina.* He must therefore have paid for this sculpture, which supported the table top, ca 30,000 to 50,000 sestertii, as these were the then prices paid for *deversoria*¹⁰⁷. Eventually, Cicero accepts all statues from Gallus.

A covered portico with exedras was also built in Tusculanum in imitation of Greek gymnasia. Cicero had the recesses with seats adorned with paintings because, as he confesses to Gallus, *I do not like anything of this kind more than paintings*¹⁰⁸.

Cicero tried to decorate also his other estates with works of art, *when I have plenty of these things (i.e. statues) in Tusculanum, it is only then that I will adorn my house in Caieta with them*¹⁰⁹. We do not know, however, if further events allowed him to carry out his intentions.

Cicero's house on the Palatine, bought in December 62 BC from Crassus, must have also been amply furnished with works of art¹¹⁰. We do not know anything of the décor of the house, but its sumptuousness can be confirmed by the high price of 3.5 million sestertii, having paid which sum, Cicero fell into huge debt¹¹¹. One of the items that came from his house was probably the statuette of Athena, which Cicero put as a votive offering in the temple of Jupiter in the Capitoline Hill before he was exiled¹¹². Plutarch (*Cicero* 31) reports that *Cicero had it in his house for a long time and worshipped it with exceptional attention.* Overturned and destroyed by a storm in 43 BC, the statuette was put already in the same year after a restoration in the same place by the decree of the Senate¹¹³. A. H. Griffiths believes that although the description of its appearance is not extant, we can assume that it represented a very popular type of Athena Parthenos sculpted by Phidias¹¹⁴.

The period of Cicero's life and activities coincided with the time of turmoil and the fall of the Republic. On the other hand, these are the times of the growing interest in Greek culture and art among the Roman *nobilitas*. The flowing riches and the spoils of war change not only the face of Rome and other towns in Italy. With the growth of wealth, luxury and beauty enter the lives of the Romans. There appears the fashion of adorning one's estates with Greek, preferably original,

¹⁰⁷ Cic., *Att.* X 5,3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, VII 23,3; we find the description of a similar portico in Vitruvius (V 11,2.)

¹⁰⁹ Cic., *Att.* I 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, I 13,6; W. Allen, *The location of Cicero's house on the Palatin Hill*, CJ, 35, 1939–1940, 134–143.

¹¹¹ Cic., *fam.* V 6,2.

¹¹² Plut., *Cic.* 31; Cass. Dio XXXVIII 17,5; Cic., *leg.* II 17,42; *fam.* XII 25,1.

¹¹³ Cic., *fam.* XII 25,1.

¹¹⁴ Griffiths, *op. cit.*, 8; the closest to the original of Athena Parthenos is the reduced copy, so-called Minerva of Varvakion.

works of art. These, however, are more and more difficult to obtain in the 2nd c. BC. The art resources of Greek towns run out, the conquests in the East come to an end, and the growing demand for works of art exorbitantly raises their prices. Consequently, the practice of plundering intensifies, as exemplified by Verres' conduct, typical rather than exceptional. Thanks to Cicero, we also know so exactly how Roman officials committed misappropriations.

Not only statues and pictures but also all artistically valuable objects made of gold, silver, and ivory were collected. Not everyone, however, knew enough about Greek art. Cicero points out Verres' ignorance in this respect, and a century later Pliny the Elder writes, *it appears that the majority of alleged connoisseurs only pretend to be art experts but in fact they do not understand it any better at all*. Those who did not feel competent enough to make the right choice, relied on the judgment of more sophisticated friends or Greek artists in their service. Cicero himself uses the help of Atticus and Fadius Gallus, while Verres „used the eyes” of Cilician artists: Tlepolemos and Hieron, and Lucullus most probably was assisted by the sculptor Arkesilaos (Arkesilaos).

A residence richly furnished with statues and other works of art emphasized the wealth and social position of the owner and added glamour and foreign splendor to the villas. Even the most conservative Romans were influenced by this fashion despite the fact they protested against such luxury and extravagance.

The Greek works of art that flowed to Rome represented different artistic levels and different styles. Not all Romans shared Cicero's taste, who preferred the classic works of the 5th and 4th c. BC. For example, Verres also highly valued archaic sculptures, which was rather a commendable exception among collectors, while Asinius Pollion was interested in the Hellenistic style.

Cicero was critical towards those who closed beautiful and valuable objects from the public in their estates. This attitude was also shared by Asinius Pollion and Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. Cicero also condemned the immoderate admiration for and pursuit of all works of Greek art¹¹⁵, himself not being free from these passions, however. He was influenced by the fashion of adorning villas with works of art but he did it to a limited extent, in accordance with his financial capability and scholarly interests. His collection looks rather modest. When adorning his gymnasia after the Greek fashion, he selected art works by subjects. They were not Hellenic originals, rather contemporaneous copies produced in Greece and generally inexpensive. Being reasonable in this respect, Cicero preferred to look at the masterpieces made by famous masters in the public galleries in Rome, and in the houses and villas of his friends, as well as in Greek temples and cities whenever he had an opportunity to travel.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem, loc. cit.*