Extracts re signatures and attribution on Greek painted pottery, from Gill and Chippendale 1993.

The exemplar for the identification of masters in ancient Greece, of course, is the study of painted pottery, in particular black- and red-figure, as perfected by Sir John Beazley and his followers. Beazley was famously reticent about his methods, though confident his eye could distinguish fine grades of distance between artistic personalities and saying 'that manner, imitation, following, workshop, school, circle, group, influence, kinship are not, in my vocabulary, synonyms.' Some of the Beazley attributions have been challenged or revised, either by Beazley himself or subsequently. In fact, since we do not know fully what criteria Beazley used, one cannot apply the same criteria fairly in attempting reattribution. Brian Cook draws our attention to Hadra vases, where different expert eyes have seen different patterns of artistry. For an authoritative statement, we therefore go back to the original field where this Morellian method was perfected, the identification of masters in Renaissance painters, and in particular to the classic statement in Berenson's essay, "Rudiments of Connoisseurship."

The starting point is an identified corpus to gauge the range of a known artistic personality in the material under study: "To isolate the characteristics of an artist, we take all his works of undoubted authenticity, and we proceed to discover those traits that invariably occur in them, but not in the works of other masters." This first condition is violated by the Cycladic corpus, for we have, and can have, no independently identified sets of works of "undoubted authenticity" by any one master of the kind that is provided for Renaissance painters by signed, identified, and documented pictures, and for Greek vase painters by signed pots.

The next step is to isolate those little details of form that may unconsciously be characteristic of the hand of an individual painter—the manner of the ears, the hands, the folds of drapery, or the landscape behind the figure. The most revealing of all elements in Renaissance art is the manner of painting an ear: because it is part of the head, the ear is invariably painted by the master, rather than assistants, yet it is inconspicuous, unremarked by painter or by patron. This makes it "more characteristic, indeed, than any other detail of the human figure." Berenson notes

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504 D. von Bothmer has drawn attention to the difficulties in applying the Beazley methods to Cycladic: Fitton 1984, 73.
506 ARV² xlvii.
507 E.g., the Andokides and Lysippides Painters. The Lysippides Painter was first identified by Beazley as a black-figure painter, and noted as perhaps the same as the red-figure Andokides Painter (J.D. Beazley, Attic Black-Figure: A Sketch [London 1928] 25, 38–41; later he felt the two were the same (ARV, 1941); and later still, he once more identified them as two different persons (ARV² 2).
510 Berenson 111–48. This was written some years before 1902, when it was published.
511 Berenson 144.
512 Berenson 130.
that "the Italian painter kept on through a lifetime painting the same ear, because there was absolutely no call for changing it."\textsuperscript{313}

What are the characteristic details in Cycladic figures that are equivalent to Renaissance ears? There are none! They do not offer significant details at all, because the stylized and simple form of Cycladic sculpture does not provide an aspect to the figures of that nature.\textsuperscript{314}

Usefully, Berenson, as well as providing an account of what is reliable for identifying the individual, also plainly states what is not to be trusted: "The chin, the jaws, the neck, are all too typical, too easily copied, to be a ready indication of precise authorship . . . the followers and copyists of these masters share the same peculiarities, which can therefore serve only as indications of school, and not of the individual artist."\textsuperscript{315}

The least applicable, then, are these larger features, those that define "structure and movement in the human figure."\textsuperscript{316} Yet the identification of Cycladic masters rests on exactly those features, of the overall proportions, of the structure and movement in the figure, which are defined by Berenson as no means of diagnosis.

Notice also that both Berenson and Beazley addressed painted objects, and painting styles that present much detail of form and technique in the visible particulars. Many of the Cycladic figures were originally painted, but the sculpted forms with which Getz-Preziosi has worked offer no kind of small-scale variation of the kind the method requires.\textsuperscript{317} It might be that a sculptural equivalent of the significant painted detail does exist—a recent study of Viking runestones, for example, hopes to distinguish individual carvers by the "signature" left in the cut profile by a carver's tool and his manner of working with it.\textsuperscript{318} No attempt, however, has been made to show that such a signature exists for Cycladic sculpture.

In summary, it seems to us that the identification of the Cycladic masters rests on a misunderstanding of what the Morellian method consists of in any of its established uses. No significant details have been used. Instead, the larger features of morphology have been used to identify groups of figures that are, if anything at all, the Cycladic equivalent of Berenson's schools, "varieties" within such larger groupings as folded-arm figures. The recovery of many hundreds of Keros fragments by Zapheiropoulou and Doumas, and from other fieldwork on Keros, may clarify the issue. But it is not helpful to approach this real variation with a frame of supposed masters in mind.

The identification of masters, and the planning out of their artistic biographies, brings with it three further difficulties. A first, noticed by Beard in respect to Beazley's vase painters, applies with greater force to Cycladic art. As we have no information about vase painters other than what we see in the paintings, any discussion of the personality of the artists is, necessarily, a discussion of the paintings themselves conducted by proxy: "There is nothing to be said about them that cannot be said about the pots themselves."\textsuperscript{319} This is even more true of Cycladic figures, which are less forthcoming in what they seem to say to us.\textsuperscript{320} Beazley was again wisely reticent on this matter; he ends his essay on the Berlin Painter, written after 55 years of enjoying his "friendly presence," by remarking "perhaps I ought to conclude with a characterization of the artist," hesitates, and makes no attempt.\textsuperscript{321} Getz-Preziosi has no such reluctance, and fashions not just a characterization but a biography for the Goulandris Master—a modest beginning without self-assurance, sharpening skill and the confidence to essay larger figures, a mature accomplishment in his finest period, less ambitious projects in the declining years of an unusually long or concentrated career.\textsuperscript{322} This human story is in fact a set of comments on a set of figures chosen by Getz-Preziosi and arranged by Getz-Preziosi in a certain order.

The second difficulty is whether the frame of Cycladic society, as that is understood from a broad
range of archaeological sources, really provides for artists, whether as individuals, schools, or circles, to develop their artistic personalities, in the manner of the full-time artist, replete with individual genius and a fiery creative imagination, as our era imagines him to be. The Cycladic islands—though falling between mainland Greece and Crete, and in later prehistory therefore placed between two regions of early states—have been economically marginal, with small populations. Broodbank has shown that the little “frying-pans,” identified as depicting ships, correspond to boats with a crew of some 25 paddlers. Yet Broodbank suggests that even that complement is so much larger than the population of a prehistoric Cycladic village or hamlet that the boats must have been shared among several villages, which could, together, provide sufficient oarsmen to man the vessel; a ship from Melos would command as its crew a third to a half of the male labor force of the island.\footnote{Broodbank (supra n. 5).} This is a society of subsistence farmers and fishers that has very little in common with those of the ancient world, in Egypt or among the Greek city-states, where there developed a social role for the maker of fine objects that might bear comparison with the artist’s position in later European societies. A model for the place of art and of the artist in society that derives from the prosperous city-states of Classical Greece or Renaissance Italy is not appropriate.

A third, yet simpler, explanation of close similarity in figures is given by Renfrew: “One piece resembles another very closely for the very good reason that it is a direct and recent copy of it.”\footnote{Renfrew 1991, 115.}