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Classical Histories, Colonial Objects: The Specimen Table Across Time and Space

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Abstract
This article seeks to contextualise the production, purchase, and display of specimen tables in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, considering their fragmentary forms as a material result of both British neoclassicism and imperialism. Made for an audience of (often British) travellers, collectors, and settler colonists across the British empire and Continental Europe, specimen tables were named after the variety of specimens from which they were made, from pieces of marble (both newly sourced and procured from ancient ruins and monuments) to semi-precious hardstones and inlaid "exotic" woods. Reconceptualising the specimen table as a site that collapsed time and space, the article reads these objects through their fragmentary surfaces to explore how their interconnected forms echo their multitudinous connections across the complex geographies and temporalities of the British experience of travel and empire during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Introduction

John Singleton Copley's portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard (1775), now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, is a typical example of a "grand tour portrait" (fig. 1). As a distinct series of images that commemorate eighteenth-century travellers during their Italian sojourns, the backgrounds of these works brim with the treasures of the country's classical past. Copley's portrait is no exception: it depicts the colonial American couple in a location that is as richly furnished with fine materials as it is with antiquities. The opulence of the silks, brocades, and gilded wood that make up the room's furnishings is matched only by the impressive classical material culture that also surrounds them, which includes an ancient sculpture (likely of Orestes and Electra) and a fifth-century Greek vase. Finally, the positioning of the Colosseum as the central perspectival focus rounds off the objectscape of antiquity that the painting conjures.

Figure 1

John Singleton Copley, *Mr and Mrs Ralph Izard*, 1775, oil on canvas, 174.6 x 223.5 cm. Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (03.1033). Digital image courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Edward Ingersoll Brown Fund (all rights reserved).

As Maurie D. McInnis has observed, unlike the "swagger" found in paintings of Grand Tourists produced by Pompeo Batoni, "Copley has shown the Izards in the active pose of thinking, of engaging in connoisseurship, of managing ideas and exercising judgement over the lessons posed by the antiquities surrounding them".[1] McInnis accordingly reads the portrait as a complex amalgam of messages encoded in classical objects, which collectively serve to suggest the couple's taste and knowledge. Within this engaged and engaging arrangement of human and object, the table across which the pair leans is also worthy of further attention. The glistening slab of porphyry—a ruddy mauve igneous rock that is usually flecked with crystals of feldspar or quartz—that formed the table's top would have signalled a venerable geological tradition to informed viewers of the portrait. Prized for its rich colour and the mottled dispersal of its constituent crystals, porphyry had been highly valued in imperial Rome since its discovery at a site in Egypt in 18 CE.[2] Like the column and plinth which frame the space to the left of the couple, clearly identifiable as being composed of the green marble *verde antico*, the table's top affirms that ancient marbles were as important in the visual language of connoisseurial expertise and refined judgement as the other classicising objects in the image. Far from being simply a passive surface or practical furnishing, the table sits prominently alongside the Colosseum and the sculptural group, its significance within this assemblage gestured to by its central position within the portrait.

Crowned with its impressive slab of porphyry, the painted table is one of a large number of objects within the category of furniture known as "specimen tables", which can be broadly defined as tables whose tops are formed either from an intact piece of esteemed stone, or from fragments, parts, and pieces of material such as stones, minerals, and different types of wood. A particularly beautiful example of this category of furniture can be seen in figures 2 and 3, which show a rosewood occasional table featuring a specimen tabletop from around 1815, recently sold by Christie's. Its top showcases 120 specimens, including everything from Liberian granite to Sicilian breccia and cipollino marble, which are cut so as to display the specimens' brilliant colour and geological splendour. These are rendered identifiable by an accompanying *Catalogo*

Della qui annessa Serie di Pietre Silicie e Calcarie, in No. 120, which sits in a sprung frieze drawer below the table's surface, and which would have facilitated further reflection on its makeup following its purchase.

Figure 2

A Regency brass-inlaid, parcel-gilt, ebony, and Brazilian rosewood specimen stone occasional table, circa 1815, ebony, rosewood, brass, and stone, 76 x 51 x 43.5 cm. Digital image courtesy of Christie's (all rights reserved).

Figure 3

A Regency brass-inlaid, parcel-gilt, ebony, and Brazilian rosewood specimen stone occasional table (detail of table top), circa 1815, ebony, rosewood, brass, and stone, 76 x 51 x 43.5 cm. Digital image courtesy of Christie's (all rights reserved).

Specimen tables have a long history and a complex legacy, making their precise definition difficult to pin down, but in general they emerged as a distinct typology in Italy in the eighteenth century, before taking on new, more globalised, forms in the nineteenth, as this article will explore. In their use of rich marbles and semi-precious stones, they are reminiscent of *pietra dura*, a European form of decorative craft production featuring inlaid hardstones, yet are somewhat distinct from this practice in that it is their constituent materials, and not the patterns into which they are arranged, that are privileged. So named after the variety of specimens of which they were composed—including small and large pieces of marble, semi-precious hardstones, minerals, and woods of all kinds—specimen tabletops represent a crucial intersection between classical antiquity, Continental European and British imperial manufacture, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cultures of collecting.

An immensely popular decorative object among European elites, the specimen table's remarkable survival in the collections of innumerable museums, in historic properties, and on the art market reflects its pervasiveness. Many cultural institutions concerned with the history of European design and material culture own a number of specimen tables, and they form part of the decorative fabric of country houses and National Trust properties across the United Kingdom.[3] Yet despite their physical ubiquity, specimen tables are not necessarily afforded proportional cultural significance, with examples often not prominently displayed within their institutional homes.[4] Forming the literal and metaphorical furniture of the spaces in which they reside, they are commonplace and, as in Copley's portrait, functional objects, upon which people

lean and display other works of art, and as a result they are often overlooked. Again, in contrast with their remarkable material profusion, the critical literature examining specimen tables is comparatively limited, characterised by only a few accounts of their consumption and production from the discipline of furniture history, and by their scant appearances within literature on the Grand Tour and its souvenirs.[5] Collectively, this body of work provides a useful foundational account of these objects—including analyses of their materials and the workshops in which they were made, and descriptions of particularly exceptional examples.[6] Nevertheless, more sustained discussion of the tables as a complex and shifting body of objects, which fully situates the genre within its relevant critical contexts, has yet to be undertaken.

Why has this category of object not yet received deeper scholarly attention? One answer might be to do with abundance, and therefore the question of how we can discuss so many objects in a meaningful manner. Most specimen tables are completely unaccounted for within the extant literature on this type of furniture—perhaps regarded simply as examples of a broader fashion within the decorative arts, with many not fine enough to be worthy of further attention. Furthermore, by virtue of their being made from the fragments of stone unearthed at the "cava" (excavation sites established officially and unofficially in Italy) or sourced from the assorted detritus of Roman marble yards, specimen tables exist beyond the regimes of value long established around Grand Tour collecting. When the dealer Patrick Moir, who in 1794 secured export licences for "*Due Tavoli … uno di Verdo Antico impelliccato, l'altro di Granito*", is described by Ilaria Bignamini as enjoying merely a "modest" career because his extant export licences refer only to "modern decorative marbles and paintings as opposed to ancient works of art", we can see this hierarchical dynamic of high and low at play.[7] Falling outside the confines of the sculptural masterwork, specimen tables deploy their classical materiality in a manner that recalls Adolf Michaelis's dismissal of John Soane's collections ("an immeasurable chaos of worthless fragments … mixed together") rather than the dedicated display of a choice ancient marble.[8] As such, paying greater attention to specimen tables as significant objects purchased from the market in classical objects in their own right disrupts what Viccy Coltman has called "a nineteenth-century object fetishisation that misunderstands the heterogeneity of the neoclassical collection".[9]

