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## THE PIECES OF THE ARA PACIS

### Abstract

Workmen repairing the foundations of Palazzo Ottoboni Almagià (today Palazzo Fiano) in 1569 discovered nearly a dozen relief panels from Imperial Rome. The Cardinale di Montepulciano purchased most of them at auction for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, however a few pieces escaped his grasp and ended up in other hands. Three hundred years later, in 1879 and 1881 Friedrich von Duhn realized that these panels and other fragments then displayed in four different museums all belonged to the same lost monument, the *Ara Pacis Augustae*. He overcame the very steep challenge of associating the many scattered pieces (one of which was used as a tombstone!) without the aid of photographs by laboriously learning the origin of each panel. This paper traces where each piece was displayed, how pieces of another monument were accidentally mixed into the early efforts to reconstruct the Ara Pacis, and when each museum turned over its panels, mindful that to this day the Louvre keeps an original piece.

**Keywords:** relief panels, Ara Pacis, Palazzo Ottoboni-Fiano

From its discovery in 1569, the Ara Pacis has been considered fit for the wealthiest private collectors of Italy, and it was broken up and auctioned off to several private collectors very shortly after. The many pieces of the Ara Pacis had a diverse set of histories ranging from the highlights of three private collections to serving as a tombstone before being reunited in one museum in 1936, at which time several more pieces were excavated from under Palazzo Ottoboni-Fiano (formerly Palazzo Peretti) to join the rest for the 1938 grand opening of the Ara Pacis Museum. In fact, one of the few good things the dictator Benito Mussolini

accomplished, which others before him had failed, was to reunite the pieces of the Ara Pacis into a single museum, by means of charm and heavy handed authoritarianism, when patriotic appeals failed.

The discovery of the exterior of the Ara Pacis is generally dated to 1568, although an undocumented, earlier discovery of some fragments in 1530 is suspected<sup>1</sup>. Workmen reinforcing the foundations of the southern façade of the palazzo then called Peretti<sup>2</sup>, near the church of San Lorenzo in Lucina dis-

- 1 Courbaud (1899: 78), accepts the 1530 excavation, likewise Petersen (1902: 197–202); Avena (1904: 849); Cannizzaro (1907: 2); Dissel (1907: 1); Lanciani (1908: 27) does as well, but the reliefs he cites may not belong to the Ara Pacis.
- 2 A brief history of Palazzo Peretti and its owners: Pope Martin IV gave cardinal Hugo of Evesham, an English scholar in philosophy, alchemy, and medicine, the see of San Lorenzo in Lucina. Evesham built the church and the nearby palazzo before dying of plague in Rome on 27 July 1287. A French cardinal, Jean Le Jeune de Contay of Picardy (bishop of San Giovanni di Moriana, died 1451), completed the palazzo. Nibby mistakenly thought Le Jeune was Portuguese, an error that entered the literature and history of the Ara Pacis. Le Jeune's successors, Filippo Calandrini, cardinal of Santa Susanna 1448–76, and the elderly Giorgio da Costa Portuguese, renovated the palazzo. Hence, the nearby Arch of Marcus Aurelius (often called *Tres facicellae* or *Tripoli*), took the name Portugalo, and even after it was demolished in 1662, the area retained the name. Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga (died 1566) hired Taddeo Zuccari to paint frescoes for the palazzo. Gonzaga's successor was Alessandro Damasceni Peretti (died 1623). Don Michele Peretti, prince of Venafrò, then bought Palazzo Peretti on 14 Sept. 1624 for 36,000 scudi. Prince Don Niccolò Ludovisi (1610–1664) obtained the palazzo (at an unknown date) and passed it to his third wife, Donna Costanza Panfili (1627–1665). Her daughters sold it for 55,000 scudi on 21 October 1690 to Marco Ottoboni (1696–1752), whose elder daughter, Maria Francesca, married Pier Gregorio Boncompagni Ludovisi (1642–1707). Their descendants are the Dukes of Fiano, who owned the palazzo until 1939. The *Guida Monaci* (1900), 316, adds the following. *Palazzo Fiano-Ottoboni, eretto sotto Eugenio IV e successivamente trasformato e ampliato fino ai nostri giorni con disegno di Francesco Settmi. Nel cortile sono alcuni avanzi dell'Arco eretto da Augusto alla Pace. Seguendo la via a sinistra, detta delle Convertite, si giunge alla chiesa di S Silvestro in Capite che esisteva nel VII secolo e venne rifabbricata da Paolo I. Fu riedificata nel 1286 e quindi nel 1690 da Giovanni De Rossi. L'annesso vastissimo monastero è stato totalmente trasformato nel Palazzo della Posta e dei Telegrafi sotto la direzione di Giovanni Malvezzi nel 1878; nella parte che s inoltra in via della Mercede è stato costruito il Ministero dei Lavori pubblici.* "Palazzo Fiano-Ottoboni, erected under Eugenius IV and subsequently transformed and enlarged to the present day with a design by Francesco Settmi. In the courtyard are some leftovers from the Arch erected by Augustus to Peace. Following the street on the left, called 'of the Converted,' you reach the church of San Silvestro in Capite which existed in the seventh century and was rebuilt by Paul I. It was rebuilt in 1286 and then revised in 1690 by Giovanni De Rossi. The vast monastery annex was totally transformed into the Palazzo della Posta and dei Telegrafi under the direction of Giovanni Malvezzi in 1878; the



Angelo Bronzino (1545),  
*Cosimo I de' Medici*



Scipione Pulzone (ca. 1567),  
*Cardinal Giovanni Ricci*

covered a group of ten marble panels of an unknown ancient monument. Because of a series of misnomers, the fragments were wrongly associated with an Arch of Domitian in the area and the name Portugallo was also attached to the zone where they were found. Our primary source for the discovery, Cardinal Giovanni Ricci da Montepulciano (1498–1574), wrote to his patron,

