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Census of Antique Works of Art  
and Architecture Known in the Renaissance  
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

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Mr President, Madam Dean, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I must begin by thanking the Humboldt University for the honour of the invitation to speak on this happy occasion, when we are celebrating the golden jubilee of – to give it its present full and resounding title – the *Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance*. I must also apologize for speaking, by your kind permission, in English: this will at least be less painful for your ears, at the same time as it emphasizes the international nature of our joint enterprise.

My title is meant to recall that wisdom, as Cicero long ago laid it down, consists of remembrance of the past, understanding of the present, and foresight for the future. These words, echoed down the ages by countless thinkers, and given graphic form by many artists, Titian included, resonate still in T. S. Eliot:

»Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.«

»What might have been«, Eliot more chillingly goes on  
»is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.«

This is an occasion for thanksgiving, essentially a happy and celebratory one, happiest of all, perhaps because of the goodwill that has now made the future of our *Census* secure. So secure that I shall not dwell on that future, but merely express the most profound pleasure in this exemplary piece of international scholarly co-operation. It is so very satisfactory, and I should begin by thanking all those who have made it possible. I believe that the project deserved success, and I believe that this feeling is shared not only by everyone present, but by a very large community that cannot be with us this evening.

At such a time it is appropriate to look back, and say something about the history of our *Census*, perhaps providing some details that are not universally familiar, and at the same time celebrating some of the giants of former days.

I cannot begin without saying something, obvious though it may be, about an earlier past than is encompassed by the *Census* itself. This is partly out of a general conviction that the civilization of the ancient world is not something that is remote from us in anything but time. None of us can be innocent of it, however we try even to reject it. More particularly what I have to say will, I hope, indicate how the *Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance* forms part of a very much larger search-party to find an answer to Aby Warburg's famous and much larger question »Was bedeutet das Nachleben der Antike?« The answer, as we know, can never be more than partial. It can never – fortunately for research and the pleasure of doing it as well as the advancement of knowledge – never be final and complete: there will always be something new to add and something to change the picture. This audience, on this occasion, hardly needs reminding of Warburg's passion for the exact plotting of every trade-route, every stage of every trade-route, every by-way, along which the civilization of the ancient world had travelled forward in time and been accepted – or, at least as importantly, rejected – by other civilizations. Warburg was fully aware, too, that Greco-Roman civilization was in part the product of other civilizations, earlier or contemporary. His published and unpublished work, perhaps most particularly »Mnemosyne«, the »Bilder-Atlas«, bears all the testimony needed. Nor do I need to emphasize here the obsession with detail which drove Warburg in pursuit of his insights and intuitions, and the way in which obsession generated new insights and new intuitions for that passionate, never-to-be-complete vision of »die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike«.

Warburg is introduced here for a number of reasons. Broadly, for his own greatness as the Grand Master of our Order – which is what he himself called Ludwig Traube, the great palaeographer. For the breadth of what he wanted to do, and the need he felt to command detail into the larger picture; detail always as means, not end. Understanding is what we want. »Bildung schadet nicht«, as he used to say. If one put it as: no Warburg, no *Census*, that might be too stark a statement, perhaps, though useful as an assertion of continuities. It is true at all events that the documentation that Warburg assembled in books and photographs contained the germ of such an instrument. Those books and those photographs were already being augmented after his death, during the years that the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg remained in Hamburg, and still more in the years after the end of 1933, when it was removed to London and became the Warburg Institute.

The *Census*, as *Census*, however, had its genesis not even in London, but in the USA, more or less exactly as the Second World War was coming to an end, and its European phase was over. European contacts were already being resumed. Eric Warburg then offered Fritz Saxl the opportunity of further expanding the Warburgian sphere of influence by spending the summer of 1945, from May to August, in the USA, to seek transatlantic scholarly collaborators. Aby Warburg himself, almost twenty years before, had set out his programme for the same purpose. Saxl's memorandum to the Warburg Institute's Committee of Management on the visit recorded discussions about exchanges of teachers and research staff between the Institute and universities in the United States, and joint publications – among other things. He requested funds to make this possible. Sums of from £ 100 to £ 500 were mentioned, to enable visits of one to three months by individuals.