A final issue for the analysis of specimen tables is likely to do with their physical and semantic complexity. As objects they are visually and materially highly intricate, and critically immensely complicated to try to understand: objects of multiple parts that relate to multiple contexts. In their piecemeal forms, the tables reflect the period's dual emphasis on order and categorisation that produced highly systemised forms of knowledge, while echoing the wider aesthetic concern with complexity and the accordant emergence of collage as a central visual and material rhetoric that also occurred at this time.[10]

Despite these difficulties, the profusion of this group of objects clearly suggests their deeper significance. As a definitional category encompassing hundreds of examples both in museums and on the art market today, specimen tables beg answers to multiple complex questions. What are we, as scholars, to do with an overwhelming abundance of examples made in a notably consistent manner? How do we account for their popularity and survival, and how might we consider them through more critically and theoretically engaged lenses? While the great number of specimen tables produced firmly situates them in relation to narratives around the fashion, taste, and stylistic concerns of this period of history, they are simultaneously manifestations of broader cultural and intellectual paradigms that also characterise the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, to misappropriate Claude Levi-Strauss's famous formulation, specimen tables

are good to think with.[11] Whether one is undertaking an examination of specimen tables as a broad category, reading individual tables closely, or paying sustained attention to the small fragments that made up their surfaces, thinking about specimen tables as standard eighteenth- and nineteenth-century decorative arts objects reveals much about the world that made them. This article introduces some possible contextual and theoretical frameworks for understanding this profuse yet underexplored category of object. Building upon the connoisseurial approaches and narratives of Grand Tourist souvenir acquisition that have previously dominated scholarship on this genre of furniture, this article seeks to theorise the specimen table through a reading that emphasises concepts such as geology, history, and the fragment. In so doing, it attempts to rethink the specimen table as a dynamic object whose fragmented surface marries the historical, the environmental, and the decorative, and which collapses the space and time of the ancient past with the imperial expansion that characterised the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century world.

Tables on the Tour: Consumable Goods in Italy

Specimen tables were regularly seen and acquired by Grand Tourists of various nationalities during their travels around Continental Europe throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This section provides an introduction to the earliest forms of specimen tables for purchase, namely those acquired by Grand Tourists, giving a sense of the kinds of tables purchased by travellers as well as the ways in which they were acquired.

The constituent fragments of specimen tables were reputedly sourced from ruins, archaeological excavations, and the destruction of classical monuments, sites, and surfaces such as mosaic pavements. For example, in 1773, Thomas Martyn and John Lettice recorded "a great quantity of African marble" found at Portici, "out of which some tables were made".[12] This was a task likely undertaken by stonecutters (*scalpellini*), who, as Elizabeth Fairman has suggested, "would have had a stock of decorative stones, including rare, ancient slabs that would have been salvaged from archaeological digs, various engineering works, or the demolition of ancient villas".[13]

In addition to tables being purchased directly from such skilled artisans, they were available from shops and dealers. Sometimes collectors in Britain entrusted their purchases to family members, as when Thomas Watson-Wentworth, first Marquess of Rockingham, asked his son, Charles, Lord Malton, to make such acquisitions on his behalf: "if when at Rome you chuse to lay out 4 or 500£ in Marble Tables, statues, as you Shall judge agreeable to you I will answer your Bills to that summ".[14] Henry Temple Palmerston obtained a pair of marble-topped tables from the artist-cum-dealer Piranesi, as well as "two granite tables for £30 and two tables of green porphyry with Alabaster border for £37" from an unknown source.[15] An unspecified type of table also features in the account of Italian shopping by Sydney, Lady Morgan, in which she recorded how "every town in Italy has its *Bottegone*, or great shop, *par excellence*; which, sometimes called *Bottega Francese*, is invariably and exclusively filled with French merchandise and manufactures. There, lamps and stockings, gloves and tables, rouge and loungers, caps from the Palais-Royal and china from Sevres, the ornaments of the boudoir and the necessaries of the pantry, are all purchased by the upper classes". In Lady Morgan's account, characterised by "petty dealers, with various small wares, vegetables, fruit and fish", tables occupy the same space as sausages, "spangled fans, silver combs", and "coral necklaces".[16] As such, furniture was one element of a veritable cornucopia of consumable goods available for purchase on the Tour.

Indeed, the specimen table's status as a fashionable commodity is exemplified by the tabletops taken from the *Westmorland*, a British privateer frigate captured in 1778, which contained fifty-seven crates of art objects collected by aristocratic tourists. At least six specimen tabletop slabs

were included in the ship's ill-fated cargo, which arrived in Spain as part of a diverse shipment of sculpture, marble fragments, prints, paintings, and books, as well as cod, anchovies, silk, coral, and Parmesan cheese, among other luxuries.[17]

With many of their constituent fragments emerging from the antiquity-rich soil of the *cava*, specimen tables can be profitably located within the "digging and dealing" models of collecting discussed by scholars such as Clare Hornsby and Ilaria Bignamini, who have described the complex and protracted routes that classical sculpture and works of art followed from marble yard to British country home. As Hornsby and Bignamini have noted, all objects found at excavation sites, including statues, busts, inscriptions, slabs, and even water pipes, had to be recorded and reported to the *Commissario*, the keeper of classical monuments and their fragments in Rome and throughout the Papal States. The *Commissario* would have to inspect these objects before they could be moved or sold, but only after the share due to the *Reverenda Camera*, the Papal Treasury, had been agreed.[18]

Despite the thriving trade in illegal treasure hunting, which has left substantial archival gaps, the textual record of the formal machinations of the antiquities market at the time—from licence documents to correspondence between dealers and buyers—has ensured that extensive documentation of many excavations and their finds survives. Specimen tabletops repeatedly crop up within these sources. For example, in 1771, Isaac Jamineau sold, among other antiquities such as "*una colonnetta di alabastro orientale alta palmi cinque una vasca longa palmi sei antico di tipo africanato*", "*una tavola con ornate di pietre diverse*", while Thomas Jenkins, the famous art and antiquities dealer, exported "*due tavole di graniti di palmi quattro*", and sold another specimen table to Sir George Strickland, who travelled to Italy between 1778 and 1779.[19] Likewise, we know that Henry Blundell, of Ince Blundell, received two tabletops made by Ferdinando Lisandroni from a slab of *verde antico* as a gift from Pope Pius VI, given in exchange for a sarcophagus donated by Blundell when he could not secure its export licence.[20] As a result of these (sometimes vexed) transactions, specimen tables feature in the collections of estates such as Osterley Park, Powis Castle, and Castle Howard.[21] Sold by merchants to their eventual British owners, many slabs were attached to bases made by local artisans once home.[22] At Petworth House, for example, tabletops made from porphyry and *verde antico* were affixed to giltwood frames supplied by the English furniture makers Whittle and Norman sometime around 1760.[23] The easy integration of classical object with English furnishing is exemplified by a specimen table owned by Soane, who acquired "a mahogany frame reeded all round on turned and reeded legs on castors for a marble top" from Edward Foxhall Senior in 1816 for one of his specimen tops.[24] The slab, perhaps acquired during Soane's 1778–1780 Grand Tour, features twenty-eight perfect squares of specimen marbles, and was one of several examples owned by Soane, but it seems to have been the only one to be fitted with a dedicated base (fig. 4).[25]

Figure 4

Edward Foxhall Senior, Rectangular mahogany table with brass frame of marble samples, 1800, mahogany, brass, and marble, 68.5 x 59 x 46 cm. Collection of Sir John Soane's Museum, London (MRG4). Digital image courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum, London (all rights reserved).