Ministry of Public Works was built in the part forwarding in via della Mercede.” Page 327, 527, impressively lists Palazzo Fiano as one of the principal palazzi of Rome: “Fiano, p. in Lucina 4, di proprietà del duca di Fiano” and lists the incumbent Duke of Fiano among the “consulta araldica” as a senatore – *Boncompagni Ludovisi Ottoboni, Marco, duca di Fiano. ... La Consulta Arealdica è stabilita presso il Ministero dell Interno ed è istituita per dare pareri ed avvisi al Governo sui diritti guarentiti dall art 79 dello Statuto fondamentale del regno e sulle domande e questioni concernenti materie nobiliari ed araldiche R Decreti 2 e 5 luglio 1896 N 313 e 314. “The Heraldic Council is established at the Ministry of the Interior to give opinions and warnings to the Government on the rights guaranteed by Art. 79 of the Fundamental Statute of the Kingdom and on the questions and questions concerning noble and heraldic matters (Royal Decrees, 2 and 5 July 1896, N 313 and 314).” It also lists several businesses on the ground floor of Palazzo Fiano including the office of the Ambassador of Portugal. Von Reumont 1883: 551–554; Idem 1885: 549–554; *Guida Monaci* 1900; Barksdale Maynard 2010 (all translations by Gaius Stern unless otherwise stated).*

the Duke of Florence Cosimo I de' Medici (soon Grand Duke of Tuscany<sup>3</sup>), a series of letters describing their discovery and purchase and planned shipment, although some panels did not go to Florence until the eighteenth century. In the meantime, they remained in Villa Medici on the Pincio in Rome, which is now l'Académie de France à Rome until 1780, and the festooned internal panels stayed there permanently (Von Duhn 1881/82: 319).

Cardinal Ricci outbid his competitors for most of the ten marble blocks<sup>4</sup> and later prepared them for shipment to Cosimo de' Medici, by sawing them on a vertical axis to make them easier to transport. Thus, the workmen cleaved the processional exteriors from the interior *bucrania* and garland sides. Some panels were cut into three slabs, and the middle slab was repurposed. Several anonymous drawings from the sixteenth and seventeenth show which panels stayed in Rome and show their condition prior to restoration of lips, ears, hands, etc. (Von Duhn 1881/82: 303–304, 309–324; Michaelis 1891; Foresta 2002)<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, Cardinal Andréa della Valle (1463–1534) was collecting masterpieces of Roman art, including three or more panels possibly from the Ara Pietatis

- 3 Cosimo I de' Medici was the Duke of Florence from 1537–1574. On 21 August 1569 Pope Pius V elevated him to become Grand Duke of Tuscany. The letters from Cardinal Ricci begin in Feb. 1569 before the elevation.
- 4 Petersen 1902: 5–6, claimed the Cardinal acquired nine, large, two-sided, decorated blocks he would cut up for transport. But only two of them seem to have come to Florence. Petersen numbered them (Florentine panels) 2, 3, 6, 7 Tellus; and maybe 4. Cardinal Ricci of Montepulciano “in the beginning of 1569 wrote to the secretary of the Grand Duke of Tuscany that he had acquired nine, large, two-sided, decorated blocks he would cut up for transport. But only two of them seem to have been brought to Florence. “Two others were lost, and one conjectures under what conditions they left the site or returned, as the remaining five were housed in the Villa Medici. A few years later in 1584 the Medici family acquired the greater part of the Valle Capranica collection and also the five della Valle Reliefs, which then also were transferred to the Villa on the Pincio, and there on the back fanciful work in stucco was added to them. They remained there during the 1569 transaction and only in 1780 came to Florence.” Von Duhn 1881–1882, 317–319, thought the Louvre panel had gone unsold in 1569 due to the damage and remained at palazzo Peretti.
- 5 See Cannizzaro 1907: 3: “These drawings include an anonymous woodcut from the end of the 1500s in the Barberini Library (X, I, 5, fol. 251), whose original is believed to be in London with A.W. Francks (fol. 228) of a restoration project, ordered, but not accepted by Cardinal Ferdinando De' Medici. Other designs emigrated to England to the Windsor Castle Library (II.23) and foglio 228 of Francks. Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) *Antichità Romane* (Rome 1756) drew it as the 38<sup>th</sup> table of his engravings.” See also the *Codex Vaticanus*.

## The Pieces of the Ara Pacis



Ara Pacis SW front, Left half unearthed in 1569; Right half in 1859.<sup>6</sup>

(Sieveking 1907: 178–180, 189–190)<sup>7</sup>, although the cardinal did not know their true identity. According to Mariano Cannizzaro, the cardinal also had in his collection some small pieces of the Ara Pacis that had been discovered in 1530 (Cannizzaro 1907: 2). This collection was displayed in Palazzo Valle, which was then a famous museum of antiquities. When Cardinal della Valle died, the collection passed to Bishop Bruto della Valle, while Palazzo Valle passed to the cardinal's nephew Camillo Capranica and was renamed Palazzo Valle-Capranica. Then in 1584, the Capranica heirs sold the antiquities collection to Cardinal Ferdinand de' Medici (Michaelis 1891: 231; Cannizzaro 1907: 3), including three panels now thought to be from the Ara Pietatis (but in 1900 scholars included them as part of the Ara Pacis, *infra*) (Von Duhn 1879; Michaelis 1891: 231; Courbaud 1899: 78–79; Petersen 1902: 112–20; 1906: 305–307, *passim*; 1906: 301; Strong 1907: 46–47, 53–54, plates 8–10, 16)<sup>8</sup>. Having acquired the five exterior wall panels of the Ara Pacis formerly in Palazzo Valle, the Medici family displayed them from the sixteenth century until 1769 in Villa Medici. Many of the

6 All photos of the Ara Pacis come from The Ara Pacis On-line Library: <http://www.arapacislibrary.net>

7 Followed by Studniczka 1909: 901 ff; Bloch 1939: 81–120. Jones 2005 argues it is not the Ara Pietatis at all.

8 The della Valle panels were excluded through the forceful argument of Sieveking 1907, based on style and subject matter. For discussion of the exclusion, see Rizzo 1919: 15–16; 1926: 467 and note 10; Strong 1928: 165; Moretti 1937: 43–44; 1948: 287; Petersen 1910: 691, 695, was reluctant to accept the truth.

interior garland panels were secured to the garden walls of the villa and some remain there today. Thus, the panels of the Ara Pacis and of the Ara Pietatis were displayed together in the Villa Medici, an accident of fate that led Friedrich von Duhn (and others after him) to assign the pieces of both monuments to the long-lost Ara Pacis Augustae in his brilliant 1879 discovery that restored a lost major Roman monument to the world. This error was easy to make, for all of the panels are of fine Carrara marble, the people are of the same size, and the sculpture is of superb quality on the panels of both monuments.

In 1857, the Duke of Fiano hired an architect/engineer of Swiss origins, Cav. Gioacchino Ersoch (also written Herzog or Erzoch) to stabilize Palazzo Ottoboni Fiano and to alter façade (the latter project was not realized). During the works of August to November 1859, totally unexpectedly, on 7 September, Ersoch uncovered several works of Roman art 5.5 m. below the pavement (Dissel 1903: 2;



The head of Mars

Avena 1904: 850; Cremona 2013: 23–25). The two most notable finds were the other half of the south west front panel of the sow sacrifice and the helmeted head of a man or god, later called the head of Mars.

