

THE LITERARY GENRE  
OF ART HISTORIOGRAPHY  
IN THE EUROPEAN ANTIQUITY

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**Abstract:** This essay examines the relevant literary works of the five art historiographers of the European antiquity – Vitruvius (1st c. BC), Pliny the Elder (1st c. AD), Philostratus the Elder, Philostratus the Younger (2nd and 3rd c. AD) and Callistratus (3rd or 4th c. AD). Their diverse writings on architecture (Vitruvius), painting (Philostratus the Elder and Philostratus the Younger), sculpture (Callistratus) and all mediums of art practices (Pliny the Elder) are examined here as one large corpus of texts on the visual arts. Through an examination of the common terms, definitions, descriptions and individual statements of these authors a literary genre of art historiography of the European antiquity can be established.

The five writers whose relevant texts define them as art historiographers of the European antiquity are Vitruvius (1st c. BC), Pliny the Elder (1st c. AD), Philostratus the Elder, Philostratus the Younger (2nd and 3rd c. AD) and Callistratus (3rd or 4th c. AD). They are the only writers whose substantial texts dedicated to the visual arts have been preserved to this day. Vitruvius and Pliny the Elder wrote in Latin, and the two Philostrati and Callistratus in Greek. Vitruvius in his *De Architectura* wrote on architecture, Pliny the Elder in his substantial text consisting of excerpts from his encyclopedic *Naturalis Historia* (which we shall label the *Text X*) wrote on all forms of fine arts and applied arts practices, and the two Philostrati in the two *Eikones* on painting and Callistratus in his *Descriptiones* wrote on sculpture. Collectively, their writings addressed all aspects of fine arts in the long period spanning almost one thousand years of Greek and Roman art practice. Each of these writers in their own manner (including their specific language and style idiosyncrasies) indicated the origins of the traditions of art practices since Homeric times while some of them established a sequential line of artists and of their works. Some of the key terms common to their diverse writings are those of mimesis (and illusion), artistic creation and creative act; they also wrote on perception and reception of artworks and provided some key postulates of artwork analysis – in the process establishing a historical line connecting these very texts and enabling a perspective of examining these diverse texts as part of a particular literary category. The writers themselves pointed

to the existence of such a literary genre, mentioning some of the other, little-known or unknown authors in the field of art historiography of antiquity. These writers should therefore be seen as part of a long and important tradition of art historiography, art theory and art analysis that was defined only much later in the writings of authors such as Alberti and Vasari. Parallel to this, the individual texts by these art historiographers of antiquity directly inspired some of the works by artists such as Titian, Manet, Larionov, Picasso, De Chirico or Milena Pavlović Barilli.

The starting point of our examination is the question of definition of the construct of literature of European antiquity. Pre-Christian and early Christian Greek and Roman literature is generally understood holistically, as a large body of preserved (much of it in fragments) and lost texts written in Greek and Latin. They include the genres of poetry, drama and novel, as well as philosophy and rhetoric, history, jurisprudence, medical, mathematical and other science and technology writings. Within this body of texts the writings of the five art historiographers of antiquity have usually been examined separately and as per their respective allocated genres: Vitruvius' writings as a technical text, Pliny's as an important encyclopedic text (Harris-McCoy 2008), and Philostratus the Elder, Philostratus the Younger and Callistratus' as rhetoric texts (Clark 1957, Anderson 1993, Shaffer 1998, Webb 2009, Newby 2009, Bowie, Elsner 2009). The scholarly analysis of the texts by the latter three authors has largely been focused on the construct of ekphrasis as a purely literary category.

Nevertheless, and attesting to a different value of these texts, the art writers, artists and their patrons often used some of these texts as an inspiration for their work. This has been especially well documented since the Renaissance. The cases in point are Alberti's and other authors' literary<sup>1</sup> as well as architectural<sup>2</sup> and other<sup>3</sup> works that built on Vitruvius' heritage (Krautheimer 1992); Vasari's *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori*<sup>4</sup> directly based (and acknowledged as such by Vasari himself in his Introductions of three of his volumes) on Pliny the Elder's catalogues and anecdotes on visual artists and their work of his own times (Cheney 2007, Bojic 2012) and numerous artists' reconstructions of Pliny's descriptions of artworks; as well as various visual representations of the texts by Philostrati and Callistratus. For example, Pliny's descriptions of the iconography of

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1 Vignolla. *Regole de cinque ordini d'architettura*, 1562; Palladio. *Quattro libri dell'architettura*, 1570, Alberti, L. B. *De Re Aedificatoria, On the Art of Building in Ten Books* (trans J. Rykwert et al). London: MIT Press, 1991

2 One such example is Andrea Palladio, *Villa Capra (Villa Rotunda)*, Vicenza, 1566–1571 and *Palazzo Chiericati*, Vicenza, 1550–1580.