Evocative Fragments

Soane's *Description of the House and Museum of the North Side of Lincoln's Inn Fields*, an ekphrastic translation of his home, hints at how he (and, therefore, other contemporary collectors) may have conceptualised fragments such as those collaged into the surfaces of his slab tabletops. Soane writes: "on every side" there are "objects of deep interest alike to the antiquary who loves to explore and retrace them through ages past; the student, who, in cultivating a classic taste, becomes enamoured of their forms; and the imaginative man, whose excursive fancy gives to each 'a local habitation and name' in association with the most interesting events and most notable personages of the past of history has transmitted for our contemplation".[26] Soane's characterisation of classical objects as transportive devices that entrance viewers by conjuring imaginary geographical contexts certainly finds its echo in tourist literature of the period, which consistently figures both historic ruins and geological specimens as evocative pieces of the landscape. Reading specimen tables against contemporary British tourist narratives that mention the stones and fragments encountered while travelling accordingly suggests how we might think more conceptually about this type of furniture, providing a model for understanding these objects wherein their fragmented surfaces could conjure the imaginary and experiential contexts of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travel.

Tourists often viewed and acquired specimens, pieces of antiquity, and mosaicked surfaces during their travels, making the fragment a central material form for travellers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Charles Dickens's character Meagles, for example, comes

back from his Italian sojourn with "morsels of tessellated pavement from Herculaneum and Pompeii" in *Little Dorrit*.[27] Indeed, fragments of classical material culture repeatedly appear in literature documenting travels around Italy, with writers such as Selina Martin recording that she saw "the famous grotto of the Sybil", "the ground on all sides strewed with beautiful pillars and fragments of marble"—ruins that might have made apt raw materials for later transposition into specimen marbles.[28] Maria Graham's travel narrative likewise conveys the impression of the Roman campagna as riddled with the fragments of antiquity—"many of [the hills] are crowned with the ruins of towers, of temples, and of tombs, whose painted ceilings and Mosaic flooring now and then attract the eye of the passing traveller. As we drove along, the polygonal pavement of the antique road frequently appeared, and on either hand the plough-share annually makes discoveries which, unless they timely attract the notice of an antiquary, or the avarice of a marble-worker, it burries [*sic*] again the next season".[29] These texts reinforce what Rosemary Sweet has called the "perception of Rome as cabinet of curiosities", presenting it, and Italy more broadly, as a land of glittering morsels, its fields littered with the fragments of urns, its beaches covered with a layer of lapidary detritus, the very walls of its houses covered in an intricate canvas of ancient gems.[30]

This body of travel writing is remarkable for the impressive material knowledge demonstrated by authors as they identify and describe the precious stones and minerals encountered on tour.[31] Anna Riggs Miller's description of the Pantheon's pavement, for example, lists "a great variety of morsels of fine Italian marble, opaque gems, alabasters, agates, and jaspers", while she designates the floors of the Basilica di San Marco as one of the church's "numberless rarities" thanks to the "carnelian, agate, jasper, serpentine, and verd antique" that comprised its mosaics.[32] Like Miller, Hester Piozzi was particularly taken with the mosaic floor of the Pantheon, whose pavement was inlaid "so as to enchant the eye with its elegance". She continues by recording that the pavement "dazzles one with its riches: the black porphyry, in small squares, disposed in compartments, and inscribed as one may call it in pavonazzino perhaps; the red, bounded by serpentine; the granites, in giall antique".[33] These texts show comprehension of different types of marble and other forms of precious stone, a form of knowledge that evokes the kinds of interactions we might presume were had with the labelled and numbered specimen tabletops produced during the period, which, as Fairman suggests, should be considered as objects of "antiquarian curiosity".[34] Important examples of such tops are those captured from the *Westmorland*. Described in the ship's inventory as "beautiful marble tables inlaid with various fine stones", the decorative tabletops are inlaid with samples of stones arranged in a rigid, geometric format, with each specimen assigned an individual number.[35] An attendant key for the purpose of distinguishing the marbles would often accompany such slabs, allowing for continued analysis and comparison of the individual specimens upon arrival on British soil. A rare surviving example of a specimen table complete with such a list is housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, having belonged to a successive triumvirate of collectors, namely Dr. John Fothergill, Dr. J. C. Lettsom, and the architect George Gwilt, the latter of whom purchased the slab in 1824.[36] The original handwritten key identifies each of the 137 specimens of Italian marble within the table, including pieces whose provenance apparently related to Roman ruins.[37] Beyond Piozzi's ability to recognise the variety of specimens on display, the extract is noteworthy as the author directly compares these fragmented mineralogical surfaces with inlaid marble tables, exclaiming that they "have an indescribable effect, no Florence table was ever so beautiful".[38] Although it is not clear whether Piozzi is referring to *pietra dura* examples or traditional specimen tables here, she nevertheless continues a reading of these surfaces as spaces

that align the various visual and material cultures of the Tour, as begun in her discussion of the Villa Borghese. Describing the residence in ecstatic terms—"the tables! the walls! the cameos stuck in the walls! the frames of the doors, all agate, porphyry, onyx, or verd antique!"—she presents table, furnishings, and space as of shared mineralogical richness.[39]

Beyond their identification with the opulent surfaces of the Italian city, the antiquarian nature of such fragments is also repeatedly highlighted in travel literature from the period. For example, in a passage from *A Visit to Italy* (1842), Frances Trollope recalled the fragments of "antique statuary, in which the first glance of an unlearned eye discerns little or nothing beyond a mutilated piece of marble, interesting perhaps, from its well-authenticated antiquity, but worthy of attention from no other cause. A lengthened examination of this fragment, however, will very often force upon the mind such a conviction of the truth of its details as leads to wonder and delight".[40] Objects like Trollope's mutilated marble sit comfortably between Samuel Johnson's roughly contemporary definition of antiquities as a "remain of ancient times; an ancient rarity", and Crystal B. Lake's more recent theorisation of the artefact as a fragment that exceeds "the perceptual capabilities of its immediate observers while that which persists must continue to be available for observation".[41] Within this formulation, specimens of ancient stone recall a known (or presumed) "shape and history"; yet that which is broken, absent, or lost, prohibits full identification, opening up conceptual space wherein numerous imaginary, and specifically historical, contexts can be projected.

The Latin root of fragment—*frangere*—means to break into pieces. This etymological reference to the relationship between the part and the intact reminds us of the fact that the fragment is (or at least was) always an element of a larger whole.[42] As Deborah Harter argues in *Bodies in Pieces*, the fragment is always "a part in a larger system", whether that whole relates to its fragment's former state or its new material relationships.[43] While previous literature on the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fragment has most often focused on the "fragmentary mode" in Romantic poetry and on contemporary interest in the ruin, an interdisciplinary reading allows us to recognise the pervasiveness of this dialogue of part and whole within a range of visual, material, and literary forms. Through this reading, we can recognise the significance of the constituent elements of specimen tables not only as fragments in and on their own terms, but as objects that gain particular meaning when placed in dialogic juxtaposition with and against other objects, as facilitated through practices of acquisition, curation, and selection, of combination, placement, and creation. Within the space of the table, made from an evocative juxtaposition of natural stones shaped through cultural means, these mediating processes assigned meaning and status to fragmentary objects, even when their originating contexts were absent, or only opaquely evoked.