Among the places Saxl had visited was naturally Poughkeepsie, New York, where his old friend Richard Krautheimer was then living, teaching at Vassar College, and moonlighting at the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University. Krautheimer was at work, with Trude Krautheimer Hess, on what he then described as a »a nice little book« on Ghiberti, probably »a volume of Ghibertiana«. As he wrote to Saxl on 27 September 1945:

»Not that I am lazy, but there is just too damn much we don't yet know and can't find out without spending years on the most interesting but hardly accessible by-paths. Just during these last weeks I tried to instruct myself somewhat on questions of early 15th century knowledge of antique art. But, as you know, the difficulties are really enormous. We don't know what the early 15th century collections contained aside from the collections of the Medici and of Pietro Barbo; no corpus has been published of the antiques extant in Italy during the 15th century and important epistolarii are still wanting [...] I wish something could be done about it. Don't you know a young man who would simply make an edition of the [...] Dondi letters? [...] And couldn't we try to organize a corpus of antiques known to the 15th century? I wish we could discuss it when you come here this winter.«

Saxl replied on 18 October. He could not get again to America so soon, but he would at least meantime get photographs of the »Dondi« letters in the Marciana.

»What you say«, he goes on »about the 15th century collections of antiques is very true. [Alfred] Scharf [author of the old standard work on Filippino Lippi, and by then settled in London] has for years collected the material at my suggestion [...]. He reconstructed i. a. the earliest 15th century sketchbook

from the antique. It is time that somebody, either at New York University or with us, tackled the subject.«

Scharf's large, neatly written cards, analysing ›Codex Pighianus‹, still exist at the Warburg Institute in Woburn Square, and their information has been incorporated in the *Census*. But Scharf had turned to art-dealing to make a living, and was no longer seriously interested in such scholarship.

Saxl was soon in the USA again, however. In the Spring of 1946, he and Krautheimer met there, discussed the *Census* further, and agreed that it should be one of the projects put by Saxl before Henry Allen Moe of the Guggenheim Foundation. On 13 May Krautheimer sent, for Saxl's meeting with Moe, a draft of what he had in mind. *The Census of Antique Works Known in the Renaissance* would contain » [...] specific information regarding works of antiquity extant in the Renaissance and used or referred to, either directly or indirectly, by Renaissance artists and writers« with the aim of providing »a more thorough and more specific understanding of the phenomenon of the Renaissance.«

It would draw on three types of source:

»a. Literary sources of the Renaissance...

b. Pictorial sources:

i. Reproductions of antique works

ii. Works of art inspired or dependent on antique prototypes

c. Remnants of antiquity having survived through the Middle Ages and Renaissance to this date.

The exploitation of all these sources, carefully checked and counter-checked, should give a clear picture of the works of antiquity related to the Renaissance.«

The sheer quantity of the material, it was recognized, meant that the project should be limited in coverage, initially at least, to surveying what was already known from scholarly publications; in time to the period up to 1532, or possibly only up to 1490; and geographically to Italy. Architecture was to be excluded. Close cooperation among scholars in different fields would be essential.

»It also requires, and indeed will make for, the training of younger scholars in a combination of those fields. It may thus help to overcome the present isolation of fields which by their very nature should be closely allied. The natural focus [...] would seem to lie in a cooperative project undertaken by the Warburg Institute in London and the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University, in conjunction with individual scholars or groups of scholars (Renaissance conference) attached to other institutions in Europe and the United States.«

A division of labour was proposed in which the Warburg Institute would supervise in the first place the study of the literary sources, and the Institute of Fine Arts focus on the pictorial sources and the history of antique works of art. From this literary and pictorial material would be culled »All possible references to antique works of art«, libraries and photographic collections in London and New York being »likely to yield most of the [...] sources«. The references would be incorporated into a card file, to be maintained in duplicate in London and New York. »*Wherever possible* [my italics], small photographs of both the Renaissance work of art and the antique prototype should come on the card«.

On the basis of the card file, a hand-list would be published, which would stimulate further studies, monographs, and the publication of as yet unpublished material.

The work would be supervised by established scholars, and serve as a training ground for the next generation, »only a very few« of whom would work full-time. Two to four should be sufficient, it was thought, holding fellowships of three or four years' duration, with funds to travel between London and New York and occasionally to Italy. Voluntary contributions could be hoped for from scholars active in the field, and from students who would write their theses on such topics. Assistants for typing and filing and other similar work could »probably« be provided by the Warburg and the New York Institutes together. Funds would be needed for photographs, but publication could, again »probably«, be undertaken by the Warburg Institute.

By 28 May, Saxl was back in London, whence he wrote to Krautheimer:

»I think the project appeals to my colleagues very much. Some of them feel that it is exploiting the younger men, that they are not really given any time to think, and that you have not allowed sufficient play for their souls. But apart from that everybody agrees that it would be extremely useful to have such a census. I am now writing to Mr [Roberto] Weiss, Lecturer [and later Professor] for Italian at University College, to see whether he would be able to provide the texts.«

In June, he reported that Weiss was willing to do what he could, and that he would »probably do it slowly but quite well«. In the event, this plan came to nothing. The Institute's Junior Research Fellowship had just been awarded to someone working on another subject, but the next, in two years' time, might go to someone working on the *Census*.