However, it was smuggled out of the site and had a career on the antiquities black market<sup>9</sup>. Otto Benndorf came upon it in an antique store in Rome ca. 1890 but did not buy it (Appendix 2) (Petersen 1895: 138–139). A collector bought it for £85 (Lire) and took it home to Vienna, where it remained in private hands. Giulio Emanuele Rizzo, one of the leaders of the 1903 excavation, lamented,

It will be difficult, however, to get back the beautiful head of Mars that almost certainly comes from the excavations of 1859, when the architect Ersoch strengthened the foundations of Palazzo Fiano. The head was stolen by some workers and went onto the antiquarian market in Rome and then to a private collector in Vienna, where it was until a few years ago, but I do not know if it is still there, or where it ended up. (Rizzo 1919: 10, 17; Cf. Rizzo 1926: 461, 463).

9 Petersen 1894: 54 ff: “Block VIII – Tellus offerings (the reverse Fig. 25). Found in 1859 (p. 135 f.), Remained unsawed at first in Palazzo Fiano, came to the Museo Nazionale in 1898” The sow sacrifice was already in Museo delle Terme, Cannizzaro 1907, 10.

Happily, however, the philanthropic art historian, Ettore Modigliani (1873–1947), found it in Vienna in the 1920s and purchased it from its owner with his own money (Paribeni 1931: 3). He then passed it to the Kingdom of Italy<sup>10</sup>. Curiously, several scholars remained unaware of his *coup* and assumed the head of Mars was still in private hands as late as 1934<sup>11</sup>. Most of the other finds of 1859 were fragments of the vegetal frieze on the lower register of the exterior. Some of them remained *in situ* on display in the courtyard of Palazzo Fiano, until the Italian Government purchased them from the Duke of Fiano in 1898 and incorporated into the Museo delle Terme di Diocleziano, but two pieces went to the Vatican, one to the Louvre, and a piece with swans had gone to England (it is now believed lost in private hands) (Cannizzaro 1907: 3)<sup>12</sup>.

At first, the panel with the old man sacrificing was thought to represent a sacrifice by the Senate to Tellus. But in 1907, Johannes Sieveking proposed that it shows Aeneas sacrificing to the Penates when he first arrived in Italy (1177 BC) (Sieveking 1907: 186–187). Sieveking’s proposal instantly gained near universal acceptance due to the association with the *Aeneid*, despite the many incongruities<sup>13</sup>.

Although Ersoch’s own records of the discovery of the Ara Pacis fragments do not survive, he wrote about the discovery in a letter dated 6 July 1860 to the Duke of Fiano<sup>14</sup>. He mentioned that lost letter to Rudolfo Lanciani in 1883 when interviewed about the 1859 discovery. Lanciani, in turn, inspired Angiolo Pasqui and Eugen Petersen to seek the letter from the Duke of Fiano. In 1903,

10 Despite Modigliani’s many and widely praised accomplishments in repatriating art to Italy, in 1938 he was expelled from the state in accord with the racial laws and had to go into hiding until 1944. After the war ended, he was reinstated, Brunelli 2016: 90–91, n 2.

11 See for example Cecchelli 1925: 67; Rizzo 1926: 461.

12 Its sale in England was documented in Cavaceppi 1768.

13 Few have read Sieveking’s case, but it is very thin, and many features speak against Aeneas. For example, the sow has no piglets. Nowhere else in Roman art does Aeneas wear a toga, but he always wears either the Phrygian cap or armor. Not every pig sacrifice in Roman art is that of Aeneas, and this one has no marker that confirms Sieveking’s proposal. Most importantly, Aeneas is never associated with Peace. Lawrence Richardson and the late Paul Rehak disputed Sieveking, Rehak 2001: 190–208; Stern 2006: 440–454. They propose that the relief instead shows a man wholly associated with Peace, sacrificing the animal ritually associated with peace, a pig: king Numa Pompilius. Richardson had proposed Numa first, but he did not publish it. The magic of Vergil’s name led Sieveking astray.

14 Avena (1904: 850) dates this letter to 6 July 1859, but that would be before the work even began. I have amended it to 1860, accordingly.

the Duke's son found it and shared it with Pasqui (see Appendix 1)<sup>15</sup>. This letter provided a few useful details about the 1859 excavation, most of all the location of the pieces still under ground.

The discovery of the Ara Pacis, which was then distributed in many locations, occurred in the late 1870s. In 1878, Hans Dütschke wrote a museum guide for the Uffizi and correctly described three panels (from the South frieze) as Augustan Age reliefs from an unknown monument (Dütschke 1878). These panels were later sent from the Uffizi to Rome's Museo delle Terme di Diocleziano and were included in the Esposizione Internazionale di Roma of 1911 (*Catalogo della Mostra...* 1911: 164–168). A young German archaeologist, Friedrich von Duhn (1851–1930), was already considering a number of Roman friezes, including the panels in the Uffizi Dütschke had described. Just one year later, in 1879, von Duhn published his brilliant discovery, “Agrippa, Eastern prince, Julia, Tiberius, background figure, Varus' leg, Antonia, Germanicus, Drusus”, identifying Roman artwork from three different museums (Vatican, delle Terme di Diocleziano, Uffizi), the Villa Medici, the Belvedere in the Vatican, and palazzo Fiano, as the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, the Augustan monument associated with the *Pax Romana* (Von Duhn 1879; 1881; 1885). Von Duhn proposed a partially correct virtual reassembly of the Ara Pacis and recognized the veiled, central figure as Agrippa, but he changed his mind and regarded him to be the *genius* of



Agrippa, Eastern prince, Julia, Tiberius, background figure, Varus' leg, Antonia, Germanicus, Drusus

<sup>15</sup> Pasqui (1903: 555, n. 1) reproduced the letter.



## The Pieces of the Ara Pacis

the Divine Julius (!) (Dütschke 1880: 1–7). Dütschke then realized that the panels parade members of the Augustan court grouped in families. He reaffirmed his earlier findings in a public lecture, subsequently published, and identified the family of Drusus the Elder, Antonia, and Germanicus. In 1881, von Duhn documented a history of each panel, and in 1885, published a supplement,



Copies of the panels from the della Valle Capranica collection stored in the Villa Medici with panels from the Ara Pacis.

adding the Louvre Panel, which he had realized was his lost Aldobrandino Panel as soon as he saw it<sup>16</sup>.

