

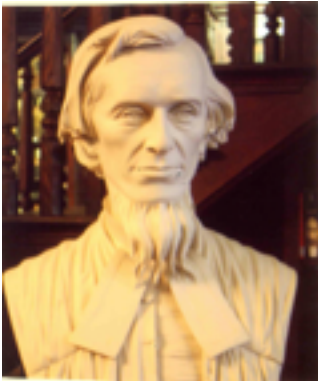
A Speculative Conversation

Overlooked and underappreciated by the art viewing public at large, *Rev. Samuel Brobst* (A. Meuller, 1877), *Alexander von Humboldt* (C. Rau, 1851), and *Johann von Schiller* (Edward Stauch, 1859) perch on the shelves of the German Society of Pennsylvania's Joseph Horner Memorial Library and muse on the state of bust portraiture today.



sigh “Contemporary art viewers have forgotten how to read a bust as an art object; they are blind to our subtlety and variety.” — *Schiller*

“Yet patrons visit those hideous presidential paintings in the National Portrait Gallery in droves! Why don't Philadelphia art lovers notice us?” — *Humboldt*



“Well... 19th century artists' use of white as a default color of memorialisation is problematic at best and fascist (one cannot forget Hitler's use of Greco-Roman aesthetics to promote racism) at worst.” — *Brobst*

Brobst struggles to mentally project an awkward turtle sign to the others, as he does not have hands, and *Schiller* and *Humboldt* stare blankly back, as they do not have pupils. Impressed with *Brobst*'s ability to untangle the communicative properties of art objects' formal characteristics, they simultaneously have a better understanding of their own semiotic properties and a worse sense of self.