An established scholar then presented himself as a collaborator, at least in Krautheimer's hopes, and in those, it seems, of Erwin Panofsky: William S. Heckscher was to spend 1946/47 at the Institute for Advanced Study in Prin-

ceton, working on the fate of ancient works of art in Rome during the Renaissance. This seemed to offer the possibility of advice and collaboration. The outcome was a sort of loose agreement that Heckscher, whose ›Relics of pagan Antiquity in medieval Settings‹ – engraved gems, mainly, and marble or porphyry vessels – had been published in 1937, in the first number of the ›Journal of the Warburg Institute‹, would deal with the Middle Ages, and carry on into the Renaissance. His contribution would be of enormous value.

By the autumn, when Krautheimer reported Heckscher's interest and goodwill in relation to the *Census*, he had to report less enthusiasm among others for the project in its initial form. A card index was thought too rigid, and threatened by sterility. The spectre of the Princeton Index of Christian Art was invoked by Rensselaer Lee, Panofsky and Clarence Kennedy, who had been consulted. Krautheimer, though remarking that an index is as good or as sterile as those who make and use it, was still anxious for the knowledge that such an enterprise would make available. He was willing to place more emphasis on individual studies and make the index »a mere offshoot« of such studies. He was unwilling, on the other hand, to listen to those who, with more enthusiasm than grasp of what was practical, wished to extend coverage into the seventeenth century. Karl Lehmann, in New York, always a staunch supporter of the project, was at one with Krautheimer in this. Krautheimer also rejected the notion that the *Census* should include »derivations from Antiquity in Renaissance paintings (postures etc.)« on the ground that this »would overlap with the Warburg Atlas«, which it was then hoped would soon be published, and definitely lead in a different direction. It would also have made an already ambitious undertaking impossibly large.

By this time, the project had had its first and decisive stroke of luck, without which the *Census* might never have come into being. In New York, Saxl had met Panofsky's star pupil, Harry Bober. Bober had a Guggenheim Fellowship, which would bring him to Europe, and to London in January 1947. He would begin work on completing the ›Catalogue of Astrological and Mythological Illuminated Manuscripts of the Latin Middle Ages in English Libraries‹, languishing, since the death in an air-raid in 1941, of the Institute's Librarian, Saxl's collaborator Hans Meier. Lehmann's star pupil, Phyllis Pray Bober, would be coming too. The theses she had already written on late Antique monuments and their emphasis on the visual rhetoric of Roman provincial art, her archaeological training, and her wide and lively art-historical sympathies, made her exactly the sort of person whom Krautheimer, Lehmann and Saxl had hoped to attract. In a letter to Saxl from Paris of 7 August 1946, she for-



mally offered her services, as Krautheimer and Lehmann had encouraged her to do. »A good idea«, wrote Saxl; the trawl through the periodical literature that he had in mind for her – he was never anything but matter-of-fact in his approach – would serve to consolidate her acquaintance with the later period, to establish just how many monuments were known, and to gauge how fully and accurately their »Nachleben« could be documented. This would be the first step in defining the problem. For it she would receive a »small remuneration«, on which as yet no precise figure could be put.

So, in the cold of the dreadful winter of 1946/47, and in the vast and gloomy halls of the old Imperial Institute Building in South Kensington, where the Warburg Institute was then housed, in the British Museum and elsewhere, the record began to be built up on those large cards. This is the place, I think, to record the generosity of mind and spirit, and the new friendships then established, with Saxl for too short a time, with Gertrud Bing and with Enriqueta Harris Frankfort in particular, that for so long kept the enterprise afloat. I shall say a very little more about that in due course. The financial resources available were minuscule, almost ludicrous. Common though this may have been, it threw into relief how optimistic had been the original proposals for establishing and maintaining the *Census*. Shoestring budgets, small grants, personal hospitality, time hardly won from teaching, archaeological expeditions and other commitments were its hallmark. The file grew, all the same, through Phyllis Bober's energy and dedication, though the *Census* was as yet – as she later put it – »putative«.