3 One such example is Leonardo da Vinci's infamous drawing *Vitruvian man*, Galleria di Accademia, Venice

4 Giorgio Vasari. *Le vite de' piu eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri*. Nell'edizione per i tipi di Lorenzo, Torrentino. Firenze, 1550. Enlarged and illustrated edition was published in 1568.

Praxiteles' *Venus (Venus Pudica)* in XXXVI, 5, and of Apelles' *Birth of Venus (Venus Anadyomene)* in XXXV, 9 alone can be credited with the creation of numerous artworks including Boticelli's *Birth of Venus*, c. 1486, Uffizi, Vasari's fresco of the *Birth of Venus*, 1486, in Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, or, more recently, Larionov's *Venus* from 1912, Picasso's *Venus wringing her hair* from 1952 and Milena Pavlović Barilli's *Venus with Lamp*, 1938, Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade – to name just a few. Similarly, the three important and highly influential works by Titian<sup>5</sup> – *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1520-1523, the National Gallery, London; *The Worship of Venus*, 1516-1518, Prado, Madrid, and *The Bacchanal of the Andrians*, 1522-1524, Prado, Madrid, created under the patronage of the duke Alfonso d'Este for his Camerino d'alabastro in Ferrara (Hope 1971) were directly inspired by several descriptions by Philostratus the Elder (1.15 Ariadne, 1.6 Erotes and 1.25 Andrians).

Such a use of these texts, also taking into consideration the texts' educational and instructive values, ensured their longevity. The case in point is Vitruvius' *De Architectura* which would obtain a new set of values every time it was republished at regular intervals since its editio princeps by Giovanni Sulpizzio as *L. Vitruvii Pollionis ad Caesarem Augustum De Architectura Liber primus (decimus)* in 1486 (Bojic 2009). Among these are the early editions such as that of Fra Giocondo, Venice, 1511; the three editions of Daniele Barbaro and Andrea Palladio all from Venice in 1556, 1567 and again in 1567; and that of Giovanni-Battista da Sangallo, as a manuscript, in 1540<sup>6</sup>, to name just a few. The usefulness of Pliny's encyclopaedia, and therefore the *Text X* comprising his writings on the arts, throughout the later ages cannot be overestimated. This is especially so because Pliny's text also **served** as a model for methodology for the many diverse encyclopaedic collections of knowledge in antiquity (Harris-McCoy 2008) and the Middle Ages (Chibnall 1975). Whilst the writings of Philostrati and Callistratus, as already mentioned, provided much inspiration for the artists since the first publication of Philostratus the Elder's *Eikones* in a French translation in Paris in 1578 as *Les images ou tableaux de platte-peinture de Philostrate* by Blaise De Vigenere.<sup>7</sup> The successive French editions such as the one from 1614 with the illustrations by Antoine Caron (Ehrmann 1966) and its reprints such as the more complete edition that also included the writings of

5 For various aspects of possible sources of Titian's inspiration see Rosand 1972, Easson 1969, Le Goff 1997, Smith 1953, Webb 1994. The iconography of both the Philostratus' and Titian's Ariadne can be further traced in numerous works by the modernist artist Giogrio de Chirico such as his *Ariadne*, 1913 in the Metropolitan Museum, New York as well as his *Piazza Italia* series, see Bojic, 2013

6 See Ciapponi 1984, Barbaro 1556, Mitrovic 1998, and Vitruvius. *De Architectura*. ed Cesare Cesariano

7 The first printed edition in Greek, edited by Aldus Manutius, Venice, 1503, was regularly reprinted in the 1500s. The first printed edition in the Latin translation by Stephanus Niger was published in Milan 1521. On the manuscript tradition of these texts see Webb 1994.

Philostratus the Younger, *Les Images ou des tableaux de platte-peinture de deux Philostrates* from 1814, popularised the imagery described by these authors. For example, one such reprint was in the possession of the painter Peter Paul Rubens (Le Goff 1997) who created several works at least partly based on the texts therein, such as the *Death of Semele*, 1640, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium. The editions in French also provided the wider European audiences of the time with textual and visual glimpses of the mythological stories from antiquity.