Von Duhn's errors were to include the Divine Julius and several, unrelated panels from the Villa Medici. A coincidence of fate led him astray. The della Valle Capranica collection in the Villa Medici happened to store friezes from two different monuments together. Von Duhn and others after him assumed they all came from the Ara Pacis, but in fact, five panels in the Villa Medici collection came from an altogether, different monument from the Claudian era<sup>17</sup>. Two of them show bull sacrifices before temples. A third presents a group of lictors around a *flamen*, thought now to be Claudius in his youth. The fourth depicts a boy carrying a Lar with a crowd of men behind him. The fifth shows a temple and fits onto a bull sacrifice.

Two pieces of the Ara Pacis left Italy entirely, the aforementioned Head of Mars in the 1890s and the Louvre Panel in the 1860s. For a time, the Louvre Panel stayed in the courtyard of Palazzo Ottoboni (Fiano). Later it was mounted in the courtyard of Villa Miollis in Quirinale, which was then the property of the Aldobrandino family, so it was called the Aldobrandino Panel (Visconti 1814: 34, 129; Von Duhn 1881/82: 315; *Catalogo della Mostra...* 1911: 164–168). General Sextius Alexandre François de Miollis (1759–1828), the Governor of Rome during the Napoleonic Era, purchased it in 1804, but then it was sold in about 1835 to the Marchese Giampietro Campana (1808–1880) (Von Duhn 1881: 309–311; 1885: 320–321; *Catalogo della Mostra...* 1911). He hired Annibale Malatesta to restore some of the missing parts of the relief with plaster, but Malatesta added a beard on the first figure.

Not only is she female, she is either Octavia or Julia! After the downfall of Marchese Campana, Napoleon III brought it to Paris in 1861, and it joined the Louvre collection by 1863, although it was not at once recognized as the Aldobrandino Panel. Thus, when von Duhn realized what he was seeing, he was able to establish its provenance through the records of its sales. It is still in the Louvre; a near perfect copy has been inserted into the frieze of the Ara Pacis Museum.

16 Von Duhn 1885: 320: "Nel Museo del Louvre a mia non lieve sorpresa ho ritrovato il basorilievo già Aldobrandini, il quale credeva scomparso sino dal 1833, quando l'Ulrichs l'aveva veduto per l'ultima volta nel palazzo di Villa Aldobrandini." In the Louvre Museum, to my not slight surprise, I found the Aldobrandini bas-relief, which was believed to be lost since 1833, when Ulrichs had seen it for the last time in the palazzo of Villa Aldobrandini.

17 See note 7.



Villa Medici boy carrying a Lar. The author and the Louvre Panel, photo Ben Stern (April 2003)

In the mid-1890s, another German archaeologist, Eugen Petersen, assumed the mantle of champion of the Ara Pacis from von Duhn. Petersen published two articles in 1894 and 1895 explaining how he thought the Ara Pacis should be reconstructed, and he wrote the first book on the Ara Pacis in 1902, including a virtual reconstruction close to his 1895 plan (Petersen 1894; 1895; 1902). Two more articles followed in 1903 and several reviews of other scholars' works thereafter (Petersen 1903a; 1903b; 1908). However, like von Duhn, he included the panels from the Villa Medici collection in his reconstructions. Petersen urged the government of Italy to undertake further excavations under palazzo Fiano, but when those excavations finally took place in 1903, with his participation, they invalidated many of the predictions in his book. Nevertheless, he applied a very impressive multi-disciplinary approach, using textual evidence, other works of sculpture, wall murals, coins, and more, even if these non-textual examples were sometimes used in dead ends to justify futile claims.

In 1898, the Italian government purchased most or all of the fragments discovered in 1859 on display in palazzo Ottoboni Fiano and moved them to the Museo delle Terme in August 1905, along with several panels (from the South Frieze of the Ara Pacis) from the Uffizi in Florence. There they stood on display until 1936, in preparation for the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Augustus's birth, the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* for the *Bimillenario Augusteo*.

Most of the interior walls of the Ara Pacis with *bucrania* and garlands that did not go to Villa Medici were considered lost. However, by a stroke of luck, the festooned, interior side of the Vatican panel was discovered in 1899. It was

found on the floor of the Chiesa di Bambino Gesù, where it was lying upside down as a grave marker for Monsignor Sebastiano Poggi, who had died in 1623 (Cannizzaro 1907: 2–3). It fits its better half, the block commencing the procession on the North Frieze, from which it had been sawn in two (not three) pieces – perhaps not on Cardinal Ricci’s orders. Today, a copy of the Vatican panel still hangs in the Vatican Museum, but the original is in the Ara Pacis Museum (Helbig 1899: 92)<sup>18</sup>. Both panels came to the Ara Pacis Museum in the 1950s.