Saxl's premature death in 1948 was a severe blow; but his successors Henri Frankfort, for those few too short years, and Gertrud Bing were strong in support. It is interesting to speculate – perpetual abstraction though it may be – how matters would have gone had Saxl in early 1948, a few months before his death, succeeded in persuading Krautheimer to cross back over the Atlantic for good. London's loss then was Rome's, and especially the Hertziana's, gain later. Still, the project began to gather way. Further discussions were held, photographic surveys both of monuments and sketchbooks put in hand, and work leading to monographic publications begun. The heart of it all, however, was always Phyllis Bober's file, which in 1951/52 comprised six hundred entries, »each describing a classical work of art with notes on its history (where possible), the testimonies of its being known in the Renaissance, and records of drawings from it or other instances of its artistic influence«.

If progress, for reasons hinted at, was not rapid, the files grew. From 1954, when Phyllis Bober returned to New York as Research Associate at the Insti-

tute of Fine Arts, there was a great leap forward. The New York Institute became co-sponsor of the *Census* with the Warburg Institute. Information on the cards in New York and in London continued to be co-ordinated, and in that year the Warburg was able to order an unprecedented number of photographs, and supply New York with duplicates. The files of correspondence overflow with references to ›Escorialensis‹, ›Coburgensis‹, ›Destailleur‹, ›Dupérac‹, ›Heemskerck‹, ›Aldrovandi‹, and many others more obscure, and requests for photographs. Enriqueta Frankfort, as Curator of the Warburg's Photographic Collection until 1970, was the linch-pin in London; and Ruth Olitsky Rubinstein, as assistant with special responsibility for the *Census*, formally from 1957 to 1996 – and, with luck, informally for the rest of time – devotedly kept things going, adding greatly to the documentation. Phyllis Bober's summer visits, too, were vital, and have continued so.

Recognition of the *Census*'s value had begun already, for example in the welcome form of Krautheimer's announcement in his *big* book on Ghiberti, first published in 1956. Throughout, said Krautheimer – and especially in the Appendix on classical prototypes, which was the special responsibility of Trude Krautheimer Hess – the source of documentation would be given as ›Mrs Bober-Census‹. The Deutsches Archäologisches Institut offered Corresponding Membership to Phyllis Bober, in recognition of her contribution to classical archaeology through her documentation of Renaissance collectors and students, as has more recently the Accademia dei Lincei.

And the series of sketchbooks with monographic introductions and catalogues was initiated by the publication of Phyllis Bober's ›Aspertini‹ in the ›Studies of the Warburg Institute‹ in 1957. It continued with Erna Mandowsky and Charles Mitchell on Pirro Ligorio in 1963, incidentally containing, in Mitchell's account of Renaissance antiquarian studies, the best brief treatment of that topic that I know. The ›Girolamo da Carpi‹ of Norman W. Canedy followed in 1976; appropriately, Canedy had been a pupil of Rudolf Wittkower's, and Wittkower had always been a *Census* supporter. Later came Gunter Schweikhart's ›Codex Wolfegg‹ in 1986; and Arnold Nesselrath's ›Fossombrone sketchbook‹ in 1993. As always, much time and effort by the Warburg Institute's staff was expended in seeing these volumes through the press, and the ›Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes‹ continued to carry, from time to time, articles which owed much to the *Census*. In the ›Studies of the Warburg Institute‹ also, Nicole Dacos's ›La découverte de la Domus Aurea et la formation des grotesques à la Renaissance‹ of 1969 added a dimension. Out-

side the series of Warburg publications, ›Antiquarian Drawings from Dosio's Roman Workshop‹, edited by Emanuele Casamassima and Ruth Rubinstein and published by the Giunta Regionale Toscana in 1993, was a good example of what could be done with the resources of the Census and with the help of those who came to London to use it.

The decision of the New York Institute in 1973, when Phyllis Bober left it, that the *Census* was a personal rather than an institutional project was a blow. Phyllis Bober's continuing attention at Bryn Mawr, her visits to London, and day-to-day work at the Warburg ensured progress, if at a reduced rate. And the number of those coming to consult the documentation continued to grow.

One of its most assiduous users in the 1970s was Michael Greenhalgh, then Lecturer and later Professor of the History of Art in Leicester, and now at the Australian National University at Canberra, who showed a convert's zeal for and an impressive grasp of the new documentation-by-computer. In 1978/79 Greenhalgh's persuasions, and his practical help – along with the wish to test by experiment how computers would cope with such highly complex and specialized documentation – prevailed. None of us had any real idea of the time it would all take. That, at least, we shared with our predecessors. A feasibility study was put in train. Perhaps, one felt, this might also lead to the sort of handbook to classical survival that had been the subject of enquiries from scholars and approaches from publishers now for some time. This was, I am thankful to say, provided by Phyllis Bober and Ruth Rubinstein, with their ›Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture‹, first published in 1986, ›Bober-Rubinstein‹, for short, and now an acclaimed and much consulted standard work.