In scholarly research the works of these five authors are rarely examined as a body of art historiography and art theory texts. However, each of these writers dedicated a substantial portion of their texts specifically to the visual arts: Vitruvius wrote mostly on architecture and also provided much information on painting (VI, vii, 4; VII, v) as well as his own method of its evaluation (I, ii; VII, v); Philostrati wrote on painting and the practice of art collecting and art display also offering their respective methods of art analysis; Callistratus wrote on sculpture and the manner of its display; and Pliny in his *Text X* wrote on all aspects of the history of fine arts, encompassing architecture, painting and sculpture, as well as on aspects of applied arts practice. Vitruvius's text includes his description of the constructs of the principles of architecture applicable to the visual artworks in general (I, ii); Pliny's relevant texts employ these very principles in an evaluation of artworks (to a particularly great effect in his evaluation of sculptural works (XXXIV; XXXVI)); Philostrati's writings include some key constructs of art analysis such as ekphrasis and interactivity between an artwork and its audience; and Callistratus' descriptions emphasise the dialogue between an artwork and its environment. The common starting point for all of these writers is the construct of mimesis first defined by Vitruvius in relation to architecture as well as painting (VII, v), and then further defined by Philostratus the Elder in relation to painting (*Proemio, Eikones*), with Philostratus the Younger and Callistratus following in the Elder's footsteps and Pliny again providing a ready application of the construct (XXXV, 3; XXXVI, 12). Much of Vitruvius' description of the principles of architecture is directly related to the construct of the perception of artworks (for example, VI, ii, 2). This construct was further applied by Pliny (for example and rather memorably in XXXV, 9 on the Apelles and Protogenes' abstract painting displayed in Rome) and fully developed by Philostrati and Callistratus as one of the key points of their methods of art analysis. Vitruvius provided, mostly as examples, names of several significant Greek and Roman architects, painters and sculptors and their (now lost) artworks; Pliny wrote extensive art history catalogues of a large number of diverse Greek and Roman artists and their works and often provided information on the manner in which the works were displayed; Philostrati deliberately excluded such information focusing instead on art analysis of apparently popular compositions, whilst Callistratus described in detail several well-known works by the named and celebrated mostly Hellenistic

artists. When these diverse texts are considered as a whole a larger sequential catalogue of artists and their works from the period between c. 8th-7th c. BC and 3rd c. AD emerges. The earlier date is established by Pliny's mentions of the Greek artists who lived before the 19th Olympiad (i.e. in the 7th c. BC), in XXXV, 3, 12, as well as his mentions of the artists who arrived on the Italian soil in the same period. Pliny also maintained that some of the artworks in Ardeia that survived to his time were created before the founding of Rome, traditionally dated to 753 BC. The later date relates to the times of Philostratus the Younger and Callistratus.

The writers themselves pointed to the prior existence of such an art historiography literary tradition, with mentions of some other, little-known or unknown writers in the field. Vitruvius stated that his writings on architecture were the first of its kind in Rome, although in VII, Introduction, he acknowledged the writings on the topic by Fuficius, one book on architecture by Varo<sup>8</sup> and two books by Septimius Severus. However, in VII, Introduction, 12–14, he mentioned more than a dozen Greek architects as writers who described the principles and processes of planning and constructing their respective celebrated or unknown works. Vitruvius also mentioned the texts on *scenographia*, or painted scenery, by a Greek artist of the Classical times (VII, Introduction, 11–13), and the texts on the principles of perspective in painting by two other Greek artists (VIII, Introduction, 1).<sup>9</sup>

The texts on the arts by Pliny the Elder combined into a single text which we shall label the *Text X* include Pliny's Dedication and largely the books XXXIII–XXXVI: On painting in XXV (1–5, 7–12) and colours in XXV (6–7) and XXXIII (5–12); on applied arts in XXXV (textiles 11, ceramics 12), XXXIII (metal objects 1, bronze and gold objects 2–3, silver objects 8, 11–12, coins 3, metal jewellery 3–4, precious stones 1–2), XXXIV (bronze objects 1–3) and XXXVI (glass 26, mosaic 25, stoneware 8); on sculpture in XXXV (12), XXXIII (sculpture in gold and silver 4, 12), XXXIV (bronzes 4–8) and XXXVI (stone sculpture 4–5); and on architecture in XXXV, XXXVI (on building materials: ochres, XXXV 13, 14, 49, 51, 52; stone 17, 22, 44, 50, 1, 56, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8; on building works 51, 55, 59, 25; on the most extraordinary buildings: obelisks 8–11; Egyptian pyramids 12; Pharos lighthouse 12, labyrinths 13, the temple of Diana in Ephesus and other temples 14–15, on the architectural wonders of Rome 15). Although there is an abundance of compilations of Pliny's segments

8 Varo Vitruvius otherwise mentioned again only in passing as a man of letters (IX, Introduction, 16–17) and an edil (II, iii, 9).

9 Given that Vitruvius' subject matter is architecture that encompassed building as well as various other professions and sciences, Vitruvius mentioned several writings by various philosophers (II, ii, 1; V, Introduction; VI, Introduction; VII, Introduction; IX, vi, 3; IX, Introduction, 2, 6, 16, 17); mathematicians (I, vi; V, iv, 1; IX, Introduction, 3, 13; IX, ii, 3), geographers (VII, iii, 27), astronomers (IX, ii, 1; IX, vi, 2, 3; IX, viii) and machine engineers (X, xiii, 3) as well as several Greek comedigraphers (VI, Introduction, 3) poets (VII, Introduction, 2; IX, i, 13) and other writers (IX, Introduction, 16–17).

on various topics, the segments on all aspects of art practice have only recently been published as a whole, in a Serbian translation, as Pliny the Elder, *On the Arts* – Plinije Stariji, *O umetnosti*.