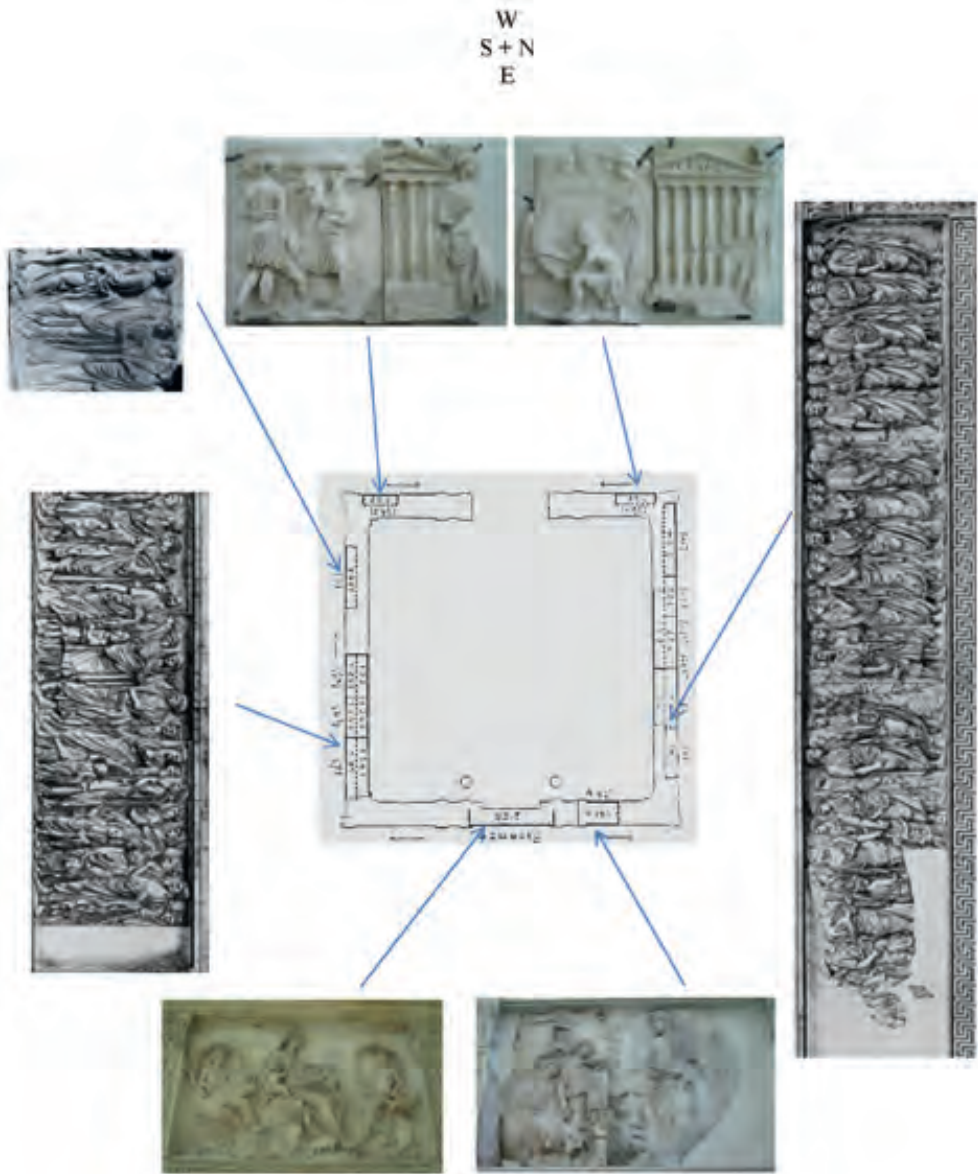
Although Petersen mostly correctly arranged the procession on the North wall, an unavoidable empty void occupied space ahead of the two *flamines* on the South wall, where the missing, then still-underground panel fit. Furthermore, following von Duhn, Petersen inserted several foreign panels into his reconstruction, one of which presents the emperor Claudius as a *flamen*. The chart below shows where Petersen located each panel on the Ara Pacis in 1902 and includes the figured Villa Medici panels (from the Ara Pietatis, marked by \*).

In his book, Petersen predicted the presence of several missing participants in the empty spaces. He also centered the Pax Panel (the so-called Tellus Relief) within the East wall where a doorway actually opened and placed within the West wall two other, Claudian era panels from the Villa Medici (originally from the della Valle collection). The 1903 excavations undermined both his predictions and diminished his credibility to overly hasty modern scholars<sup>19</sup>. In retrospect, it is unfair to diminish Petersen’s contribution. He was the driving force that pushed for further excavations in 1903, and, more than anyone else, he popularized the Ara Pacis and its importance as a work of Augustan Age state art. His mistakes were to follow von Duhn’s lead over the della Valle reliefs without considering their composition as did Sieveking and to misdate the event depicted to 9 BC.

18 On the Vatican Panel: “almost all of the heads have been restored, only the cheeks and part of the back of the head of the first figure and the face (except the nose of the third figure from the left are authentic. Only the head of the second figure from the right on the upper part (heavily revised), a part of the head of the third figure from the left (almost the entire face is modern), and the upper part of the head of the first figure are authentic.”

19 I give my Berkeley under-graduate students paper copies of each panel of the Ara Pacis and assign them to work in groups of four to reconstruct the monument without any guidance. One out of four groups does not reassemble the panels in the proper sequence. My appreciation for Petersen grew when I saw how difficult the task is.

The Pieces of the Ara Pacis



The chart below registers the names and designations of the panels of the Ara Pacis as well as their locations in 1900. Some parts of the Ara Pacis were still underground.

Vatican	Dütschke	Von Duhn	Petersen	Stern	1900 location
Codex #	#	#	#	numeral & nickname	
		5.	4.	N-1 Vatican Panel	Vatican
		4.	3b.	N-2 Uffizi Panel (2)	Uffizi – 1905
3439 f96	31	3.	3a,3c	N-3 Uffizi Panel (3a)	Uffizi – 1905
3439 f95	32	2.	2.	N-4 Uffizi Panel (3b)	Uffizi – 1905
3439 f93		1.	1.	N-5 Louvre Panel	Louvre 1863-now
				N-6 End of North wall	(lost)
	34			NE Roma Panel	underground
				SE Tellus Relief/Pax Relief	Uffizi –1937
3439 f93	33	7	7	S-6 (Drusus Panel)	Museo Naz. delle Terme
	35	6	6b.	S-5 (Julia-Tiberius Panel)	Museo Naz. delle Terme
	35	6	6a.	S-4 <i>Pontifex/Agrippa</i> Panel	Museo Naz. delle Terme
				S-3 <i>Flamines</i> panel	underground
		VII.	5.	S-2 Augustus & lictors	Panel underground
				<i>Ara Pietatis Flamen</i>	Villa Medici
				S1a, b Lictors Panel	underground
				SW Aeneas/Numa Sacrifice*	½ Delle Terme, ½ P.Fiano
				Villa Medici bull sacrifice 2	Villa Medici
				NW Lupercal panel	(fragments scattered)
				Villa Medici bull sacrifice 1	Villa Medici
		a-f		Interior, festooned panels	Villa Medici
		g		Interior, festooned panel	Museo Naz. delle Terme



1903 Discoveries: Augustus and Four Lictors



Gaius Caesar

The long-awaited excavations under Palazzo Ottobani Fiano began under the direction of Giulio Rizzo, Angiolo Pasqui, and Mariano Cannizzaro on 27 July 1903 and yielded several finds. On 9 September, the “shoulder of Faustulus” and trunk of the oak tree (*illex*) and other vegetal pieces from the lower register were extracted from under Palazzo Fiano (Pasqui 1903: 556–557). Additionally, in mid-September, an important discovery was made of a large slab with several lictors and a majestic figure, quickly recognized as Augustus (Pasqui 1903: 563). Another discovery was a headless boy, wearing a *bullā*, whom John Pollini and Brian Rose now think is Lucius Caesar, but his size better suggests he is Gaius Caesar (Pasqui 1903: 566; Pollini 1987: 23, 25–26, 28; Rose 1990: 453–467; Stern 2006: Chapter 8, 409–410). The greatest discovery occurred on 8 November in the presence of the Minister of Education, Vittorio Orlando, the future Prime Minister who led Italy through World War I after the disaster of Caparetto (Ibid., 573). This panel had two *flamines* on the right and several more priests who are looking to the right. The upper, left edge of this panel connects to the head and neck of Augustus. However, due to its weight and size, it was impossible to remove this panel without opening a new hole to the surface and without threatening the stability of palazzo Fiano, which rested upon it. This unexcavated panel is twice as thick as most of the other panels then known, seven or nine of which were sawn in half at the order of Cardinal Ricci di Montepulciano. Then, unfortunately, in December water flooded the site and halted the excavation. The project halted, officially only temporarily, but years turned into decades without the resumption of work. All in all, 35 pieces were removed and brought to the surface, including the figure of Numa/Aeneas, at that time identified as the Senate, from the front of the Ara Pacis<sup>20</sup>. Pasqui, Petersen, and Rizzo each lamented the unfinished