All very well, but to Greenhalgh's optimism one had to reply that the Warburg had neither computers, nor the money to buy them. We could not continue to rely on Greenhalgh's and Leicester University's hardware. And what of software? It would be a full-time job, moreover, and not one that could be undertaken part-time for the sheer glory to be got from it. Besides, just as thirty years before, a card-index was held to be the agent of sterility, would not computers be even worse? Some were sure that they would. Krautheimer's response, I thought, would still partially suffice, in a more modern form: ›Garbage in, garbage out‹. What was already in was not garbage, however much deciphering of the cards, regularizing, checking and expansion might be needed.

At this point, we (I mean Jennifer Montagu, by then Curator of the Warburg Photographic Collection and I) were presented with the opportunity of an im-

mense enrichment. Limitation of scope was abandoned under the temptation of discussions with the Directors of the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Christoph Luitpold Frommel and Matthias Winner, in 1981. These presented the possibility of incorporating their parallel documentation of the survival of ancient architecture. One of the happiest experiences of involvement with the *Census* was the opportunity of working together with the Directors and the staff of the Hertziana. Yet again, who of us had a clear idea of the time and effort involved in this as in later expansions?

We were fortunate indeed that joint approach to the Getty Art History Information Program, then just beginning its existence, provided the most generous initial assistance that can be imagined, in the acquiring of new documentation, expanding the old, recording and making both available in the new medium, and in the staging of international research colloquia, which notably advanced both knowledge and the techniques of recording and disseminating it. That assistance has continued: it is impossible to be too grateful for the finance, the expert technical knowledge, the staffing, and the time the Getty has made available – or indeed for the Getty’s generosity of spirit. We were, of course, fortunate too in securing the services of Arnold Nesselrath to oversee the project. His wholeheartedness deserves nothing but praise. His struggles, first to come to terms himself with IT and then to instruct those who were expert in its technicalities but less versed in the arcane subject matter with which they were being presented, he can narrate better than I. Also his struggles to instruct those who were inputting data. I shall likewise leave him to tell you, privately perhaps, about the jet-lagged trials and pleasures, the twenty-four-hour working days, of a life shuttling between Rome and London; the visits to Los Angeles to justify us; and to museums and print-rooms all over the world in search of material.

I have finally so to speak declined, rather too rapidly and too cursorily, into the present – in the sense that I have, deliberately, spent most time on a heroic past. The present, my implication is, we know well. My notion has been to honour those who conceived the *Census*; those (she, rather) who gave it birth; and those who so long nourished and supported it, precariously for so long, generously later. I want to make sure that, in the dazzling and secure future that now seems to lie before it, these things are not obscured.

The *Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance* was intended as an instrument to make clear, by a specialized demonstration, the vital role of the consciousness of the ancient world in the formation of the

modern. In support of its expanded aim to provide an accurate knowledge of classical works of art and architecture up to 1600, it now counts some 25,000 images and 40,000 documents, recording not only the ancient free-standing, relief, and architectural sculpture, the inscribed monuments, the architecture itself which make up the bulk of its constituents, but painting, the minor arts, engraved gems. It exists as a data-base and can still be consulted through its now vastly increased files of photographs – and these can be used most rapidly and effectively in conjunction with the resources, available a few paces away, of the collection of facsimiles, books, periodicals and offprints which constitute the Warburg Institute's Library.

In 1995, as everyone here knows, there was a happy enlargement of the existing consortium of the Warburg Institute, the Bibliotheca Hertziana and the Getty Art History Information Program (now Information Institute) responsible for the maintenance of the *Census*. We were joined by the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities (now Getty Research Institute), the Humboldt University and the Aby-Warburg-Stiftung of Hamburg and the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology of the Federal Republic of Germany. That it can now be consulted on so many sites seems to me part of its triumph.

This seems to me exemplary international collaboration in scholarship, individual and institutional. I am conscious, too, of the reciprocal, inter-reliant aspect of it all, the way in which information made available by scholars unconnected with the *Census* is part of its life's blood, just as information made available by those responsible for the *Census* becomes part of the gross scholarly product, the general and mutually beneficial exchange of information. What we are celebrating today is the golden jubilee of a specialized research instrument which, in the fully developed form it has achieved, has the widest of uses and implications. The present, fully conscious of the past, looks forward with pleasure in and gratitude to that past, and with confidence, to the future.

NOTE: In compiling this paper, I have drawn chiefly on the Annual Reports and the correspondence files of the Warburg Institute, on Phyllis Pray Bober's 1995 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture >A Life of Learning< and on my own recollection, reinforced by that of colleagues.