It is important to note here that Pliny dedicated much of his encyclopaedic text exclusively to the visual arts; he provided catalogues of the visual artists known to him by name and by their work and named and described some of their artworks. Pliny did not provide such detailed information on music, performing arts or poetry, and he mentioned musicians, poets and performers only sporadically. This of course can be explained by the fact that Pliny's encyclopaedic *Naturalis Historia* dealt exclusively with the physical world – music, poetry and performing arts being ethereal by their nature would therefore have no place in such an encyclopaedia. Nevertheless, and in stark contrast to Vitruvius, Pliny did not engage – other than occasionally – with music instruments, performing arts spaces such as theatres and odeons, libraries and other material paraphernalia to music, performing arts and poetry. It is also important to note that Pliny himself in his Praefatio singled out his segments on the visual arts as one of the foremost values of his encyclopaedia.

Among the names of the writers on the arts who are known to us almost exclusively through Pliny's text (XXXIV, XXXV) is the artist Xenocrates (early 3rd c. AD), whose lost literary work, it has been suggested, could have served for some of Pliny's catalogues of artists and their works (Schweizer 1932, Jex-Blake 2007). However, many other segments of Pliny's text testify that this could only partially be the case, especially those segments in which Pliny described the artists and the works of his own times. Amongst these were the artworks which he claimed to have seen displayed in Rome, of which many were Greek (for example in XXXV, 9, 10, 11, Bojic 2011), and many Roman (for example, XXXV 3).

In some segments of his *Text X* Pliny referred to Varo (for example in XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI), the writer mentioned by Vitruvius a century earlier. Both Vitruvius and Pliny were perhaps referring to Varo's lost writings on liberal arts, *Disciplinarum libri IX* of which one book was dedicated to architecture. This question of the role of Varo and his text as a possible template for Pliny's *Text X* must be rejected for two reasons. The first is that it is clear that a single book on architecture by Varo could not have been extensive enough to substantially serve Pliny in assembling such a comprehensive (although segmented) text on the arts. The second reason is that Pliny mentioned and described in detail many Greek artworks he saw displayed in Rome and which Varo, who lived over a century earlier, could not have known.

Pliny mentioned Vitruvius only in two instances, once in the segments on ochre and pigments and once in the segments on the use of stone, and did not reveal the full extent of Vitruvius' impact. Modern scholarship appears to follow in Pliny's footsteps: while *Encyclopedia Britannica* states that Vitruvius' text is indeed a template for Pliny's seg-

ments on the methods of construction and the Roman fresco painting, the question of Vitruvius' true impact is either neglected or completely discarded. A case in point is the following quote from Pollitt: 'Vitruvius probably served as one of Pliny's sources for information on the Mausoleum at Halikarnassos. Otherwise, there is little indication that he was used as a direct source.' (Pollitt 1966: xix) The possible reason for this is the fact that Pliny's excerpts on architecture have not been examined within the framework of research on Pliny's writings on the arts which results in a lack of a parallel study of the two texts. The reason why Pliny's texts on architecture do not appear in some compilations of Pliny's segments on the arts is twofold: some scholars do not consider architecture as part of a more broadly understood art practice but as a separate discipline, while other scholars do not consider many passages of Pliny's text as the segments concerning architecture. On the other hand, Vitruvius clearly stated what was considered architecture about a century prior to Pliny's publishing his encyclopedia. Vitruvius' definition included not only the architectural works but also the principles of architecture, construction and building materials. Within the analysis of Pliny's *Text X* it is essential to make a comparison with Vitruvius' text on architecture, especially since Pliny wrote about the same categories of architecture as did Vitruvius. On building materials Pliny wrote within the framework of two books: on ochre in XXXV (13, 14, 49, 51, and 52) and on stone in XXXVI (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 17, 22, 44, 50, and 56); on construction works and the use of construction materials he wrote in XXXVI (25, 51, 55, and 59). Describing some exceptional architectural works in XXXVI, Pliny wrote on obelisks (8–11); Egyptian pyramids (12); the Pharos lighthouse (12); labyrinths (13); The Temple of Diana in Ephesus (14–15) and on architectural wonders in Rome (15). When comparing Pliny's passages on architecture with Vitruvius' text it is clear that Pliny was fluent in Vitruvius' text and that he used it abundantly (Bojic, „Писац и дело” 2011). In his many segments on architecture Pliny both summed up Vitruvius' text and supplemented it with new data or comments (for example in XXXVI, 56, on the types of columns, supplementing Vitruvius' III and IV). This points to the idea of the possible existence of a prior coherent text on the arts and architecture – be that a text by Xenocrates, Varo, or some other author – that could have served as a source to both authors. In several segments of his text Vitruvius indicated his familiarity with various authors' writings on the arts (Bojic 2009), yet Xenocrates was not mentioned amongst his sources. The very idea of Xenocrates' writings as a possible source for Vitruvius is not viable when Vitruvius' text is examined as a whole – Vitruvius wrote on many aspects of the principles of architecture, architectural works, and construction and building materials obviously from his own experience. Similarly, Vitruvius wrote on painting (especially in VII, v, 4 and further) from his own perspective and evaluated it as per his own taste. Accordingly, the idea of any one literary source being common to both Pliny and Vitruvius must be rejected.