Flamines block (full thickness)  
(Sieveking 1907: 176)

20 The Numa piece fit(s) perfectly to the half then in the Vatican Museum of the pig led to sacrifice by two boys.

excavation as a terrible loss for archaeology and for Italy (Pasqui 1904; 1913: 284; Petersen 1906; Rizzo 1919; 1926).

The 1903 excavation revealed that the Ara Pacis had two doorways, contrary to Petersen's plan. This meant the Pax Panel did not belong in the center of the East wall, as Petersen envisioned. The final blow to his reconstruction came in 1907, when Sieveking powerfully argued against the inclusion of the panels from the Villa Medici collection in the Ara Pacis, because they differed too greatly from the other figured panels of the procession in both style and composition. In the same article, Sieveking also proposed that Aeneas performs the sow sacrifice<sup>21</sup>. Petersen readily accepted Aeneas, but he was slow to accept Sieveking's first argument and stubbornly refused to omit the della Valle reliefs for several more years until he finally conceded the truth.

The expectation that work would soon resume under Palazzo Ottoboni characterized scholarship for another decade, but World War I put a halt to any possibility of a new excavation. Other contributions came from scholars largely forgotten today, such as Alberto Avena, Karl Dissel, Alfred Domaszewski, Victor Gardthausen, Emanuel Löwy, Emil Reisch, and Eugenia Sellers Strong<sup>22</sup>. Immediately after the war ended, a movement swept Italy to build a monument to commemorate the peace that ended "the war to end all wars". For many, the Ara Pacis perfectly symbolized that vision. The call was raised to reunite the scattered pieces of the Ara Pacis in one national monument, whose exact location in Rome was also a topic of much debate<sup>23</sup>.

It is, therefore, ironic that a monument that celebrates peace was restored only in the mid-1930s by the warmonger Mussolini. Seeking to appropriate the glory of the Roman Empire for Fascist Italy, Il Duce decided to reunite the pieces of the Ara Pacis. He compelled Uffizi to send the Tellus Relief (then often identified as Italia) to Rome. Since he was unable to bully or persuade the

21 See n. 19–21.

22 The author has edited the Ara Pacis Wikipedia page to provide recognition for several of these scholars and translated into English their scholarship on the Ara Pacis in the Ara Pacis Online library at academia.edu.

23 *Bollettino della Società Piemontese di Archeologia e Belle Arti*, 1920. Rizzo 1919 was among the forefront of those who urged the Ara Pacis be rebuilt. Cecchelli 1925 urged that a museum be built for the Ara Pacis on the Campodoglio. Another proposal was within the Mausoleum of Augustus. After World War II, Fasolo 1949 renewed Cecchelli's cause, but the Ara Pacis remained in the same location, even after Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo's glass museum was taken down and Richard Meier's new design was built in its stead.



Louvre or the Vatican to part with their panels, copies had to be made. All of the other pieces were united together for the planned 1937 celebration in the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*, except the fragment of a swan in England, which is lost. Curiously, a photograph from 7 May 1938 shows the respected, anti-fascist archaeologist Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli showing the Pax Panel to Mussolini and Hitler, who utterly fail to appreciate its significance. The photograph is ironic for three reasons, most of all because Mussolini and Hitler could not comprehend the merits of peace or the fine points of Bianchi Bandinelli's analysis, secondly because Bianchi Bandinelli did not enjoy the opportunity to meet the two dictators and explain ancient history and ancient art to them, an opportunity which others would have jumped to have, and thirdly because unlike most other classical archaeologists of his day and now, Bianchi Bandinelli was not especially enthusiastic about the Ara Pacis and underestimated its importance as a document in Augustan propaganda and innovation in Roman art. A much more enthusiastic archaeologist and scholar had been chosen to reassemble the Ara Pacis for the *Bimillenario Augusteo*, Giuseppe Moretti, who had recently supervised the museum collections in Le Marche and in Croatia and was thought to be a loyal fascist (Brunelli 2016: 91, n. 8). Moretti was assigned to reassemble the Ara Pacis for the grand opening (originally planned for 23 September 1937) and to excavate under Palazzo Fiano<sup>24</sup>, despite the challenges that had doomed the 1903 excavation. Moretti faced the simultaneous tasks of running a new excavation and rebuilding the Ara Pacis inside a museum, while that museum was being built. Despite a number of alternate suggestions, including placing the Ara Pacis on via dei Fori Imperiali, Mussolini and the Minister of National Education, Giuseppe Bottai selected a location on the Lungotevere between the Tiber River and the Mausoleum of Augustus for the Ara Pacis.

To extract the many newly discovered pieces without water flooding the site, a brilliant solution was engaged to freeze the earth and thereby create a frozen fire wall, so to speak. Although the work was long and arduous, Moretti uncovered many new fragments, including the panel with Augustus and two *flamines*. After cleaning it meticulously, Moretti fit it perfectly in between the slab with Augustus's head and the two *flamines* ahead of Agrippa. It has half of Augustus's body, two *flamines*, several lesser priests, and an obscure figure in the third row that resembles M. Lepidus. With this formerly inaccessible panel,

24 Although the Duke of Fiano was initially cooperative, he was forced to leave Italy and forfeit any financial stake in the findings, Maynard 2010.



Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli explains the significance of the Ara Pacis to Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, 7 May 1938. The dictators look confused. [https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?pid=S0717-69962015000200004&script=sci\\_arttext&tlng=en](https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?pid=S0717-69962015000200004&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en)

Moretti was able to reassemble two-thirds of the South wall and offer a virtual reconstruction of the first third, where he assumed a dozen lictors preceded Augustus, running up to the start of the frieze. Moretti's version of the start of the South wall differed greatly from that of Petersen, who predicted that Livia and Gaius Caesar opened the procession a short space ahead of Augustus the *flamen* (*sic*).

