

BOOK REVIEW

The Art of Contact: Comparative Approaches to Greek and Phoenician Art. By S. REBECCA MARTIN. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Pp. 320. Hardcover, \$59.95. ISBN 978-0-8122-4908-8.

Rebecca Martin's new book seeks to update narratives on the art of Phoenician and Greek contact in the first millennium BCE. With an array of theories, she aims to free Phoenician art from the shadows by avoiding the presumption that Greek art was superior to that of the Near East. By selectively choosing examples of canonical works of art and relevant postcolonial theories, Martin pieces together innovative and thought-provoking ideas that prioritize the Phoenicians. The book heralds an end to professors teaching students that Phoenician art was derivative or "eclectic," with ruthless businessmen slavishly copying art from other cultures to advance their single-minded interest in trade.

Given the scarcity of art and archaeology from settlements in the Levantine homeland and abroad, Martin's task is not easy. Moreover, because the Phoenicians traded in ephemeral goods from the Levant, Arabia and Mesopotamia, the archaeological record obscures the culture of a mobile people famed for their taste in luxury, trade and travel. Coins, mosaics, sculpture, pottery and sarcophagi believed to be Phoenician-produced are examined alongside literary, historical, epigraphic and archaeological sources. Martin promotes a holistic approach towards the available evidence, eschewing unhelpful disciplinary compartmentalization, which has limited our understanding of Greco-Phoenician interaction.

Because of its theoretical emphasis, the book begins with a set of definitions and questions, showing how art historical work on Greece and the Near East has left the Phoenicians behind. The terms “Orientalizing” and “Hellenization” are critiqued as vehicles for Greek exceptionalism, where Greek artistic genius and originality always triumph. Such frameworks deny scholars the ability to make progress on illuminating Greco-Phoenician relations other than as paradigms of “dualism of conflict or consensus” (39).

Chapter 2 shows how interpretation of Greek *kouroi*, Hellenistic picture mosaics and Phoenician anthropoid sarcophagi have furthered the “double standards that pervade thinking about Greek art relative to other arts in the eastern Mediterranean” (42). Art historians speak about the evolution of Greek *kouroi* over Egyptian influence in teleological terms where “Greek cultural imperialism was inevitable,” a concept that fits well with western ideals about progress (44). Chapter 3 continues in this vein. Martin believes a biological definition of race is relevant, largely because modern scholars have used “Greek” and “Phoenician” in a racial sense (79). Biases are rooted in Levantine colonialist history, current events and a poorly understood archaeological record due to a lack of fieldwork.

Chapter 4 argues that a collective Phoenician identity did not emerge until the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman periods, and that a “Phoenicianism” (the author’s term) can be seen most clearly in monumental art and coins. Burials from Tyre, Byblos, and Sidon of royal and common people emphasize ancestry and local toponyms. Phoenician sanctuaries employ a combination of iconography, styles and architectural typologies unique to the region. Bilingual inscriptions on stelai from Athens show a Phoenician community abroad conversant with both languages and cultures, while imagery suggests Phoenician mortuary practice was represented in Athenian style. Language, religion, economy and family motivated the Phoenicians perhaps more than civic considerations, with the exception being Tyre, which produced coins promoting their dominance over other Phoenician cities.

Chapter 5 examines the “Alexander” Sarcophagus and the sculptural group of Aphrodite, Pan, and Eros, known as the “Slipper Slapper,” through the concepts of hybridity and middle ground. Martin effectively applies hybridity to the Alexander Sarcophagus, defining it as a cultural encounter negotiated through power structures that are inherently unequal (140). She argues that the Sarcophagus, by working within the artistic traditions of Sidonian funerary art, acted as a subversive statement meant to destabilize Macedonian hegemony through cues to which only locals were privy (151). The discussion contains a summary of various interpretations (142–152), and the section could be assigned to an upper level art history methods course for instruction on postcolonialism in ancient art. In reading the Slipper Slapper, Martin uses Middle-ground theory, defined as a set of negotiations, where mediations were a major source of power between discordant but equal parties (153–154).

As a part of the sanctuary group of the Poseidoniasts of Berytos’ clubhouse at Delos, the Slipper Slapper expressed Phoenician maritime religion. As an international hub, Hellenistic Delos engendered an extraordinarily unique and prolific art scene, reflective of Phoenician interconnectivity and larger cultural ambitions. Themes of originality, emulation, appropriation, and the role of agency, which percolate throughout the book as the predominate forces behind Phoenician artistic culture, are revisited in the conclusion. In advocating for a proper use of theory, she effectively brings Phoenician art up to speed with current trends in Greek and Roman art and sets an agenda for future research.

With its successful organization and methods, the book marks a major contribution. By dealing with material culture chronologically from the Iron Age through the Persian, Egyptian and Hellenistic periods, arguments build upon one another in a way that draws out major shifts. For example, Phoenician art had not yet developed by the Iron Age. Second, the book models the appropriate way to apply theory to visual culture. With interpretations already grounded in traditional art histori-

cal ideas of formal analysis, receptivity, patronage and archaeological context, the use of theory, along with interesting juxtapositions of art, privileges Phoenician contexts and allows for important new interpretations. Martin's mastery is apparent in her deft summary of race and ethnicity in antiquity where she explicates the racial biases inherent in ancient art from Winckelmann to modern times in a manner free of jargon and didacticism (80-84). I hope she will expand upon her research by drawing on anthropology, which may provide a more nuanced platform to explore the Phoenicians and especially their preference for anthropomorphism in mortuary art.

The book is well-illustrated with a judicious selection of images pertinent to advancing argumentation. Black and white images, which are the focus of major points, are helpfully embedded within the text for easy reference, while colored plates of more canonical art are placed together at the end. Endnotes and bibliography are easy-to-use and up-to-date with current scholarship.

LEAH E. LONG

Independent Scholar, leahel@umich.edu