Vitruvius' text served as a direct template to many segments of Pliny's text on architecture and as an unacknowledged reference point to some others. However, Pliny's text on architecture is only a portion of his *Text X* for which there are no known precedents. The question of authorship of the most part of the volume of the *Text X* is hence focused on the idea of Pliny's own authorship of a previous larger coherent text on the arts. This larger text Pliny would have divided into segments and distributed across *Naturalis Historia* in accordance to his subject matter. A similar argument is presented by the scholar Jakob Isager (Isager 1991)<sup>10</sup> who also identified and examined some of the constructs that Pliny used throughout the whole of *Naturalis Historia* and especially in the passages on the arts: *luxuria*, *avaritia*, *unitas*, *origo*, *inventores*, *mirabilia*. The construct of *luxuria* was further examined by other scholars (Carey 2006), who also identified similar constructs, such as that of *diligentia* (Perry 2000). As Pliny consistently advocates certain views in all parts of his text taken as a whole, and from which he never deviates, his authorship of the *Text X* is proven regardless of the closeness *Text X* to its sources. It is nevertheless important to mention that there are many instances of harmony between Pliny's and Vitruvius' individual views despite the differences between the two authors and their respective eras.<sup>11</sup>

Philostratus the Elder's *Eikones* is an artwork in its own right, created by the author's admission (*Eikones*, Proemio) as a literary response to the paintings described. It is therefore tempting to look for predecessors of this literary work firstly within the volume of visual artworks and then within the art historiography genre. Except, other than Vitruvius' and Pliny's writings, there are no surviving examples of such a genre. Philostratus stated in his Proemio that prior to his work other authors had already written on painters and on the *countries and the kings dedicated to this art*, thus enabling him to instead provide descriptions of the *examples* of paintings. Philostratus named only one such writer, the painter Aristodemus of Caria, his art teacher of four years, and wrote that Aristodemus painted in the style of Eumeleus. Neither of the artists are known to us outside of this mention, although another Aristodemus, a sculptor, was mentioned by Pliny. However, because Philostratus used Eumeleus's work as a reference point for his readers it is plausible to assume that Eumeleus, unlike Aristodemus of Caria, whose work needed to be referenced, was indeed a well known artist of his time. Philostratus the Younger in his Proemio to his own *Eikones* named Philostratus the Elder as his maternal grandfather and the Elder's text on painting as an inspiration to his own, thus continuing the tradition of this genre. Callistratus' *Descriptiones* contains fourteen short descriptions of statues and of a painting and no dedication or an introduction.

10 Isager's *Pliny on Art and Society: The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, already by its title wittily points to an earlier research, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters On The History Of art, ... by Pliny*, K. Jex-Blake, E. Sellers. first ed. 1896

11 There is vast literature on social, political and moral circumstances of Pliny's times which includes Murphy 2004, Wallace-Hadrill 1990, Carey 2006, Marchetti 1991, Beagon 1992, and others.

There are no references to the other authors of the genre. Despite this and because of its subject matter and method, *Descriptiones* should be seen as an integral part of the genre, and as a continuation of the genre's tradition.

The common denominator to all of these works is firstly the idea that the visual arts practices are worthy of literary effort. This raises the question of these authors' definition of their subject matter and each of the authors provided a contribution to it: Vitruvius in I, ii–iii and Pliny in XXXIII 4, XXXIV 4–5, XXXV 1–4, and XXXV 12 described the origins of art practices, and Philostratus the Elder in his *Proemio* defined it in opposition to what it is not. They all provided this definition also by establishing a set of *sine qua non* constructs inherent in every artwork. These Vitruvius named (I, ii – iii) as *ordinatio* (taxis), *dispositio* (diathesis), *eurythmia*, *symmetria*, *decor*, and *distributio* (*oikonomia*). Pliny the Elder applied these constructs in his own evaluation of artworks to a particularly striking effect in his discourse on (Greek) sculpture in bronze and stone in XXXIV and XXXV respectively. Of these, Philostratus the Elder (*Proemio*) singled out *symmetria* as an essential quality of artworks and described it as the construct that connects art and reason. Philostratus the Younger (*Proemio*) directly referred to the very set of constructs noted by Vitruvius as the *andessential* qualities of an artwork.