Racing time, Moretti had to transform his virtual reconstruction into stone in a museum that was currently under construction to open by the deadline Mussolini had set. He had to take certain short cuts, for example, he incorrectly pushed together two fragmentary priests on the North wall. More egregiously, he confirmed in stone the damage Carradori had done in 1769 when he grafted the right leg of the consul Varus at the right end of the Julia-Tiberius panel to Antonia on the left end of the Drusus panel. Moretti saw what Carradori had done, and he read from his diary that he had applied acid to the two edges to increase the illusion that the panels join here, but Moretti retained the falsehood, owing to his time constraint, and put up a velvet rope barrier (stanchion) to prevent visitors to the museum from seeing the error. When one looks head on, one sees the join of the two panels in only two dimensions and does not catch the flaw, but when one looks at an angle or comes close, one can see the planes of the two panels do not match. Carradori murdered Varus, and Moretti covered up the crime.

## The Pieces of the Ara Pacis

The Ara Pacis Museum opened on 23 September 1938 to great fanfare, to conclude the Two Millennium celebration. Mussolini attended, after having toured the Ara Pacis Museum in advance to make sure that everything was proper. The museum itself was a glass shell, designed by Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo that let in natural light to enhance visibility.

As soon as Italy entered the World War II, Rome became a target for Allied attacks. Photographs taken during the war show sandbags surrounded the Ara Pacis to protect it. The monument suffered no significant damage, despite numerous attacks, and reopened after V-E Day. Moretti died in 1945, his giant book on the Ara Pacis nearly complete (Moretti 1948)<sup>25</sup>.



Varus's leg grafted onto Antonia



Mussolini tours the museum in advance. <https://www.romasparita.eu/foto-roma-sparita/tag/ara-pacis>

<sup>25</sup> His son finished it.



The museum opening, 23 September 1938. <https://www.inexhibit.com/mymuseum/ara-pacis-museum-rome-richard-meier/>

## EPILOGUE

Over time, the incessant traffic on Lungotevere began to rattle the entire museum. The city eventually held a contest to replace Morpurgo's glass museum with a new design, and the mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, chose Richard Meier's project. The Ara Pacis Museum closed in 1999, allegedly for three years, but in fact when the Massimo D'Alema's government fell, Giuliano Urbani, the new Minister of Cultural Heritage under Silvio Berlusconi, was able to delay work on the new museum for years. Critics claimed Meier's design did not fit in the neighborhood and that it is an eyesore. Work came to a halt, and the Ara Pacis sat inside protective wrap for six years. It might as well have been underground again. But after Meier modified the design, work finally resumed and the new Ara Pacis Museum opened in 2006. Since its discovery, the Ara Pacis has been a treasure fit for collectors but worthy of a museum. Today the Ara Pacis sits just a mile from its original location. On the one hand, it is a fitting tribute to Augustus that the Ara Pacis Museum now protects his most famous, revived monument, beside his empty Mausoleum, for by waging only foreign wars, Augustus brought a form of limited peace to the Roman Empire. On the other hand, the panels dispersed almost immediately after their discovery, and their reassembly occurred only due to the vainglory of a dictator, who took Italy into four wars (Abyssinia, Spain, Albania, World War II) that ruined his country and cost the lives of millions of Italians. In the days after World War I, the movement to reu-

nite the pieces of the Ara Pacis and create a museum that would forever remind Italians to stay at peace correctly sums up the modern message of the Ara Pacis in the proper medium: it is a museum of national memory. Since 1946, Italy and all Europe have enjoyed unprecedented peace and prosperity, which was also the original goal of Augustus's Golden Age.



Richard Meier's new Ara Pacis museum

## APPENDIX 1

On the letter from Ersoch to the Duke of Fiano  
Petersen, *Röm. Mitt.* (1894: 172):

“berichtete Pellegrini. In den *Röm. Mitt.* konnte ich einige Angaben des Architekten Herzog oder Erzoch abdrucken, welche dieser, der Leiter jener Arbeiten, R. Lanciani gemacht und dieser mir mitzutheilen die Güte gehabt hatte. Dem Duca di Fiano verdanke ich die Abschrift eines kurzen Berichtes, den derselbe Architekt ihm schon am 6 Juli 1859 geschrieben hatte. Beide seien hier wiederholt, weil sie einen gewissen urkundlichen Wert haben. Die Angaben, welche Herzog um das Jahr 1883 R. Lanciani machte, lauten folgendermaßen:

*La scoperla dei frammenti Fiano avvenne il 7 Settembre 1859 nell' angolo rientrante del palazzo in via Lucina fra i n. 16 B, 16 C. I frammenti giacevano alla profondità di m. 5.50 e giacevano su d' un piano lastricato di tavole di candido marmo. Il piano si estende per un buon tratto d' intorno essendo stato ritrovato*

*anche in altri scavi di sottofondazioni. Gli scavi durarono sino alla fine di nov 1859. Non tutti i pezzi furon estratti per l' angustia del sito e pel timore di meliere in pericolo i muri del palazzo. Der von Herzog selbst am 6 Juli geschriebene Bericht lautet Nell' eseguire la sottofondazione del muro di prospetto del Palazzo al Corso che guarda Via in Lucina e nell' apprqfondare il cavo all' oggetto di rinvenire un piano solido sul quale plantare la nuova rifondazione sonosi scoperti vari fratnmenti di marmi antichi cotne avanzi dt un monumento crollalo in quella locatità e scolpiti di ornati in bassorilievo ed altri con modinature.*

*Tali pregevoli avanzi spurgati dalle terre sono stati con ditigenza estratti, onde sgombrar il cavo, per quanto occorreva alle nuove fondazioni. Di fatto non ci durò lunga fatica a rintracciare sotto di essi 1m muramento di calce che per l' ampiezza e spessore del muro di prospelio soprastantc mi per misc pianlare la nuova rifondazione senza occupare e carcerare ninno delle vestigia di altri massi che circondano il perimetro del cavo aperto, die letzten Worte künftiger Grabung günstiger als die obigen.*

