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THE LANGUAGE OF IMAGES IN ROMAN ART

This book develops a new theory for the understanding of Roman pictorial art. By treating Roman art as a semantic system it establishes a connection between artistic forms and the ideological messages contained within. The history of Roman art traditionally followed the model of a sequence of stylistic phases affecting the works of their era in the manner of a uniform *Zeitgeist*. In contrast, the author shows different stylistic forms being used for different themes and messages. This leads to the reception of Greek models, a basic phenomenon of Roman art, appearing in a new light. The formulations of specific messages are established from Greek art types of different eras: Classical forms for the grandeur of the state, for example. Different stylistic forms from the Greek past serve to express Roman ideological values. In this way a conceptual and comprehensible pictorial language arose, uniting the multicultural population of the Roman state.

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THE LANGUAGE OF IMAGES
IN ROMAN ART

TONIO HÖLSCHER

TRANSLATED BY
ANTHONY SNODGRASS AND
ANNEMARIE KÜNZL-SNODGRASS

WITH A FOREWORD BY
JAŚ ELSNER



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Preface

The main lines of argument in this essay were first presented in a paper to the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, and later formed the subject of lectures in various Universities, Archaeological Institutes and academic study groups. In the ensuing discussions, they were advanced by contributions, in particular, from J. Assmann, A. H. Borbein, F. Coarelli, H. Gabelmann, L. Giuliani, N. Himmelmann, St. Lehmann, E. Lefèvre, W. Schluchter, S. Settis, M. Torelli and P. Zanker. At the Archaeological Institute, Heidelberg I have been able to discuss the subject-matter above all with D. Grassinger, P. Karanastassis, C. Maderna-Lauter, H. G. Martin and St. Schröder, whose dissertations also deal in part with these questions. In the concluding stages of the work A. Dihle, who read the manuscript and improved it considerably with critical comments and suggestions, was of particular help to me. For the provision of illustrations, I was assisted by Archivi Alinari, M. Bertolotti, Hirmer Fotoarchiv, H. Jung, U. Kreilinger, N. Kunisch, H. Oehler, Th. Schäfer, S. L. Touati, H. Vögele. To them all, I owe cordial thanks.

Preface to the English edition

It is with particular pleasure that I see this book being published in a translation for an English-speaking audience. During the last ten years I have been introduced by the friendship of various scholars to the stimulating scene of Classical Studies in England as well as in the United States where I was challenged, by colleagues as well as by students, to open up my scholarly approaches to many new perspectives. Therefore, this English translation is first of all an act of gratitude. On the other hand, it has become more and more evident in recent times that scholarly orientations in the various countries are not only dramatically diverging – which in itself would not be problematic and could even be most fruitful – but that the multiplicity of approaches only rarely results in a productive pluralism since scholarly discourses tend more and more to isolate themselves within the boundaries of language. Translations can never compensate for the knowledge of foreign languages – on the contrary, they should encourage the acquisition of this knowledge.

The first suggestion of publishing an English version of this essay came from Emmanuele Curti, who aroused the interest of Cambridge University Press and stimulated influential colleagues to support this plan. Pauline Hire of Cambridge University Press was an indefatigable and encouraging driving force in long and difficult phases. An absolute stroke of luck was when Annemarie and Anthony Snodgrass were persuaded to undertake the translation which they did with wonderful insight and understanding. Afterwards Jaś Elsner contributed his very thoughtful introduction to my rather German approach into the

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intellectual scenery of the English-speaking world. Last but not least, the tiresome task of editing was taken over with enormous patience by Michael Sharp with the help of Sinéad Moloney. The translation was financed by Inter Nationes, Bonn. To all of them I express my deepest gratitude.

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Foreword

By *JAS' ELSNER*

Tonio Hölscher's essay, *The Language of Images in Roman Art*, is one of the most important and least well-known books (at least to an English-speaking readership) to have been published on Roman art in the past thirty years. Hölscher's formidable achievement is not only to have produced a wonderfully flexible and new theoretical understanding of Roman art, but to have grounded it – with a rare mixture of minute expertise and wide-ranging panache – in a careful discussion of the monuments themselves. Moreover, by returning art-historical and archaeological discussion to the age-old issues of style and form, Hölscher has breathed new life into a kind of art history many have left for dead. He is quite right to argue that we can only abandon questions of form – questions at the centre of every art-historical debate in Classical archaeology before the present generation – at our peril, not only since the methods of formalism are those by which objects have always been assessed and understood, but also because – if it loses its empathetic closeness to objects – art history risks heading into a tailspin ungrounded by any basis in material culture. Yet his is not a dry or antiquarian return to stylistic art history for its own sake. Rather, he has succeeded in uniting the great formalist strengths of the German tradition (of which he is one of the major living exponents) with a more recent interest in content and within the umbrella-theory of art as a linguistic system. In this union of old and modern approaches, he has created something genuinely new – both on the level of understanding Roman art and also as a theoretical postulate for the ways images more generally work as semantic vehicles for communication.