The relationship between the visual arts and literature is an important point raised by our art historiographers which also contributes to the definition of these authors' subject matter. Both Vitruvius and Pliny, but especially Pliny in his *Praefatio*, writing on the subject of portrait, defined the portrait as either a verbal or a painted or sculpted likeness of the sitter. Philostratus the Elder in his *Proemio* established early on a clear equation between the visual arts and poetry, between a painter and a poet. In his descriptions Philostratus the Elder often mentioned Homer, claiming the poet had established the iconography for painterly mythological and historical compositions (for example, 1.1, 1.8, 1.26, 2.8, as well as indirectly such as in 1.15), and for portraits of gods and heroes (for example, 2.2). Amongst other poets Philostratus the Elder invoked Pindar (2.12), Archilochus and Aesop (1.3), Anacreon (1.15), Arion (1.19), Sappho (2.1), Euripides (2.23) Hesiod (2.28) and poets in general (2.30). Considered together the instances of mentions of poets and poetry contribute to Philostratus' definition of painting in relation to poetry. In the relevant passages from 2.9, 2.13 and 2.17 the literary narrative and the painterly representations are clearly distinguished from one another. Several other Philostratus' descriptions allow for categorising painting as a narrative (for example, 1.13, 1.16, 1.17, 1.18, 1.23, 1.24, 1.26, 1.27, 1.28, 1.29, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, and 2.17–10), as presenting a single dramatic moment (1.11, 2.17–11), and as depicting the drama itself (2.10). The latter description, 2.10 Cassandra, served Philostratus to explain the difference between the art of painting and dramatic arts: 'If we observe this scene as a drama, my boy, a great tragedy is taking place in a short time span. But if we observe it as a painting, you will find more than a drama in it.'

In further describing the painted scene Philostratus says that a single painting represents both the scene that takes place centre-stage (Clytemnestra killing Cassandra with the still warm axe) as well as the smaller compositions which are part of the same dramatic narrative (slain drunk soldiers, slain Agamemnon). This idea was further developed by Philostratus the Younger. In his Proemio for his own *Eikones* Philostratus the Younger says that the key elements common to the art of painting and poetry are appearance, stage (which only appears as real), and all the elements which depict dignity, grandeur and might with the purpose to bewitch the reason. What differentiates the two is that the art of painting uses line to present that what the poets describe in words. The terms Philostratus the Younger used here: *to present* – in painting, and *to describe* – in poetry, underline the very idea of his predecessor.

The most important aspect of the definition of the visual arts in the writings of the five art historiographers of antiquity is the construct of mimesis. Although Pliny the Elder, Philostratus the Younger and Callistratos did not specifically provide this definition, they each addressed the related construct of realism (and illusion) as one of the key qualities of praised artworks. Pliny the Elder instead specifically addressed another related construct, that of the creative act in a memorable segment of his Praefatio:

‘I wish to be considered in the same manner as those who created new works in the arts of painting and sculpture... whose works, although so perfect that we can never get weary from looking at them, bear inscriptions that point to the temporary quality of these works, such as *Apeles, or Polykleitos, has been making this*, indicating that the work had only been started and was not finished and that it remains imperfect. And that the artist would have benefitted from a critique of his work and that he would have corrected it if only the death hadn't stopped him... [These inscriptions] is also a sign of their moderation because they appear to want to say that this is the last artwork they would ever make, as if it is still in the process of being made at the time of their death. I think that there are only three artworks with the inscription *Such-and-such made this...* It appears that in these instances the artist felt a perfect contentment with his artwork and indeed such artworks induced envy among people.’ (Pliny, Praefatio)

The construct of mimesis is specifically addressed and defined by only two of our writers: by Philostratus the Elder and by Vitruvius. In his Proemio Philostratus the Elder wrote that ‘the invention of the art of painting belongs to gods – the proof for this are all the colours with which the seasons colour the landscape, and appearances we see in the sky,’ with the oldest invention and the one closest to nature being miming, devised by wise men and named the art of painting or the art of sculpture. He developed this construct further in 1.12:

‘Painting presents things which exist, things which happen, and in some instances the manner in which they happen, not offending the truth with a reason for a large number of presented things but showing the true nature of the things as if the painter presented a single thing.’ (Philostratus Major, 1.12)

This definition builds up on the definition provided by Vitruvius in VII, v, 1:

‘Painting is actually a presentation of things that actually exist or that can exist, such as a man, house, ship, or anything else of particular and actual form that can be used to create an alike shape.’ (Vitruvius, VII, v, 1)

In Vitruvius’ literary work the constructs of mimesis is somewhat blurred with the construct of realism in the arts, allowing for his statements on good (true) and bad (illusionistic) painting in VII, v,3-4:

‘...Such things do not exist and cannot exist and have never existed... The fact is that the paintings that do not resemble the truth should not be praised and even when they are well executed there is no reason to consider them good if they do not mime the things without distorting the laws of truth.’ (Vitruvius, VII, v, 3-4)

Vitruvius’ construct of painterly illusion is in opposition to that by Philostratus the Elder. For the latter writer illusion is an integral part of the art of painting because the painting not only presents things as if they were real, it represents things. In several passages such as 1.23, 1.27, 1.28, 2.38 and others, and referring to the hyperrealistic qualities of particular paintings, Philostratus the Elder praised the painters’ craftsmanship used for creating an ever more truthful illusion of reality, engaging all the human senses. He admired the painters for having depicted the smells and the sounds and in several instances pointed to the seemingly tactile quality of the objects depicted, in the process advocating the idea of art of observing art and therefore the art of writing on the arts being a synesthetic experience.

The starting point of the art of writing on the arts is the description of artwork, ekphrasis, the method common to our art historiographers of antiquity and the basic method of the later established disciplines of art history, art criticism and art theory.

Known since Homer’s description of the shield of Achilles (Becker 1995, Lecoq 2010), Iliad, XVIII and including such literary examples from antiquity like Petronius’ *Satyricon*, 88, 89, which was probably written during Pliny the Elder’s lifetime, ekphrasis is understood as both a literary method (Webb 1999, Briand 2012, Agosti 2006, Smith 1995) and an art history and theory one (Macdonald 1993, Goldhill 1994, Boeder 1996, Squire 2009, Dufallo 2013, James 1993). The definition of this construct is not finite (Ravenna 2006, Bartsch 2007) nor all-encompassing. One manner of defining the ekphrasis is as a verbal description of an artwork (Cheeke 2008) or a verbal description of that which is presented (Krieger 1992, Smith 1995, Valtolina 2007, Wagner 1996, Heffernan 1993, Rosand 1990). The other is that ekphrasis is a rhetorical description of an artwork (Webb 2009, Fairbanks 1931) and part of the rhetorics of ekphrasis (McNelis 2002, Varia 2003).

Here, the term ekphrasis is used in its art history and art theory meaning such as employed by Vasari (Alpers 1960), as it applies to the writings of the five art historiographers of antiquity. Vitruvius’ use of ekphrasis can thus be

extended from his many descriptions of particular artworks (architectural, sculptural or paintings) to a number of his instructions especially those that relate to the manner of constructing temples (III–IV) and public buildings (for example the ‘Vitruvius’ basilica in the town of Fano, V, i). Pliny’s *Text X* includes catalogues of artworks, of which many are described in detail. The elegant descriptions of Philostratus the Elder, Philostratus the Younger and Callistratus as the sole subject matter of their respective writings on the arts have been the subject of an ongoing heated scholarly debate that began over a century ago (Friederichs 1860, Lehmann-Hartleben 1941, Constantini et al. 2006) on the question of veracity of the works described (Graziani 1990, Shaffer 1998, Beall 1993, Bäbler 2006). Although some scholars point out that ekphrasis can be seen as a piece of writing in its own right and not requiring the actual artwork (Kostopoulou 2009), the writings of the latter three authors must be examined primarily in relation to their subject matter. The artworks described by Philostratus the Elder, Philostratus the Younger and Callistratus cannot be archaeologically reconstructed (in contrast to those described by Vitruvius and Pliny the Elder). However, given the wealth of the other fully comparable visual arts material of the European antiquity, these imaginary artworks still have an important place in art history (Bojic „Филострати, о сликарству:” 2013). Starting from the ekphrasis, the key starting point of art analysis, each of our five art historiographers of antiquity developed their own literary method of art analysis, as it would correspond to their respective audiences and subject matter.

Each of the authors also wrote on interaction between an artwork and its actual audience – Vitruvius in IV, I, ii; Pliny in XXXV, 9, whilst the other three authors dedicated all of their writing to the interaction between the writer as a viewer and the artworks themselves. The key point common to all of our five art historiographers is the question of audiences each of them was addressing exclusively through their literary work. The time span between the lifetime of Vitruvius and that of Callistratus comprises some four hundred years. However, as stated earlier, the texts of these authors retained some popularity in antiquity and increased in popularity in later times, continually addressing their diverse audiences to this day. Vitruvius, as he himself stated in his introductory dedication, wrote his text as a building and construction manual addressing both the ruler of the time, Augustus, as well as specialists and the general public. Pliny wrote his encyclopaedia as both a scholarly text and a useful reference. Philostratus the Elder’s text can be seen as illusionistic – he structured his literary descriptions of the paintings displayed in a private gallery as his own lecture series addressing his young audiences accompanying him there. In very many places in his text including 1.4, 1.6, 1.13, 1.22, 1.24, 2.1, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.11, 2.12, 2.17 and 2.29, he used direct speech addressing a young boy from this group, giving him instructions and advice. He also occasionally addressed in direct speech some of the characters depicted in the paintings, such as in 1.21, 2.8, 2.34, and perhaps most memorably in 1.28 – the method was later employed by Callistratus. As a literary work, Philostratus the Elder’s