Notably, fragments encountered on Tour functioned in highly mnemonic and experiential ways, evoking both scenarios of personal signification and much longer historical contexts. Both Miller and Piozzi record their overwhelming desire to dig in the grounds of classical sites to find specimens of ancient gems, or the "caryatid pillars said by Pliny to have graced" the Pantheon.[44] When Miller was unable to view the Caduta della Marmora cascade at Terni, she subsequently wrote to her mother that her husband, who had continued alone, had returned with incrustations "plucked" from its spray, "some of which he brought me in his pocket", and which served to represent the experience in which Miller could not physically partake.[45] As such, the fragments encountered on significant journeys such as these can be understood as spectacles reduced to souvenirs, or history reduced to the enduring materiality of the object.[46] These examples highlight the role of fragmentary material culture in creating important moments when narrating

the act of travel. Reading responses to the collected fragmentary objects found on Tour within their textual descriptions, we can see how highly experiential models of travelling, looking, and owning might have coalesced around the surface of the table, as an object that brought many such fragments together. The table therefore functions as an object that collapsed the sites and sights of such journeys within a unified material plane that commodified these experiences for eventual translation into an English collection.

Site and Sight

Furthermore, a number of accounts by tourists from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries affirm that inlaid marble tables not only evoked Grand Tour travel but were among the regular sights experienced during it. Piozzi, for example, inventoried a table "encrusted with *verd antique*" as part of the furniture of her lodgings during her stay in Rome, while Starke recalled viewing "a table made of precious marbles" when she visited the Palazzo Barberini.[47] Of course, for contemporary tourists, such tables not only formed the physical furniture of the interior spaces they visited and the apartments in which they stayed, but were also routinely available for purchase as souvenirs and exportable home furnishings.[48] Such acquisitions constituted meaningful replications of the material cultures of the Tour translated home, or, as Coltman has described it, "a process of transposition from one cultural context", with the object subsequently "appropriated into another".[49]

Alongside processes of transcription and translation, contemporary travel writing shows us that such tabletops also evoked the ruined materiality found on Tour. Miller's discussion of the several tables that she encountered in Italy, including "a table of *lapis lazuli*, which appears to consist of several pieces", and another "composed of excellent morsels of lapis, amethyst, and agate, 22 inches broad, and 3 feet 10 inches long", employed notably consistent language that connected these objects to the classical objectscape of the Italian past.[50] Deploying the fragmentary "morsel" as a shared descriptor, she relates the materiality of the table to many other objects found throughout her epistolary transcription of Italy's wonders. Using "morsel" to describe narratively rich specimens, she appends the term to everything from the pavement of the Pantheon to ruined temples. In so doing, she highlights the relationship between the geological richness of the sights of the Tour and the site of the table, one echoed by the fact that many such objects were literally composed from the ruins of ancient monuments.

This connection between site and sight was literalised within several nineteenth-century examples of specimen furniture. Figure 5 depicts one such table, now in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, donated by the prominent art collector Henry Vaughan. Made by the renowned mosaicist Michelangelo Barberi sometime between 1850 and 1867, it features a combination of micromosaics and specimen marbles, mounted on a base of black slate. Unifying specimen marbles with micromosaic production and *pietra dura* inlay work, this type of table combines a number of prevalent forms of Italian craftsmanship available for purchase in the form of souvenir objects throughout this period. Specimen tables joining these crafts became particularly popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, as evidenced by the plethora of examples surviving from these decades.[51] Designs of this type typically feature a central micromosaic plaque depicting a famous site associated with classical antiquity, such as the Colosseum, the Tomb of Cecilia Metella, the Temple of Vesta, the Pantheon, or the Doves of Pliny. The Victoria and Albert Museum table depicts the Forum, another location favoured by the producers of such objects. The micromosaics forming the outermost border of the table depict a mixture of capriccios of Roman monuments and sculpture (including the Temple of Vesta, the

Colosseum, St. Peter's Square, the Arch of Titus, the Capitoline Flora, and the Belvedere Apollo) alongside representations of Italian worthies such as Virgil, Horace, Galileo Galilei, Raphael, Michelangelo, Dante, the Roman emperor Augustus, and Cicero, a significant inclusion given the transformation of Italy into a unified nation around this time. Developed by mosaicists employed by the Vatican Mosaic Workshop, micromosaics depicting such sights became increasingly popular from the late 1750s.[52] When visiting Rome in 1817, Charlotte Eaton noted the proliferation of micromosaic wares and their producers within the city, describing "hundreds of artists, or rather artisans, who carry on the manufactory of mosaics on a small scale. Snuff-boxes, rings, necklaces, brooches, earrings, &c. are made in immense quantity; and since the English flocked in such numbers to Rome, all the streets leading to the Piazza di Spagna, are lined with the shops of these Musaicisti".[53]

Figure 5

Michelangelo Barberi, Black slate with inlaid marble specimens and micromosaics tabletop, 1850–1867, stone, overlaid with a mosaic of coloured marbles and other stones, 83.5 x 3.1 cm. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (924-1900). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (all rights reserved).

Variously bordered or surrounded by specimen marbles, the surfaces of this type of specimen table draw a direct link between the depicted sight and the material site of Rome. Unlike the neatly arranged specimen marbles of tables made in the previous century, the Vaughan donation deploys a tonal gradation of bands of stone, which undulate from deepest grey-black to rosy-pink and fleshy yellows at its outermost edge (fig. 6). Amid this jumble of fragments, individual pieces of porphyry and *verde antico* stand out, and likewise the brilliant blue of a slice of lapis lazuli interrupts its formal coherence. Thanks to their unregimented forms, the table's specimens evoke not only a natural, even geological mode, but the classical fragment in its raw form, as confirmed by a note affixed to the tabletop's reverse, which identifies its marbles as "found in the Palace of the Caesars on the right of the Forum". Fragmentary souvenirs that related to the

landscapes, sites, and histories of the places visited by travellers during this period thereby evoked Horace Walpole's conceptualisation of souvenirs as literally the inanimate parts of places visited, small objects liberated from their imbrication within larger cultures to become pieces of them.[54] By unifying these specimens with a visual depiction of the very space from which the stones were reportedly sourced, the table collapses the physical site of the city with its famed sights, thereby rendering the connection between the specimen table and the place of its production explicit. In this way, they evoke Richard Wendorf's formulation of Rome as a site of "perpetual double-exposure", wherein the ancient and modern cities coexist in powerful and evocative ways through its enduring classical material culture.[55]

Figure 6

Michelangelo Barberi, Black slate with inlaid marble specimens and micromosaics tabletop (detail), 1850–1867, stone, overlaid with a mosaic of coloured marbles and other stones, 83.5 x 3.1 cm. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (924-1900). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (all rights reserved).