Although he gestures briefly to academic disciplines outside Classical archaeology and formalist art history, notably in the direction

of semiotics and linguistics, Holscher's theoretical contribution is grounded firmly in a precise analysis of monuments. Unlike much of the grand theory that has swept the human sciences (and especially art history) in the Anglo-American tradition since the 1980s,¹ Holscher's is a theoretical approach built empirically from careful examination of objects within the constraints (but equally building upon the strengths) of a long German set of interrogations of this material. It is not theory applied to works of art, to see how far one can get, but rather a theoretical model derived from them. The fact that Holscher's book may not look like art theory as one might expect it in Britain or the United States does not make his contribution any less theoretical or interesting. While German art-historical scholarship has a general tendency towards abstraction (something deeply embedded in its Kantian and Hegelian roots), this does not always go hand in hand with close theoretical reasoning. In its own context, Holscher's work offers an outstanding example of abstraction built upon the foundations of a methodologically rigorous and theoretically astute empiricism.

The book is terse and closely argued. It is also strikingly reticent about its historiographic roots within German art-historical writing. For this reason it seems only fair to give the English reader a sense of its depth and significance beyond the ostensible objects and discussions presented in the book's substance. For Holscher writes within a great theoretical tradition of art history, rocked to be sure by the crises of the first half of the last century,² but still vibrant enough to have produced (at the Classical end of art history alone) such dominant post-war voices as those of Nikolaus Himmelmann, Erika Simon and Paul Zanker as well as Holscher's own.³ This book is an active engagement with that tradition – not just archaeological but art-historical in its widest sense.⁴ It is no surprise that, among the few Great Names Holscher mentions, are a number – especially Panofsky and Wölfflin – who are not Classicists, but rather represent the finest theoretical reflections of the German art-historical tradition on the general questions of form and meaning which govern this book. In this sense, the author's contribution has ramifications well beyond Classical art history. For, although Holscher's specific subject may be

the relations of Roman art to its Greek roots and models, his deeper theme is a novel approach to the alignment of meaning (iconographic, iconological, social and contextual) with form (understood both as style and as a semantic system for using earlier visual types). And this issue – the ways form determines, defines, enables meaning – is one of the fundamental problems that characterise the entire German-speaking tradition of art history.

At the same time, Hölscher confronts head-on one of the oldest (and least resolved) chestnuts in the history of Classical art, the theme that Otto Brendel presented in 1953 as ‘the Problem of Roman Art’. Hölscher’s book may be described as the most comprehensive and satisfying general theory of Roman image-making since Brendel – to whom Hölscher is clearly and explicitly indebted – advanced his vastly influential, if obscurely entitled, *Prolegomena to the Study of Roman Art*, which was originally written in the early 1950s and has been required reading (especially in the United States) since its publication as a book in 1979.⁵ One might say that as a thesis on how Roman images work in their cultural context, Hölscher’s book replaces that of Brendel, whose conclusions on pluralism (pp. 122–37) were effectively a statement of his own position. It is the major theoretical contribution since Brendel’s book and the eloquent Marxist reformulation of ‘dualism’ in Roman art proposed by Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli.⁶ While there are several ways the field has moved on since the original German publication of this book,⁷ there has certainly been no overarching attempt to summarise how and to explain why Roman art became the phenomenon it became, other than Hölscher’s outstanding essay. Nor has there been any sustained engagement with the issues of form on anything like the scale which Hölscher achieves.

As a specifically historical contribution, Hölscher limits his thesis of ‘art as a semantic system’ to the uses of Greek prototypes within Roman art. However, his observations about the ways Romans appropriated external models can be extended to other artistic influences in Roman culture – notably, what scholars have labelled the native ‘Italic’ elements in Roman art (descending in part from Etruscan influence) and also non-Greek cultural appropriations into Rome – for instance (in both painting and sculpture) the adoption of Egyptiana. These

visual forms (the 'Italic' often characterised by a radical rejection of the illusionistic conventions of scale and perspective normal in Roman art, and the Egyptian by Pharaonic and Ptolemaic styles) may be said to perform 'semantic' visual duties within Roman art on a basis exactly analogous to the Classicism explored by Hölscher. There can hardly be a greater compliment to a theoretical model than the observation that it can be satisfyingly extended. Moreover, in a period the book scarcely touches upon, Hölscher's postulate of the typological nature of the Roman language of images helps to explain aspects of the transformation of Roman art in late antiquity towards the art forms typical of the Middle Ages. If Hölscher is right about 'semantic' juxtaposition of types as a key to Roman image-making, then the eclecticism of late antique art – with its juxtapositions not of replicas resembling earlier prototypes but of actual examples culled from earlier periods in Roman art (the so-called practice of spoliation, of which the Arch of Constantine is the most famous example)⁸ – is effectively a transformed continuation of Hölscher's semantics. While it is true that the Romans always borrowed (often stole!) actual examples of Greek art as well as its forms, types and styles, in late antiquity they transferred this process to their own earlier productions. All this is to say that, not only in the linguistic model of typological borrowings and semantic uses, but also in some of the specifically historical entailments of this model for late antique art, Hölscher's thesis seems not only sound but flexible enough to be enriched by the addition of further data outside his immediate sphere of concern.