I was able to print some information from the architect Herzog or Erzoch, who was the leader of the project. Rudolfo Lanciani was kind enough to tell me about him. I am indebted to the Duke of Fiano for the transcript of a short report written by the same architect on 6 July 1860. Both are repeated here because they have a certain documentary value. The details which Herzog made in 1883 for Lanciani are as follows: *“The discovery of the Fiano fragments occurred on 7 Sept. 1859 in the corner of the palazzo on via Lucina between n. 16 B and 16 C. The fragments lay at the depth of 5.50 m. on a paved slab of white marble paneling. The plan extends around for a good tract, having been re-found also in other excavations under the foundations. The excavations lasted until the end of November 1859. Not all the pieces were extracted due to the narrowness of the site and for fear of an endangered in putting the walls of the building in greater danger.”* The report written by Herzog himself on 6<sup>th</sup> July reads *“In carrying out the underpinning of the façade wall of the palazzo on Corso, which looks down on Via in Lucina and in the preparation of the cable to the object of finding a solid plane on which the new foundations were planted, several portions of ancient marbles were discovered of a monument that collapsed in that location, carved with bas-relief decorations, others with moldings.*

*These valuable leftovers pulled from the earth were carefully extracted, in order to clear the cavern, as needed for the new foundations. In fact, it did not take us long to trace 1-m lime masonry beneath them, due to the width and thick-*

*ness of the overhanging wall to mix the new foundation without occupying and imprisoning the remains of other boulders that surround the perimeter of the open cavern, the last words regarding a future, more favorable excavation than the above.”*

Avena, *Rivista d' Italia* 7 (1904: 850): the architect Erzoch, who was in charge of the re-foundation project wrote to the Duke of Fiano on 6 July 1859 (*sic*).

*Tali pregevoli avanzi — scrive il 6 giugno del 1859 – al duca Fiano l'architetto Erzoch, incaricato delle opere di rifondazione — spurgali dalle terre sono stati con diligenza estratti, onde sgombrar il cavo, per quanto occorreva alle nuove fondazioni, che furono piantate, senza occupare e carcerare ninna delle vestigia di altri massi che circondano il perimetro del cavo aperto.*

“Those valuable scraps have been cleared from the earth and extracted with diligence in order to clear the cavity, as needed for the new foundations, which were planted without taking anything or locking in the remains of other masses that surround the perimeter of the open cave.”

The letter from the Duke of Fiano:

“Livorno, 20 Aug. 1903

*Ciò che posso dire come schiarimento sugli avanzi dell Ara Pacis rinvenuti sotto il mio palazzo nel 1859 è che quando fui avvertito di quella preziosa scoperta, fatta in occasione dei rinforzi della parte antica del palazzo dal mio architetto cavallò Erzoch, mi recai ad osservarli ancora giacenti nel luogo ove erano stati rinvenuti (angolo rientrante del palazzo antico, in via in Lucina, di faccia a via del Giardino) ed allora potei osservare pure altre simili lastre di marmo scolpito che s incastravano sotto il piano stradale della via in Lucina e proseguivano su per la via del Giardino, la cui montuosità, seguita immediatamente dal declivio dello Sdrucchiolo e via della Missione, altro probabilmente non ò che un cumulo di rovine di monumenti esistiti nei dintorni del Campo Marzio. Prova ne è, che là (credo in via della Missione) fu ritrovata in tempi recenti la colonna, innalzata in piazza di Spagna pel monumento della Concezione.*

Quello dunque che a me sembra l' indirizzo più pratico per nuove fruttuose ricerche si è di rivolgere i tasti e gli scavi verso i luoghi suindicati; ma per ciò fare, credo che converrebbe indagare pure le fondamenta del fabbricato, già scuderie Chigi, ora Caffè Olympia.

What I can say as a clarification of the remains of Ara Pacis found under my palazzo in 1859 is that when I was told of that precious discovery, made on the occasion of the reinforcements of the ancient part of the palace by my architect Sir Erzoch, I went to look at them still lying in the place where they were found (corner of the ancient palazzo on via in Lucina, overlooking via del Giardino) and then I could observe other, similar, carved marble slabs, which were attached to the street floor of via in Lucina and continued on under Via del Giardino, whose unevenness followed immediately by the decline of the downward slope and in via della Missione, in high probability is no more than a cumulus of ruins of monuments that existed in the vicinity of the Campus Martius. The proof of it is, that a column was recently found (I believe in via della Missione), raised in the city of Spain for the monument of the Conception.

So, what seems to me to be the most practical location for new fruitful research is to direct the excavation to the aforementioned places; but to do that, I think it would also be necessary to investigate under the foundations of the building, then called the Chigi stables, now Caffé Olympia.”

## APPENDIX 2

An additional piece, called “The head of Mars” was apparently smuggled out of the site when workmen under the engineer Herzoch were restabilizing Palazzo Ottoboni Fiano in 1859. Otto Benndorf came upon it in an antique store in Rome ca 1890 but did not buy it. A private collector bought it for £85 (Italian Lire)

Il Benndorf, alla cui amicizia debbo questo gesso, aveva ben riconosciuto a qual monumento appartenesse la testa, acquistata a Roma ed oggi di proprietà privata in Vienna. L'antiquario romano, presso cui si trovava sporca e negletta nel £ 85, la disse proveniente dal palazzo Fiano; e seguendo tal cenno il Benndorf non poté non accorgersi dell'unità di stile fra la nostra testa e gli altri avanzi dell' *Ara Pacis* riconosciuti dal ch. v. Duhn <sup>(1)</sup>, specialmente le bellissime lastre scolpite che si conservano nel detto palazzo, frutto dell'ultimo scavo fattovi nell'anno 1859, nella quale occasione senza dubbio' anche quella testa torná alia luce, per esser rubata, come suol farsi, da uno degli operai.

Professor Benndorf, to whose friendship I owe this plaster, had well recognized to what monument the head, acquired in Rome and now private property in Vienna, had belonged. The antiquarian shopkeeper in Rome, in whose store it



was both dirty and neglected at £85, said it came from near Palazzo Fiano; and following this mention, Benndorf could not fail to notice the unity of style between our head and the other remains of the Ara Pacis recognized by Friederich von Duhn, especially, of course, the very beautiful carved slabs that are conserved in the aforementioned palazzo, the fruit of the last excavation made in 1859, on which occasion without doubt this head also came to light, to be stolen, as is commonly done, by one of the laborers.

Lanciani (1908: 27):

In the notes Alessandro Sarti, *A.S.R.S.P.* 9, 496 [*Archivio della Società romana di storia patria*], has recorded this “Then when the side of Palazzo Fiano, which is on Corso, was reduced to the present condition, the bookseller Scalabrini told Fossati that he had seen under the foundations an immense, colossal capital and some columns, he did not say if they were intact or broken up, and that everything was left there without taking care of it.”

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