History and the Geological Specimen

Beyond the individual experience of the traveller, the fragmentary objects and sites encountered on the Grand Tour also evoked more universal experiences, such as the passage of time and the frailty of human life.[56] Nowhere was this fragility more keenly displayed than at the ruined sites of Herculaneum and Pompeii. The excavation of these locations not only revealed preserved classical civilisation, but powerfully suggested timescales beyond the human. It is no coincidence that the concept of "deep time"—that is, the geological temporality that stretches beyond the scale of human history—was first coined in the eighteenth century by the Scottish geologist James Hutton, whose work revealed that the formation of the earth occurred over such a prolonged period as to render "human history comparatively inconsequential".[57] As Stephanie O' Rourke has noted, geological illustrations and artworks from this period accordingly suggest not only a past prior to human existence, but also a possible "geological future marked by the absence of living human actors".[58]

Marked by the traces of the classical past and the destructive forces of the earth's "raw geological power", Pompeii and Herculaneum also evoke Florence M. Heltzer's concept of "ruin

time", an anthropo-biological temporality that combines both human history and natural processes of ruination.[59] Drawing upon this unique position, Noah Heringman has discussed antiquarianism undertaken in the shadow of Vesuvius as fracturing antiquity into "historical, prehistoric, and pre-human domains".[60] For visitors on the Grand Tour, these overlapping temporalities were rendered even more palpable by Vesuvius's ongoing activity throughout the eighteenth century, with violent eruptions taking place between the years 1765 and 1794.[61] The constant rumblings of the volcano were recorded in Miller's tour diary, when in 1770 she spent a night watching its eruptions: "it bellows like distant thunder, and then throws out flames and red-hot stones with *lava*".[62] As Heringman writes, this "shared experience of Vesuvius in action" aligned geological, ancient, and contemporary moments, a connection materialised through the volcanic matter that characterised the geological profile of the Bay of Naples.[63] From its "fields of fire", to the tuff, or solidified volcanic ash, that blanketed the ancient towns, the region was literally formed from many millennia of volcanic eruptions.[64]

Yet the status of rocks as "signs of obscure, titanic processes" beyond human comprehension is complicated by their presentation within specimen tables, a translation that rendered their forms commodifiable and ownable, reframing them from "nonhuman agents of violent deformation" into potentially knowable specimens, crystallised in time for future study.[65] Utilising fragments marked by both geological (in their formation) and historical (in their use by classical civilisations) time, classical specimens help to reconcile sublime unknowability through transformations of scale, ordering, and improvement. Subjected to cyclical and reciprocal processes of refinement, wherein rock was transmuted into stone so it could be translated into cultural objects such as buildings, monuments, and structures, before eventually being ruined, lost, rediscovered, and refined again, the object biography of the specimen table is one of transformative acts of commodification that rendered "magnitude, formlessness, inscrutable antiquity" into consumable goods.[66]

Hamilton's *Campi Phlegraei*, published in Naples in 1776, directly contributed to the period's "growing connoisseurship of the earth" and its attendant consumer culture.[67] Featuring illustrations by Peter Fabris, the text chronicled Vesuvian emissions, ancient structures, and classical antiquities, which are discussed alongside thirteen plates depicting "the different specimens of Volcanick matters, such as lava's tufa's, pumice stones, ashes, sulphurs, salts", of which the region was composed.[68] Of the plates, which feature carefully posed displays, one is particularly significant: Plate XXXXIX (fig. 7), in which the rigid presentation of perfectly square fragments undeniably resembles a specimen tabletop. Like the rest of the illustrations, which juxtapose encrusted seashells, snuff boxes, and "crystals commonly call'd Gems of Mount Vesuvius" with more clearly geological fragments, the image is an evocative combination of natural specimens and cultural objects.[69] While Heringman notes that the specimens in these plates are grouped "on table tops or on shelves", I would propose that Plate XXXXIX is grouped *as a* tabletop, an interpretation hinted at by its numbered key.[70]

Figure 7

Peter Fabris, Specimens of the lavas of Vesuvius polished, in William Hamilton, *Campi Phlegraei* (Naples, 1776), Plate XXXXIX, 1776, hand-coloured engraving. Digital image courtesy of Sepia Times/Universal Images Group via Getty Images (all rights reserved).

This was an appropriate mode of presentation given that specimen tables featuring Vesuvian fragments would become a popular sub-type. As with the other types of specimen table discussed, the production of these objects mirrored contemporaneous forms of Grand Tour acquisition. Tourists often record obtaining souvenirs of Vesuvius and the surrounding volcanic landscapes. Anne Flaxman (wife of the sculptor John Flaxman) recalled picking up "a piece of the sulphureous matter which was rather too hot to hold" following a breathless climb up the volcano, noting with satisfaction that she "manag'd to keep it" despite its preserved heat.[71] Likewise, Lady Elizabeth Holland displayed a "complete collection of the volcanic eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, and the correspondent volcanoes of Lipari and Ischia" in her cabinet of curiosities at Holland House.[72] Alongside the commodities, specimen slabs, and works of fine art included in the cargo of the *Westmorland*, several crates included sulphurs and lava.[73] As such, we can view lava tabletops as part of a wider economy of Grand Tour souvenir production, which included portraits, marble sculpture, and even the volumes of *Campi Phlegraei* itself. Although often not the focus of accounts of his prodigious sculpture collection, it is notable that Charles Townley's first antiquities were specimens of lava from Vesuvius and "slabs of coloured marbles from Capri and Pozzuoli".[74] Later in 1774, Isaac Jamineau wrote to Townley to offer him five busts and two more "inlaid lava tables", these made by "a rascal … one Tamasino who shews the paintings at Herculaneum", but Townley would not take the dealer up on his offer.[75] These were such popular souvenirs of the tourist experience that Rudolf Eric Raspe warned potential buyers of "the subtle lava-dealers at Naples, who like their kindred Italian antiquity-sellers, cannot be supposed to be remarkably conscientious. I have seen dear-bought pretended Vesuvian precious stones, which, upon nearer examination, were found to be artificial glasses; and some tables, inlaid with pretended Vesuvian and Sicilian lavas, which, for the greater part, were extremely apocryphal, or consisted of marbles".[76] As Richard Hamblyn argues, this anecdote demonstrates the importance of the veracity of specimens, as it was lava, not marble, that was "the souvenir sample of Naples", and it was this unique materiality that gave it value as a specimen, and as part of a tabletop.[77]

A surviving example of a lava specimen table from 1764 gives a good sense of the appearance of such objects (figs. 8, 9). Mounted on a base likely produced by the furniture makers Ince & Mayhew, it was one of a set of three lava tables that Brownlow Cecil, 9th Earl of Exeter,

acquired for Burghley House, Lincolnshire, during his Grand Tour of 1763–1764. Tables of this class make use of an evocative combination of *pietra del Vesuvio*, *pietra di lava*, *palombino*, *giallo*, *granito*, *breccia*, sienna, and labradorite marbles, alongside green and red porphyry, some of which are displayed here in a rigid geometrical arrangement of polished discs interlinked by looped rings and stars, with a yellow marble surround. Such tables accordingly demonstrate how ornamental objects subsumed natural materials, specifically those with a classicising signification, within their decorative schemes. Here the geological and the classical pasts and temporal modes are linked. With Vesuvius's pyroclastic flow responsible for one of the most infamous events in classical antiquity, the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the associational resonances of the tabletop, even in the lava's transformed state, would have been powerful ones.