Moreover, because the 'Classicism' of Roman art – its assimilation of and play with earlier models – is this essay's main subject, Hölscher's book plugs into a series of significant debates on the issues of cultural influence, borrowings and appropriation.⁹ The question of the reception of earlier forms and visual paradigms is one that is not only fundamental to Roman art history, but is cardinal to the aesthetics of postmodernism itself – that period whose inception coincided directly with the writing of the book.¹⁰ Hölscher's theory of Roman art may thus be seen to offer a historical paradigm on the visual level for some of the eclectic strategies and pick-and-mix genuflections of postmodernist art itself.

In what follows, I shall try to outline in a little more detail something of the art-historical traditions in which Hölischer's book should be situated. Besides providing a certain amount of historiographic and methodological background, this will – I hope – help to show the importance of Hölischer's specific contribution, as well as placing it in its own cultural context.

ROMAN ART

The two Roman art historians of an earlier generation whom Hölischer mentions by name in his introduction are Otto J. Brendel and Peter H. von Blanckenhagen. Hölischer cites them as his precursors in emphasising the pluralism of Roman image-making (p. 3). However, Brendel's book in particular is important to him as an earlier attempt to do some of the things Hölischer is attempting himself. Its strongly historiographic streak (it is in fact the major work of historiography in Roman art)¹¹ allows Hölischer largely to avoid the historiographic side of his subject and to tackle the visual material directly, without too much genuflection to earlier approaches. Yet the circumstances governing both Brendel's and Blanckenhagen's work are interesting in relation to their influence on Hölischer. Both were educated in the great German tradition before the Second World War; though neither was Jewish (Brendel being a clergyman's son and Blanckenhagen a Latvian nobleman from a family which fled from Russia to Germany to escape the Bolshevik revolution) both chose to leave Germany for America (Brendel before the War and Blanckenhagen after it), where both eventually settled in New York. Indeed, the very need for Brendel's book was surely motivated by his American experience.¹² His American students had neither the deep knowledge of the German tradition nor a suitable command of the German language to immerse themselves in what must have seemed the most recondite (and enormous) of formalist bibliographies. What was needed therefore was his own guide through that literature, worked up from a lecture published in Italian in the 1930s and completed with a more recent statement of where the field currently stood (as of 1953).¹³ That Brendel himself represented the apogee of the tradition he was examining is perhaps

inevitable (if not entirely modest!) – but it is an important warning to modern readers of the *Prolegomena* about the care with which one must handle its purported objectivity. It is ironic how important for those (like Holscher) still within the German tradition is this somewhat slanted insider's portrait designed as an outsider's introduction.¹⁴

In the *Prolegomena*, Brendel asks two questions which not only govern his own discussion¹⁵ but linger still to inform that of Holscher. First, he worries as to whether there really was such a thing as Roman art with its own identity and value.¹⁶ The classic Viennese intervention of the late nineteenth century, in the form of works by Franz Wickhoff (1853–1909) and Alois Riegl (1858–1905), had sufficiently affirmed the independent existence and value of Roman art,¹⁷ but had left open the second of Brendel's questions – namely, 'What is Roman about Roman art?'¹⁸ The post-Rieglian tradition of Roman archaeology might be described as a series of attempts to provide a solution. Some proposals, in the context of the rise of Nazism, were nationalistic and downright racist – an issue to which Holscher alludes obliquely in chapter 2, when he criticises the 'absolute conception of individuality [as] applied not just to persons but to whole peoples'. In the years before and after the Second World War, a series of what Brendel characterises as 'dualistic' theories of Roman art were formulated, associated with such luminaries of the discipline as Gerhardt Rodenwaldt (1886–1945), Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli (1900–75) and Guido Kaschnitz-Weinberg (1890–1958).¹⁹ These effectively divided Roman art into a great battle between the stylistic traits indigenous to Italy (variously described as anti-classical, Italic or Plebeian) and those borrowed from the Greeks. In English and American circles, by far the most influential of these dualisms was that proposed by Bianchi Bandinelli – who allied the dialectic of styles to a Marxist-influenced account of Plebeian (i.e. indigenous and Italic) versus Patrician (i.e. imported Hellenic) tendencies in Roman art.²⁰ In Germany, probably the most significant approach was the attempt to bridge stylistic dualism through an alternation of 'archaic', 'classical' and 'baroque' styles, argued by Rodenwaldt especially in his 1935 booklet on stylistic transformation as the motor for understanding historical change in Roman art.²¹ It is this literature which Holscher takes on in his

