

BOOK REVIEW

The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture. Edited by ELISE A. FRIEDLAND, MELANIE GRUNOW SOBOCINSKI, AND ELAINE K. GAZDA. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xiv + 713. Hardcover, \$175.00. ISBN 978-0-199-92182-9.

With over five hundred monographs published, the Oxford Handbook series has become the leading source for innovative research in disciplines like classical studies. Each Oxford handbook brings together leading scholars in the field in order to create a comprehensive volume on a particular subject. In 2015, Oxford added to their collection by publishing an extensive volume on Roman sculpture.

Edited by Elise A. Friedland and Melanie Grunow Sobocinski with Elaine K. Gazda, *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture* (OHRS) is about seven hundred pages long. Forty-five leading scholars of Roman sculpture lend their expertise to each chapter of this handbook. Eschewing a traditional chronological approach, OHRS is arranged thematically, is interdisciplinary, and attempts to place Roman sculpture into the larger arena of the Roman world. Extensive in both geography and chronologically, OHRS examines Roman art from the early Republic to the Late Empire, looks at examples of both elite and non-elite art, and includes sculpture both in Rome and the provinces.

The handbook is divided into six thematically organized sections. Part I investigates the history of collecting, conservation, and display of Roman sculpture. Part II focuses on the techniques and methods of distribution of Roman sculpture. In Part III, scholars contribute essays on the styles and genres of Roman sculpture. Part IV concentrates on the spatial and social contexts of Roman sculpture while Part V is an extensive investigation of the sculpture of the Roman provinces. Finally, Part VI investigates the viewing and reception of Roman sculpture.

OHRS is an essential resource for any scholar of antiquity. The main strength of this handbook is its sheer breadth. In addition to its extensive coverage of Roman sculpture in chronology and geography, the handbook also attempts to cover the majority of different types of sculptural media. Furthermore, an entire section of OHRS is devoted to the sculpture of the provinces of the

Roman Empire, giving the reader a more complete understanding of the stylistic diversity of Roman sculpture.

Another strength of OHRS is that it is current in the scholarly trends of Roman art and examines sculpture through popular prisms like feminism, gender, reception, and non-elite patronage. In addition, OHRS is on-point with its interdisciplinary approach and its attempt to place Roman sculpture into its larger context, thus giving the reader a better idea of how Roman sculpture functioned in antiquity. This interdisciplinary methodology is current practice in Roman art and archaeology. In fact, the entire book is up-to-date, bringing the reader the latest research and issues in the field of Roman sculpture.

This does not mean that there is no room for expansion. Many of the essays in OHRS are meant to be jumping-off points and offer scholars ideas for further research. For example, the editors state that two areas that need to be expanded upon include issues of technology and cultural heritage. In order to stay current in the field, there is an online version of OHRS. Instead of having publishing new editions, updates and new essays will be added directly to the online version.

But OHRS is not without a few faults. While the handbook examines a wide variety of sculptural media, the editors almost completely neglect the minor arts, which is a missed opportunity and yet another example of how the minor arts are still relegated to the background. This is nothing new. In the sixteenth century, Giorgio Vasari divided the major arts (architecture, painting, and sculpture) from the minor arts (everything else) and relegated the major arts to a supreme position. This opinion still pervades scholarship today, and is evident in the OHRS. Only Chapter 4.3 ("Terracottas" by Adi Erlich) is devoted explicitly to a form of minor arts. Interspersed throughout the rest of the text there are certainly discussions of objects of minor arts, but these objects are not the focus of those chapters. For example, Mark D. Fullerton's chapter deals with the applications and limitations of style and he uses the Gemma Augustea as a case study at the end of his essay.

The editors also fail to include sections on iconography and cultural heritage, though they are aware of this omission. In terms of cultural heritage, the editors state that this is something that they want to see expanded upon in the online version of the handbook. In that milieu, hopefully there will soon be a chapter by Margaret Miles on cultural heritage in the Roman world as well as chapters on the modern debates over cultural heritage. As for iconography, the editors are also aware that they neglected this subject and state that it is much too

broad to be discussed in this volume. Perhaps an Oxford handbook of Greek and Roman iconography is in order.

Finally, the high price (\$175) must be acknowledged as a potential drawback for OHRS, though when it is published in its paperback form it will be significantly less. The hardback might be too expensive to be used as a course textbook, especially if the instructor is also using Diana E.E. Kleiner's seminal *Roman Sculpture* published in 1992 by Yale University Press. However, if only a few chapters are required in a course's reading list, the student can buy the PDF of these on the Oxford Handbook series' website, thus making it much more affordable.

Despite its few drawbacks, OHRS is an essential resource. Its cutting-edge approach and content, along with its breadth of material, makes this a monograph that any scholar of Roman art should have on their shelves.

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