Figure 8

Ince and Mayhew, Wood table inlaid with specimen lava and marble top, 1764–1767, wood, lave, marble, 89 x 144.5 x 76.5 cm. Collection of The British Museum, London (1764,0928.1). Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

Figure 9

Ince and Mayhew, Wood table inlaid with specimen lava and marble top (detail), 1764–1767, wood, lave, marble, 89 x 144.5 x 76.5 cm. Collection of The British Museum, London (1764,0928.1). Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

Colonial Objects

In its hybridisation of the ancient past and the eighteenth-century present, the specimen table therefore represents a rather typical Grand Tour souvenir. Grand Tour collecting, particularly the acquisition of antiquities, can be viewed as an explicitly colonial enterprise. Indeed, in telling language, Ilaria Bignamini argues that the "'British Conquest of the Marbles of Ancient Rome' can be regarded as one of the most important consequences of the 'Golden Age' of the Grand Tour", while Heringman has also described contemporaneous antiquarianism as a "conquest of the past".[78] Coltman has discussed this kind of material acquisitiveness in plainly imperial terms, arguing that from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards "Britain was no longer a peripheral European state paying lip service to ancient Rome via her literature and architecture, but instead an empire ready to take on the material legacy of that paradigm of empires".[79] Apart from the intellectual association between Britain and great ancient empires created and reinforced by Grand Tour collecting, the model of digging and dealing was very much a colonial

one of unearthing and removing the goods of one nation to another: classical objects reused, redisplayed, and integrated into the cultural heritage of the newly ascendant British empire. Although the objects were often purchased, this was not always the case, as the tourist John Morritt of Rokeby described, noting "some we steal, some we buy" in reference to the consumptive practices of travellers.[80] Indeed, tourist accounts teem with narratives of taking fragmented specimens of ancient stone directly from the earth. Writing from Naples on 16 March 1771, for example, Miller recounted her visit to the Cumæan Sibyl's cave, located near Puzzuoli, in which she filled her pockets with some handfuls of the earth, among which there were an "abundance of antique bits of mosaic, broken agate … one intaglio of jasper".[81] This manner of collecting and the archaeological and excavatory practices that went along with it are exemplary of the perceived ownership of the landscape that typifies British imperialism. As Coltman writes of British collectors: "their attitude to the *spolia opima* of their travels was proprietary rather than exploratory. They identified with the imperial Roman paradigm to such an extent that, rather than encountering the other, they seemed to be furnishing an indigenous tradition".[82] In the context of these encounters with the Italian landscape, strewn with classical objects ripe for the taking, specimen tables can accordingly belong to a broader model of colonialism predicated upon an unquestioned ownership of the land, and its resources and materials; occasioned by a deep-seated British belief that it was owed these classical objects and stones as the rightful heir to the ancient past.

A possible interpretation for the specimen table as directly connected to British imperialism and its artistic manifestations through the exploitation of the landscape and its resources is reinforced by the emergence of a specifically and explicitly colonial variety of specimen table during the second half of the nineteenth century. Like the eighteenth-century tables that made use of Italy's distinct history and geological record by employing classical stone and materials such as lava, these late nineteenth-century tables also employed distinctive regional materials, specifically those rendered accessible by the rise of the British empire. As a direct response to expanded colonial geographies, this group of tables inherited the visual and material languages established in eighteenth-century Continental European examples—that is, of fragmented specimens of specific types of notable or rare materials—but used them in tabletops made not of stone or minerals, but of inlaid "exotic" woods. As such, the tables can be read in relation to Richard Wrigley's model of artistic influence, which seeks to look beyond the "transhistorical universal joint that is invoked in order to articulate links between all manner of artefacts and styles", to instead highlight "the particular models, mechanisms, and metaphors by which means influence was understood to work at a given moment".[83] Beyond the aesthetic commonalities between objects made across two centuries and within distinct geographical contexts, read in this way, specimen tables emerge as a distinctive cultural mode, one which reflects the particular "models, mechanisms, and metaphors" of empire as much as it does histories of taste and collecting.

Such wood-inlaid tables were made in parts of the Caribbean, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Sri Lanka, these areas' local flora and fauna being utilised to produce tables that directly employed the geographies of empire and the very physicality of which echoed the possessive commodification of colonialism. "Ceylonese" tables form a particularly distinct local grouping, comprising a large number of examples characterised by radially inlaid spirals of woods that emanate from the central point of the tables, which are typically round, hexagonal, or octagonal in shape (fig. 10). Employing a mixture of materials such as ebony, palm, zebra wood, satinwood, and other regionally specific materials such as ivory, they showcase the botanical and natural fecundity of the area through a highly aestheticised presentation of colour and grain. This

exhibitionary mode for showing off the fruits of empire was exploited by the organisers of contemporary international exhibitions, where wooden specimen tables were frequently displayed.[84]

Figure 10

Wood inlaid centre table, mid-nineteenth century, ebony specimens, 79 x 48 x 122 cm. Digital image courtesy of Christie's (all rights reserved).

Exemplars of this form of specimen table were made by Ralph Turnbull, a Scottish furniture maker who set up shop in Jamaica sometime around 1815.[85] One of a number of Scots who sought to exploit the business opportunities afforded by imperial expansion, Turnbull consistently used the indigenous woods of Jamaica in his designs, employing mahogany, rosewood, cedar, logwood, palmetto palm, ebony, allspice, wild lime, Jamaican dogwood, live oak, and coconut palm. Figure 11 shows a particularly impressive example of his workshop's furniture, recently acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. The subject of important new scholarship by Catherine Doucette, the table uses the indigenous woods yacca and mahoe to create heraldic designs, *trompe l'oeil* elements, and vignettes of what we presume to be Jamaican scenery.[86] Less intricate, but nevertheless significant, are an array of smaller tables produced by the same workshop that follow the typical language of specimen display, featuring concentric circles of mahogany, palmwood, and satinwood, alternated so as to emphasise visual contrasts between individual wood specimens.[87] As Cross has argued, Turnbull took particular interest in the indigeneity of the woods used in his furniture, as evidenced by an advertisement for the company that asked people to send him "any new or unnamed specimens of wood, the leaf, flower, and fruit of the tree", as he had an "excellent opportunity (by the assistance of a scientific Gentlemen) of ascertaining its real botanical name".[88] Beyond the self-evidently colonialist strategy of renaming plant varieties that were presumably only "new" and "unnamed" to the eyes of European colonists, Turnbull's employment of a botanist is significant, as it denotes his participation in the botanical cultures and methodologies of the period. This reading is underlined by the existence of paper keys identifying the timbers used on several of his workshop's specimen tables that associate Turnbull's productions with the numbered examples

discussed, and thereby with the "sciences of antiquity", Heringman's characterisation of the Romantic period's shared material spaces of antiquarian and natural historical enquiry.[89]

Figure 11

Ralph Turnbull, Wood inlaid centre table, 1846–1851, rosewood, ebony, bird's-eye maple, sabicu, satinwood, padouk, lacewood, palm wood, amboyna, mahogany, and oak specimens, 75 cm x 133.5 cm. Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (2019.1803). Digital image courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Henry H. and Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund (all rights reserved).

The use of natural materials within this type of enquiry has been discussed by scholars such as Theresa M. Kelly and Kay Dian Kriz, as part of the botanical technologies of empire.[90] Kelly identifies the taxonomical modes that characterised the natural historical enquiry of this period as a method for mapping variety, thereby creating order and comprehensibility out of the chaos of generic diversity occasioned by imperial expansion.[91] Beyond the decorative functions of specimen tables, the well-ordered presentation of their fragmentary samples renders them a kind of visual and material translation of the organisational mode described. It is not by accident that specimen tables are so named—their nomenclature directly evokes natural historical modes of compilation and presentation. Yet, while highlighting the alien nature of these species by demarking them as worthy of individuated display, the table's formal adherence to established aesthetic models marks its specimens as nativised and domesticated: subsumed within time-honoured visual and material cultures of Europeanness, they are reshaped and marked as European themselves.

