

BOOK REVIEW

A History of Greek Art. By MARK D. STANSBURY-O'DONNELL. Malden and Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015. Pp. xxviii + 402. Paperback, \$66.95. ISBN 978-1-4443-5015-9.

For decades, textbook options for introductory Greek Art and Archaeology courses were limited to Biers (*The Archaeology of Greece*) and Pedley (*Greek Art and Archaeology*). In recent years no fewer than three new textbooks appeared, aiming at the same introductory undergraduate market: Barringer 2014 (reviewed in CJ 2016.03.08 and in BMCR 2016.06.05); Neer 2012 (reviewed in CR 63.1, 2013, 225-226); and the volume under review here. Like Neer's book, the Stansbury-O'Donnell volume consists of 14 chapters; double the number of Barringer's text. Eight chronological chapters, spanning the Early Bronze Age through the Hellenistic period, are preceded by an introduction and interspersed with thematic chapters. This reflects the challenge faced by textbooks like this: to balance the traditional goal of giving students an overview of stylistic developments, illustrated by a large number of canonical works, and the aim to equip them with a skillset by familiarizing them with the interpretative process archaeologists use to make sense of artifacts and assemblages. Stansbury-O'Donnell tries to do both, but the result of the large number of works and dense information content, coupled with a small and dense print, feels slightly overwhelming.

The structure inevitably causes some going back-and-forth when works feature in multiple chapters: on page 272, for example, all seven references to illustrations refer the reader to other chapters, and a discussion of the Early Geometric "Boots Grave" is split between chapters 4 (73-74) and 13 (327). Cross-references are excellent, but one may wonder to what extent students would bother flipping back and forth through the text.

Whereas Neer offers three case studies of important sites, Stansbury-O'Donnell's text includes two chapters on contexts ("civic, domestic, and funerary;" and "sanctuaries and architecture") and an additional three on the themes of narrative; the production of Greek art and its markets; and identity. The decision to move away from type sites to themes allows students to discover that they can apply certain ways of looking at material culture to any multitude of sites, assemblages, or individual artifacts. This approach also allows Stansbury-O'Donnell to bring in

some of his greatest expertise (in iconography, narrative, and gender and identity), and his descriptions and analyses of scenes on pottery and how they reflect society are excellent.

As the title suggests, the focus of the book is unapologetically on art, and Stansbury-O'Donnell's expertise in iconography tends to take precedence over more humble material remains. Thus a description of houses at Olynthos (111–115) mentions loom weights as evidence for household weaving, but the weaving process is discussed and illustrated exclusively via pottery paintings showing looms or elaborate textiles, literary sources about Athena's peplos, and the unique shroud from Vergina. For more archaeologically-inclined instructors the chapter on production is valuable and sections of it can easily be assigned to be read along with the major monument or art form under discussion.

Stansbury-O'Donnell seamlessly weaves together formal descriptions of artifacts with their function and role in society. A good example of this is his discussion of the Early Bronze Age seals from Lerna: a description of designs is followed by functional analysis (the use of seals to seal clay jars), leading to the observation that such seals indicate ownership and that the quantity of them in Lerna's House of the Tiles suggests an administrative role for the building as well as a change towards a more hierarchical society. In this way Stansbury-O'Donnell walks the student through the process of interpretation: description, function, and social-historical implications.

My specific criticisms are few. In a textbook geared towards undergraduate students with no or minimal background knowledge, clarity is of the utmost importance, both to ensure understanding and to serve as an example of the sort of lucidity and precision students should follow in their own writing. In general, the text is clear and detailed, and timelines in the beginning of each chapter, a glossary of terms, and text boxes focused on specific issues all help create order in the plethora of information. Technical terms are also helpfully explained in the margin when they first appear. Occasionally a lack of precision obscures meaning: for example when the author seemingly conflates scripts (Linear A and B) with languages (Minoan and Greek) and states in a single paragraph that Linear B was "a writing system unlike the earlier" Linear A, and "may have been developed by the Mycenaeans from Linear A" (50). A more disturbing example occurs in a very brief discussion of the Parthenon marbles in a textbox on cultural patrimony (262–263). Stansbury-O'Donnell refers to the controversy, but does not explain the circumstances under which the marbles were removed; without that knowledge, it is

impossible to understand what the controversy entails, or even why it exists in the first place.

Chapters 2 and 3 contain a number of errors; I offer here a few corrections in the hope that they be incorporated in future editions. The Mycenaeans did not start building palaces “by LH I” (43) but, as stated correctly on page 60, palaces developed in LH IIB-III A1; the figure-8 shield is not found only in Mycenaean art (44) but is common in Minoan art as well (as is the theme of the lion hunt, popular on Minoan seals); the photos of the West House frescoes at Akrotiri (fig. 2.20) should be flipped and the text (40) adapted: ships (and warriors) move left to right; the Lion Gate and the Treasury of Atreus are built with large ashlar masonry rather than with the roughly-hewn boulders that constitute Cyclopean masonry (58).

The final qualm I have with the book is to do with its production. The volume is produced on thin paper, that doesn't promise to hold up well to typical semester-long use (my own copy looked rather tattered after a few weeks). My criticisms aside, Stansbury-O'Donnell has produced a highly informative textbook which conveys its wealth of information in a clear and accessible style and frequently challenges students to look harder and think deeper.

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