

## BOOK REVIEW

*A Companion to Greek Art*. 2 Vols. Edited by TYLER JO SMITH and DIMITRI PLANTZOS. \$413.00. Pp. xxviii + 892. ISBN 978-1-4051-8604-9. 892 pp. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

The field of Greek art has an identity crisis. Nowhere is this more evident than in *A Companion to Greek Art*, edited by Tyler Jo Smith and Dimitri Plantzos. Smith and Plantzos assemble a roster of scholars who summarize the field of Greek art—but, as constructed, it is a field that I do not fully recognize. As they establish in Part I's Introduction, for them "Greek art," "classical art," and "classical archaeology" are more-or-less interchangeable terms for a field that (extraordinarily) stands apart from "art history" and "cultural history." This strikes me as an odd claim in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many contributors share this point of view, and such an assumption—together with some superficial research—prevents this often-helpful Companion from being the comprehensive reference work it could be.

Essays of varying quality in Part II deal with some of the various objects that help to constitute Greek art, the circumstances of its production, and its reception in classical literature. "Free-standing and Relief Sculpture" is indeed a huge topic, but, even so, I wish that Dimitris Damaskos had relied less on the basic handbooks. He asserts, for instance, that Lysippos made the Farnese Herakles, which is, rather, a copy of an original Lysippan work (Glykon the copyist would not be pleased!).

A better example of a sweeping essay, though, is that of Olga Palagia who reviews architectural sculpture, demonstrating its importance in the Greek world and why it merits its own conceptual category. Similarly, Ruth Westgate (mosaics) and Eleni Hasaki (workshops) present fresh and informed surveys. And Kenneth Lapatin cogently summarizes the ancient sources that deal with Greek art, including inscriptions and the "new" Posidippos epigrams. Perhaps the most groundbreaking—and potentially influential—essay is what could be called François de Callataÿ's prolegomena to the study of coins as art-historical evidence.

Essays in Part III consider the geographical areas outside mainland Greece. The historical and archaeological information offered here is valuable, but the essays do not always directly relate to the production or the reception of Greek art.

Clemente Marconi is particularly successful, though, when taking stock of Greek art in Sicily and South Italy. And, along the way, he thoughtfully explores the definitions of both “Greek” and “art,” even using the inclusive terms “visual arts,” “material culture,” and “visual culture.”

Part IV addresses iconography, context, and theory, with essays hitting a sampling of appropriate topics. In this section, authors take different approaches to very broad subjects. H.A. Shapiro, for example, chooses to focus on one aspect—group scenes—of the Olympian gods to great benefit. Timothy J. McNiven, Jennifer Neils, and John H. Oakley explore overlapping subjects in their useful overviews of social issues. With a command of historiography, moreover, François Lisarague teaches the reader how to analyze the imagery in scenes that represent sacrifice, reminding her that it is not mere illustration of reality but rather an interactive “visual commentary.” James Whitley’s essay, too, is welcome because it investigates a theoretical subject—agency—that has informed much recent scholarship about Greek art.

Essays in Part V explore the reception of Greek art in the West. They all investigate important topics, but they meet with varying degrees of success. Stephen L. Dyson, in particular, gives the reader much to consider when reviewing the study of Greek art in the 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century university. Like the Introduction, his essay takes for granted that “Greek art” and “Greek archaeology” are synonymous, sometimes tellingly using the term “art-historical archaeologist” instead of the simpler “art historian.” While “Greek art” and “Greek archaeology” may not be mutually exclusive, they do often refer to different conceptions, indeed traditions, of study. Dyson’s continued work on historiography is interesting, but surely his essay would be even more complete if it were to include an examination of Greek art in all applicable university departments, not just in Classics and classical archaeology programs. Some classical archaeologists today argue that Greek art should (only) be a subdivision of classical archaeology, often, one suspects, because they mistakenly believe that all art historians do not know their Latin and Greek. But the reality is that many prominent 20<sup>th</sup>-century specialists in Greek art taught and/or were trained in history of art departments, and even scholars who received degrees in Classics self-identified as both art historians and classicists. The result was that, by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, many scholars claimed dual citizenship, and at least as many specialists of Greek art studied and worked in the history of art as they did in Classics. Both of those different interdisciplinary contexts helped to shape the fin-de-siècle hybridized field that entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century—and that we know today.

As with any collection of this impressive size and scope—μέγα βιβλίον, μέγα κακόν—the essays' effectiveness is uneven, and omissions and inaccuracies in the bibliography are frustrating. Having to consult Volume 2 for both volumes' bibliography is a bit cumbersome for the reader, too. Yet the essays are helpful for both scholars and students when they present recently discovered material, often-neglected topics, and up-to-date bibliographies that do not appear in Greek art handbooks – some of which were written over 20 or 30 years ago. And they are indeed (perhaps inadvertently) thought-provoking when they define, or seek to redefine, what scholars mean by “Greek art.” For this Companion assuredly makes the reader think about her own definition of Greek art and its academic homes.

KRISTEN SEAMAN

*Kennesaw State University, kseaman1@kennesaw.edu*