As such, these overtly colonial specimen tables evocatively emulated the material strategies of Britain's imperial Roman forebears, who quarried coloured marbles from the furthest corners of their vast empire in order to express their power over, and ownership of, distant lands.[92] Read alongside the wooden specimen tables created at the height of the British empire, the inclusion of specimens of porphyry and *giallo antico* (as quarried in North Africa under the auspices of the Roman Republic) in eighteenth- and earlier nineteenth-century marble tables is a double echo of

empire. Collectively, these objects function as a tangible record of past and present material conquest, one articulated through a shared visual and material language of collection, exhibition, and display that semantically united wood with stone, and several iterations of empire.[93] Sophie Thomas has argued that because the fragment is associated with "the incomplete and the open-ended", it is able to "operate more productively as a mode than simply as a 'kind': it uses, transforms, and hybridizes genres".[94] The fragmentary mode of the specimen table was a particularly apt form for such colonialist transculturation.[95] Repackaging the "possessive commodification" that characterised the Grand Tour into a framework of exoticisation within the space of the table, ancient objects and exotic curiosities alike were transformed into consumable goods. Utilising pieces of landscape and the fruits that it bore, their production literalised British ownership of the land in an ownable form.[96]

Conclusion

To return to the opening image of this article, in Copley's portrait of the Izards we see a specimen table physically moved by many hands and placed among objects that call to mind diverse historical, geographic, and cultural contexts. As Jennifer L. Roberts has written of another of Copley's portraits that prominently features a table, his famous *Henry Pelham (Boy with a Squirrel)*, it is vital to consider the "transit, and the challenges [of] movement", in the consideration of these works, as a way to reinstate the formative geographical and temporal "intervals that determined the development of eighteenth-century art and material culture".[97] From the stone quarried and sourced in the table's creation, to its movement into the studio, and its eventual translation into and display within the pictorial space of the portrait, the image evokes the overlapping stories of manufacture, excavation, travel, and colonialism that typify this genre of furniture as a whole. As these broader histories affirm, while an examination of individual tables can reveal highly particular stories of specific people and specimens, thinking across the broad oeuvre of surviving specimen tables demonstrates how they, as a genre of furniture, can also reveal much bigger narratives: global histories of natural materials; the complex chronologies of the geological record; and the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century obsession with fragmentary things. By looking across this selection of objects, we gain a sense of the specimen table as a form of decorative arts production that became a recognisable model of knowing, understanding, and processing the world, something echoed by other forms of fragmentary production from this period, such as the commonplace book or the herbarium. Yet, as these examples demonstrate, the specimen table was also deeply connected with notions of *owning* the world—a characteristic typical of objects that were the material manifestations of imperialistic world building. These tables brought together fragments of natural materials as a kind of microcosmic replication of the fruits born from the very land of the empire. Yet it is only when considering the specimen table en masse and across two centuries that we gain a better understanding of these issues. This approach reveals how a collective of objects might be positioned so that we can think about them as reflective and constitutive of some of the seismic shifts that occurred in global eighteenth- and nineteenth-century politics and culture. When considered in this way, specimen tables must be understood not only as a critically complex site of knowledge production, antiquarian contemplation, and aesthetic surface experiment, but also as one upon which the more difficult legacies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century culture must be projected and unpacked.[98] Made from the material and extractive practices central to British imperialism, from the looting, plundering, and mining of local landscapes, specimen tables are inherently embedded with these histories.

As a space of both physical and semantic transformation wherein raw stone, minerals, and woods were reconstituted as cultural objects, and in which the classical past was linked with an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century present, the specimen table's bricolaged form is echoed by its multitudinous relationships to other cultural modes, historical moments, natural materials, and landscapes. Collapsing space and time, the environmental and the decorative, specimen tables are a powerful category of object through which to think about the ways in which the classical past and the imperial present were experienced, acquired, and consolidated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, revealing how these processes were reflected within the very forms of the period's decorative modalities."

About the author

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Footnotes

1. Maurie D. McInnis, "Cultural Politics, Colonial Crisis, and Ancient Metaphor in John Singleton Copley's 'Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard'", *Winterthur Portfolio* 34, no. 2/3 (1999): 86.
2. A.A. Vasiliev, "Imperial Porphyry Sarcophagi in Constantinople", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 4 (1948): 3.
3. For example, 58.75.130a, b (Metropolitan Museum of Art), and NT 266650 (Basildon Park), NT 771744 (Osterley Park and House), NT 137668 (Uppark House and Garden), and NT 129481.1 (Knole).
4. For example, the 1764 lava table discussed later in this article is not on display in the British Museum but is instead housed behind the scenes.
5. See Martin Drury, "Italian Furniture in National Trust Houses", *Furniture History* 20 (1984): 38–44; Godfrey Evans, *Souvenirs: From Roman Times to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: National Museum of Scotland, 1999).
6. Kate Hay, "Mosaic Marble Tables by J. Darmanin & Sons of Malta", *Furniture History* 46 (2010): 157–188; Peter Thornton, "Soane's Kent Tables", *Furniture History* 29 (1993): 59–65; Freya Gowrley, "Craft(ing) Narratives: Specimens, Souvenirs, and 'Morsels' in A la Ronde's Specimen Table", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 31, no. 1 (2018): 77–97.
7. Ilaria Bignamini and Clare Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome*, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 1:301.
8. Adolf Michaelis, *Ancient Marbles in Great Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882), 164.
9. Viccy Coltman, *Fabricating the Antique: Neoclassicism in Britain 1760–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 4.
10. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2005); Ariane Fennetaux, "Female Crafts: Women and Bricolage in Late Georgian Britain", in *Women & Things, 1750–1950: Gendered Material Strategies*, ed. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 91–108.

11. Claude Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 162.
12. Thomas Martyn and John Lettice, *The Antiquities of Herculaneum, Translated from the Italian* (London: J. Taylor, 1773), xi.
13. Elizabeth Fairman, "Inlaid Decorative Stone Tabletop", in *The English Prize: The Capture of the Westmorland, An Episode of the Grand Tour*, ed. M.D. Sánchez-Jáuregui and S. Wilcox (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 292.
14. Cited in Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 181.
15. *Catalogo d'impronti cavati da gemme incise dal Cavaliere Giovanni Pichler Incisore di sua Maestà Cesarea Giuseppe II*, 1790, cited in Bignamini and Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing*, 1:317; Christie, *The British Country House*, 250.
16. Sydney, Lady Morgan, *Italy*, 3 vols. (London: Henry Colburn & Co., 1821), 1:299.
17. Fairman, "Inlaid Decorative Stone Tabletop", 292; Viccy Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain since 1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 134.
18. Bignamini and Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing*, 1:24–25.
19. *ASR, Camerale I, Diversorum del Camerlengo*, b. 682, fol. 138v. *ASR, Camerale I, Diversorum del Camerlengo*, b. 679, fol. 235, cited in Bignamini and Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing*, 1:287–293; Coltman, *Classical Sculpture*, 153.
20. Bignamini and Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing*, 1:300–301.
21. Christie, *The British Country House*, 250; Drury, "Italian Furniture", 43.
22. Clive Edwards, *Eighteenth-Century Furniture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 118.
23. Drury, "Italian Furniture", 43.
24. Helen Dorey, "A Catalogue of the Furniture in Sir John Soane's Museum", *Furniture History* 44 (2008): 171.
25. Dorey, "A Catalogue of the Furniture", 171.
26. John Soane, *Description of the House and Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's Inn Fields* (London, 1836), 13.
27. Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1857), 140.
28. Selina Martin, *Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in Italy, 1819–1822* (Dublin: W.F. Wakeman, 1831), 99.
29. Maria Graham, *Three Months Passed in the Mountains East of Rome*, ed. Betty Haglund (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), 5.
30. Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy, c.1690–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 152.
31. On the idea of material literacy, see Serena Dyer and Chloe Wigston Smith, eds., *Material Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Nation of Makers* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).
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34. Mariana Starke, *Travels in Italy, Between the Years 1792 and 1798; Containing A View of the Late Revolutions in that Country*, 2 vols. (London: R. Phillips & T. Gillet, 1802), 1:203;

