

BOOK REVIEW

A History of Roman Art. By STEVEN L. TUCK. Chichester, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015. Pp. xxxiii + 372 pages. Paperback, \$66.95. ISBN 9781444330267.

In the preface of *A History of Roman Art*, Steven L. Tuck admits that there are countless textbooks on Roman art and thus he must justify the creation of yet another one. Besides the fact that Tuck wanted a text that seamlessly followed his classroom lectures, he also saw a huge need for an textbook that had numerous high quality images at a fraction of the normal price. Tuck was able to minimize the cost of the text by utilizing open source Wikimedia images along with his own and colleagues' photographs. In terms of content, Tuck wanted to set his textbook apart by emphasizing the social, cultural, and political contexts of Roman art, thereby giving students a well-rounded view of how art functioned in the ancient world. Furthermore, in his chronological narrative of Roman art, Tuck eschews the traditional notion that there is a downward trajectory within Roman art that moves from illusionism into a decline in naturalism in late antiquity. Instead, Tuck focuses on how these "changes that occur in the art of a particular period represent the response of the visual world to the needs of its makers ... and their selection for their ability to convey the selected lessons or messages to the audience" (xxi).

Before proceeding with his chronological investigation, in Chapter One, Tuck places the discipline of Roman art within its context, enumerating modern issues surrounding the study of Roman art like cultural patrimony, restoration, and problems with dating. In addition, in the first chapter Tuck highlights some of the major research trends of the past decades, including elite and non-elite reception. The next eleven chapters are arranged chronologically, beginning with one chapter on Etruscan art and the regal period, two chapters on the Roman Republic, and eight chapters on art of the Roman Empire; Tuck ends with the reign of Constantine. Within these twelve chapters, Tuck examines not only the fine arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting but also a plethora of minor arts, like mosaics, jewelry, metalwork, and cameos.

Each chapter begins with a timeline and within the marginalia, the reader can easily find glossary words in bold. In order to achieve his goal of integrating artworks into their larger contexts, within each chapter Tuck includes sidebars and larger box features, which highlight primary sources, recent scholarship, and more information on historical context and artistic methods. For example, the scholarly perspective box in Chapter six investigates the literary inspiration behind Tiberius' Sperlonga sculptures and Anne Weis' recent research on this subject (156). At the end of each chapter, Tuck provides an annotated bibliography for further reading.

A setback of *A History of Roman Art* is the online student content, which includes the timelines and glossary that are already in the textbook. Twenty-first century students want interactive and multimedia content and this is a missed opportunity. On the other hand, the online instructor content is highly beneficial and includes additional images and details, PowerPoint presentations, assignments, and even sample lesson plans; this could save preparation time for the adopting professor.

But how does Tuck's textbook compare to other Roman art and archaeology survey textbooks? As Tuck admits in his preface, there is quite a selection, including Paul Zanker (*Roman Art*, 2012), Fred S. Kleiner (*A History of Roman Art*, 2010), and Nancy H. Ramage and Andrew Ramage (*Roman Art*, 2016). In my experience, most instructors use Ramage and Ramage (RR). When comparing RR to Tuck's textbook, both are arranged chronologically and are on trend with a contextual approach, investigating artworks holistically while highlighting the most recent breakthroughs in scholarship. Within the chapters, RR also has textboxes that help put objects into their larger contexts. RR also includes website content for students. But Tuck differs from RR in a couple of ways. First, he dispels the idea of a downward spiral within the style of Roman art. In addition, unlike RR, Tuck investigates the regal period of Roman art, elucidating the origins of the Roman Forum and the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Also, Tuck's textbook is almost half the price of RR.

So would I use Tuck's textbook in a course on Roman art? Yes. Tuck presents the material in an accessible way, with a cogent writing style. In addition, Tuck is on trend with his emphasis on the context of Roman art, relating the works to political, social, and cultural issues of the Roman world, thereby bringing the ancient world to life for students. As an instructor, I would also find the online resources of this textbook immensely useful. Finally, one cannot deny that the price of *A History of Roman Art*, at \$66.95, is much more affordable for students

than other Roman art textbooks. But do not be fooled: just because Tuck's textbook is almost one hundred dollars cheaper than Ramage and Ramage, this does not mean that the author skimps or delivers an inferior study. Tuck packs in the information, includes many high quality, color photographs, and delivers his narrative of Roman art in a fresh, up-to-date manner.

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