

## BOOK REVIEW

*Enduring Bronze: Ancient Art, Modern Views.* By CAROL C. MATTUSCH. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2014. Pp. 168. Paper, \$30.00. ISBN 978-1-60606-326-2.

In this concise and informative book Carol Mattusch offers an overview of the versatile medium of bronze and its products throughout their history, from their earlier extant Greek artifacts (dating from c. 900 BCE), through Roman imitations of Greek statuary, to the reception of these works in the modern world. She embeds ancient bronze products in their contexts and surveys production techniques and their implications; uses Athens as a case study and mines its literary sources and archaeological evidence; looks at commercial issues by studying the art market of Greece and Rome; and poses questions about originality in light of the many editions of a single piece deemed “the first one.”

Chapter 1 discusses Book 33 of Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*, written in the first century AD, a study of copper, mining, alloys (copper mixed with tin or lead or both, plus scrap metal and trace elements), statues (portrait statues, busts, herms, female portraits, *lararia*, and home décor), and famous Greek artists. Mattusch looks at Pliny’s testimony and pays special attention to the materiality and peculiarities of bronze (e.g. its greater tensile strength than stone), issues of chronology and social history, as well as the uses of bronze by Greeks and Romans.

Chapter 2 covers techniques of handling bronze, which range from the “direct lost-wax process”—cutting, rolling, pinching, and carving wax, warming up body parts so they could be stuck together, covering the resulting wax model with a clay mold, baking the mold to melt out the wax, and pouring the bronze into the hollow mold—to the rarely used *sphyrelaton*-technique, to casting bronze so as to make mirrors and heavy objects.

In Chapter 3, Mattusch reviews textual testimonies about bronze starting with its mythological origin in Hephaestus, pausing over Philo Byzantius, and spending considerable time on Pliny the Elder and Pausanias. Chapter 4 focuses on Athens as the site of extensive bronze work. Here we find references both to major artifacts such as the Hephaisteion, the bronze statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton in the Agora, and the statue of Athena designed by Phidias, and to

more inconspicuous products such as various metal objects from the Agora of Athens.

In Chapter 5, Mattusch turns her attention to artists of bronze and discusses Lysippos of Sikyon from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE and Praxiteles, who is mostly known for his marble sculptures, although he also made at least a dozen bronzes, as attested by Pliny. Her exploration of the art market is quite interesting. A main source of information is Cicero, an avid collector of bronze, in his letters to Atticus. In around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD Roman generals brought back from Greek cities and sanctuaries vast quantities of statuary, and Greek art dealers sold to Roman collectors works of their own heritage. Romans purchased reproductions of famous antique statues and sometimes signed their own names as the producers of very well known works.

This lax attitude to authorship is further explored in Chapter 6 where Mattusch embeds the issue in the context of the many “editions” of an “original” of a popular piece. Using as one of her examples Auguste Rodin’s plaster model for his *Monument to Balzac* (1891–1898), from which fourteen or more bronze statues were cast, she invites us to think about the differences between “original” and “replica.” The last pages of the book contain brief references to Calpurnius Piso, the Roman owner of a villa near Herculaneum; J. Paul Getty’s commissioning of bronze replicas of most of the bronze statues, busts, and herms from the ancient seaside Villa dei Papiri for his Malibu museum; and the Fonderia Chiurazzi, the longest-lived art foundry in Naples.

Overall, *Enduring Bronze* offers an accessible overview on the production, textual transmission, and distribution of bronze artifacts from classical antiquity to our times. The book is equipped with high quality images, suggested readings, and an index that enhance its readability and usefulness.

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