Fairman, "Inlaid Decorative Stone Tabletop", 292.
35. Fairman, “Inlaid Decorative Stone Tabletop”, 292.
36. Roman specimen table, *c*.1760. Marble, 5 cm × 79 cm × 178 cm. Museum no. W.54-1953, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
37. Evans, *Souvenirs*, 23–25.
38. Piozzi, *Observations*, 2:130–131.
39. Piozzi, *Observations*, 1:434.
40. Frances Trollope, *A Visit to Italy,* 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1842), 2:322.
41. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London, 1755), 1:146; Crystal B. Lake, *Artefacts*: *How We Think and Write about Found Objects* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 6.
42. Camelia Elias, *The Fragment: Towards a History and Poetics of a Performative Genre* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 1.
43. Deborah Harter, *Bodies in Pieces: Fantastic Narrative and the Poetics of the Fragment* (Redwood, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 29.
44. Harter, *Bodies in Pieces*, 131; Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 2:130.
45. Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 3:132.
46. Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography 1600–1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 159.
47. Piozzi, *Observations*, 2:119–120; Starke, *Travels in Italy*, 2:34.
48. For example, it is reputed that Lord Torrington of Powis Castle acquired a *pietra dura* tabletop in imitation of that seen at the Palazzo Borghese. Drury, “Italian Furniture”, 43.
49. Coltman, *Fabricating the Antique*, 15.
50. Miller, *Letters*, 1:154.
51. See, for example, LOAN:GILBERT.951:2-2008, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
52. Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini, *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997), 284.
53. Cited in Evans, *Souvenirs*, 26.
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56. For example, for Jane Waldie, writing in 1816–1817, the ruins of Rome were the source of strikingly powerful feeling, while for the French traveller Constantin-François de Volney, "antique monuments, wrecks of temples, palaces, and fortifications, pillars, aqueducts, and sepulchres" provoked "serious and profound meditation". Jane Waldie, *Sketches Descriptive of Italy in the Years 1816 and 1817*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray), 1:xvii; Constantin-François de Volney, *Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les revolutions des empires* (Paris, 1791), 2.
57. Stephanie O’Rourke, “Staring into the Abyss of Time”, *Representations* 148, no. 1 (2019): 30–31.
58. O’Rourke, “Staring into the Abyss of Time”, 41.
59. Florence M. Hetzler, “Causality: Ruin Time and Ruins”, *Leonardo* 21, no. 1 (1988): 51–55.
60. Noah Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity: Romantic Antiquarianism, Natural History, and Knowledge Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 78.
61. Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity*, 78.

62. Miller, *Letters*, 2:47.
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65. Noah Heringman, *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 4.
66. Heringman, *Romantic Rocks*, 10. Indeed, Heringman specifically argues that the specimen trade "mingles the archaeological and geological past". *Sciences of Antiquity*, 92.
67. Richard Hamblyn, "Private Cabinets and Popular Geology: The British Audiences for Volcanoes in the Eighteenth Century", in *Transports: Travel, Pleasure and Imaginative Geography, 1600–1830*, ed. Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 188.
68. William Hamilton, *Campi Phlegraei* (Naples, 1776), 5.
69. Hamilton, *Campi Phlegraei*, Plate LIV.
70. Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity*, 108.
71. Ann Flaxman, Journal, 1787–1788, Add MS 39787, British Library, London, 70.
72. Thomas Faulkner, *History and Antiquities of Kensington* (London, 1820), 91.
73. Fairman, "Inlaid Decorative Stone Tabletop", 292.
74. Eloisa Dodero, *Ancient Marbles in Naples in the Eighteenth Century: Findings, Collections, Dispersals* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 5.
75. Jamineau to Townley, 25 January 1774, TY, 7/96, cited in Bignamini and Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing*, 1:288.
76. John James Ferber, *Travels Through Italy, in the Years 1771 and 1772*, trans. R.E. Raspe (London, 1776), 30.
77. Hamblyn, "Private Cabinets", 192.
78. Bignamini and Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing*, 1:1; Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity*, 3.
79. Coltman, *Fabricating the Antique*, 11.
80. Cited in Jonathan Scott, *The Pleasures of Antiquity: British Collectors of Greece and Rome* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 219.
81. Miller, *Letters*, 2:130.
82. Coltman, *Fabricating the Antique*, 11.
83. Richard Wrigley, "Infectious Enthusiasms: Influence, Contagion and the Experience of Rome", in *Transports: Travel, Pleasure and Imaginative Geography, 1600–1830*, ed. Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 75.
84. On this topic, see Robin Jones, "Furniture from Ceylon at International Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851–1904", *Furniture History* 40 (2004): 113–134.
85. John M. Cross, "Ralph, Cuthbert and Thomas Turnbull: A Nineteenth-Century Jamaican Cabinet-Making Family", *Furniture History* 39 (2003): 109.
86. Catherine Doucette, "Ralph Turnbull's Center Table: Re-Crafting Colonial Identity in Post-Emancipation Jamaica, *c*.1846–1851" (MA dissertation, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2020).
87. An example of this type was for sale online in 2021: https://www.1stdibs.co.uk/furniture/tables/center-tables/19th-c-jamaican-mahogany-round-specimen-table-attributed-to-ralph-turnbull/id-f_1195990/.
88. *The Watchman* (30 July 1836) in the London Public Record Office, CO 142/2, cited in Cross, "Ralph, Cuthbert and Thomas Turnbull", 110.
89. Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity*.

90. Theresa M. Kelly, "Romantic Exemplarity: Botany and 'Material' Culture", in *Romantic Science: The Literary Forms of Natural History*, ed. Noah Heringman (New York: State University of New York Press), 225–254; Kay Dian Kriz, "Curiosities, Commodities, and Transplanted Bodies in Hans Sloane's 'Natural History of Jamaica'", *William and Mary Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2000): 35–78.
91. Kelly, "Romantic Exemplarity", 225–226.
92. Bignamini and Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing*, 1:xx.
93. Susan Stewart, *The Ruins Lesson: Meaning and Material in Western Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 34.
94. Sophie Thomas, "Ruin Nation: Ruins and Fragments in Eighteenth-Century England", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 38, no. 3 (2014): 133.
95. On transculturation, see Julie F. Codell, *Transculturation in British Art* (London: Routledge, 2012).
96. Richard Wrigley, "Making Sense of Rome", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 4 (2012): 561.
97. Jennifer L. Roberts, "Copley's Cargo: Boy with a Squirrel and the Dilemma of Transit", *American Art* 21, no. 2 (2007): 22.
98. I have borrowed the idea of "surface experiment" from the work of Jennifer Chuong. See "The Nature of American Veneer Furniture, circa 1790–1810", *Journal 18*, Issue 9 (2020), http://www.journal18.org/issue9/the-nature-of-american-veneer-furniture-circa-1790-1810/.

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