

# **From antiquarianism to the interconnection of sources: Paolo Brenni's multifaceted approach to historical scientific instruments - Dall'antiquarianesimo alla interconnessione delle fonti: L'approccio multiplo di Paolo Brenni agli strumenti scientifici antichi**

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When Paolo Brenni moved his first steps in the world of historical scientific instruments, he met Gerald L'Estrange Turner, one of the 'sacred monsters' in this field of studies. Turner was still imbibed of "antiquarianism", a particularly fortunate approach to scientific instruments (and not only). An instrument had to speak for itself, in its own language, to reveal, first of all, its authenticity, and then its author, provenance and historical (but also market) value. Turner, whose influence Brenni often acknowledged, was himself at a turning point: perhaps, antiquarianism had limits. Who better than Brenni has been able to demonstrate what such limits were? During his career - and in part also because of his historical field of expertise, from late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries - he always managed to interconnect a single item with multiple sources. Each historical scientific instrument depends on the scientific enterprise in its broadest sense. An instrument is related to experiments, and therefore to laboratories, and therefore to the scientists and their publications. But it also had one or more makers, and therefore came from a single individual, a company or multiple workshops, which in turn had ties and rivalries with other workshops and companies. It had a use, that sometimes can be replicated in order to understand something on its purpose, which could be scientific, educational, purely intellectual, and even political. It also could have been figured and explained in all its minimal components. It had a market and a selling price. It could be a single entity, or one of a lot. It had a number of actual or potential buyers at very different social levels and in different countries. It had a story made of use, misuse and disuse, and another story of conservation and exhibition in personal collections, public fairs, temporary exhibitions and museums. What emerges from Paolo Brenni's work is, more than the instrument's limited ability to speak its own language, its collocation at the focal point of many different languages.

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