*Eikones* communicated to its readership a method of analysis of the *examples* of painting (Proemio). Given that at the time no illustrations of the images accompanied the text, Philostratus' original readership was expected to envisage the recognisable, presumably well-known, artworks as well as the gallery, the group of young visitors and their lecturer. In the process, the imaginary artworks as well as their display became ideal. The continual relative popularity of Philostratus' text attests to the success of such a seemingly interactive, illusionistic literary method. On the one hand, this points back to Philostratus' holistic approach to his subject matter and his equating the visual arts with poetry and literature in general. On the other, this method of Philostratus the Elder can be seen as the nascence of the theory of arts, theory of curatorship and theory of art analysis.

Our five art historiographers of antiquity wrote in different languages: Vitruvius and Pliny the Elder in Latin; Philostratus and Callistratus in Greek. Vitruvius' only known literary work is his *De architectura*. His writing style is uneven and indicates that its author is a master builder, not a man of letters. In contrast, Pliny the Elder was a well established writer (of now lost works)<sup>12</sup> by the time he compiled his encyclopaedia. Pliny's both scholarly and journalistic, documentary style, interspersed with his own statements, is highly appropriate to his encyclopaedia, with readers being encouraged (Proemio) to browse through the text and read the segments in no particular order. Philostratus the Elder may have authored other titles<sup>13</sup> in addition to his *Eikones*. His text maintains the tone of a (very long) lecture yet serves as an example of an elegant and simple writing style. This style – minus the tone – was indeed used as a model by both Philostratus the Younger and Callistratus, both known only as writers of their respective treatises on the arts. Of the five authors, Philostratus the Elder's deceptively synesthetic descriptions of fictitiously synesthetic artworks achieve the biggest literary impact; Pliny's examination of his subject matter and his comments provide for an exceptionally interesting, and amusing, literary work; and Vitruvius' often cumbersome and technical text overflows with anecdotes and his own statements presented as arguments. Their respective writing styles alone secure each of the authors a distinguished place in the literary history of European antiquity.

The five writers, each in their own way, clearly show their awareness that visual artists and artworks are a valid and worthy subject of a literary work, in the process establishing a historical line connecting their respective texts and enabling a perspective of seeing them as part of a single literary category. By doing so, collectively they equated a writer with a painter, description with presentation, the act of observing, analysing and critiquing an artwork with the act of creating it, and the impact of

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12 *De jaculatione equestri*, *The history of Germanic wars*, *Studiosus*, *Dubii sermonis* and the completion of Aufidius Bassus' *History*

13 The author of *Eikones*, Philostratus the Elder may have been the same Philostratus who wrote *Gymnasticus*, *Heroicus* and *Letters*, and/or the Philostratus who wrote *The Life of Apollonius of Tiana* and *The Lives of Sophists*, see Solmsen 1940, Bowie 2009, Costantini 2006.

art analysis with the impact of the artwork itself. This construct alone justifies and validates the whole literary genre extant in the European antiquity, the very construct reborn within the disciplines later on defined as art history, art theory and art criticism.

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Зоја Бојић

*Књижевни жанр историографије уметности у антици*

*Резиме*

Витрувијево *De Architectura* (1. в ст. е.), *Naturalis Historia* Плинија Старијег (1. в н. е.), *Eikones* Филострата Старијег (2. в н. е.), *Eikones* Филострата Млађег (2 и 3. в н. е.), и Калистратово *Descriptiones* (3 или 4. в н. е.) су једина сачувана обимнија дела европске антике о ликовним уметностима. Иако се обично проучавају одвојено, узета заједно она сведоче о постојању традиције писања о уметности.

Сами писци наводе имена својих претходника и наслове изгубљених дела на основу чега се већ претпоставља постојање књижевног жанра историографије уметности. Оставили су и податке о уметницима и њиховим делима и успоставили узрочно последичну линеарну историју античке уметности. Писали су и о кључним појмовима теорије уметности: мимези и уметничком стварању, дефиницији и одликама ликовног дела, посматрању и анализи дела, и перцепцији и рецепцији, служећи се методом књижевног описа ликовног дела, екфразом. Касније дисциплине историје, теорије и критике уметности надградиле су се на постулате које су ови писци забележили и осмислили.

*Кључне речи:* историографија уметности европске антике, Витрувије, Плиније Старији, Филострат Старији, Филострат Млађи, Калистрат, књижевна традиција, књижевни жанр

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