second chapter, when he makes the incisive point that the obsession with stylistic exclusivity ultimately meant that the precise nature of the debts to earlier art within Roman image-making has remained unexplored, and in his third chapter, when he dismisses the notion of alternating styles. The position outlined by Brendel himself at the end of the *Prolegomena* was of a pluralism of styles – even on individual monuments (famous examples being the so-called Altar of Domitianus Ahenobarbus from late Republican times and the Column Base of Antoninus Pius from the mid-second century AD). This was effectively only a version of the dualistic model, but the notion of pluralism – found also in Blanckenhagen's very early work on Flavian reliefs (a subject on which Holscher is himself an expert)²² – was to prove useful to Holscher's rethinking of the entire problem.²³ The radicalism of Holscher's position needs to be emphasised in an English-speaking context, where many of these debates seem far away. Many modern scholars still affirm a dualist or bipolar account of Roman art, of the sort that Holscher is attacking.²⁴

The Language of Images in Roman Art is thus much more deeply embedded in the traditional German debates of Roman art history than a cursory glance might lead one to imagine. It is an attempt within the discourse of a discipline centred on the German tradition though with key non-German interventions from Scandinavia and Italy (Brendel being ironically a rare English voice and Bianchi Bandinelli a seminal Italian one)²⁵ to resolve the problem of the Romanness of Roman art by tackling not its styles (as had the post-Rieglian tradition) but its 'semantic' or 'linguistic' methods of putting images together. This is a brilliant move, and it works. Someone who did not accept any of the premisses on which style art history is constructed might well not be convinced, since Holscher's project is highly traditional in its acceptance of methodologies developed over more than a century. But given its constraints, and given some acceptance of 'style' and 'form' as proper provinces of art-historical research, what Holscher offers is a view of Roman art as an unusual, highly sophisticated and in some ways very modern cultural system. It plays with earlier models (admittedly according to a series of rules or conventions which developed over time without necessarily being consciously formulated). In this regard,

Hölscher's theory of Roman image-making is highly museological in that there was clearly some awareness of the different pasts being evoked (through formal and stylistic features), as well as a willingness to undercut their pastness in a play of juxtaposition and combination. As with the collected works of different cultures in a modern museum, Roman art's evocation of different visual types from a variety of previous cultures elides the pastness of the past in a contemporaneity of display.²⁶

FORMALIST ART HISTORY

When an acquaintance greets me on the street by lifting his hat, what I see from a formal point of view is nothing but the change of certain details within a configuration forming part of the general pattern of colour, lines and volumes that constitutes my world of vision. When I identify, as I automatically do, this configuration as an object (gentleman), and the change of detail as an event (hat lifting), I have already overstepped the limits of purely formal perception, and entered a first sphere of subject-matter or meaning.

So begins the second paragraph of Erwin Panofsky's introduction to his classic volume *Studies in Iconology*, first published in 1939.²⁷ The particular importance of this introduction lies in its elegant and consistent formulation of the place of iconology – the analysis of an object's range of meanings within its culture – in relation to iconography (the study of its content or subject-matter) and form (the exploration of the way it looks).²⁸ Hölscher refers directly to Panofsky's explorations of iconography and iconology (and hence probably to this piece) in his own first paragraph – explicitly for the fact that Panofsky never rejected the formalist side of visual studies so powerfully established in the German tradition.²⁹ In Anglo-American art history (at any rate before the great influx of German *émigrés* into the discipline in the States in the 1930s), formalism in the form of stylistic analysis had been primarily a matter of the connoisseurial identification of the individual styles of artists, and the concomitant interrelating of these artists into schools.³⁰ Such connoisseurial practice is associated above all with the brilliant identifications of hands by the American art historian Bernard Berenson (1865–1959),³¹ for the Renaissance, and by

the British Classical archaeologist Sir John Beazley (1885–1970),³² for Attic vase-painting, and is dependent on the analytic method formulated by Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891).³³ By contrast, in the German tradition – to which Panofsky (who was one of the giants of German art history forced into American exile by Nazi persecution) is referring in the quotation above – form and style had a rather different significance. Following the attempts to write a cultural history using stylistic interrelations within a given epoch by scholars such as Jacob Burckhardt, Riegl and Wölfflin, the German tradition had focussed not so much on individual style as on ‘period’ or ‘temporal’ or ‘collective’ style as offering a series of social and historical facts identified by art-historical analysis and then usable as evidence in a broader historical argument. It is undoubtedly to this sense of style and form that Hölscher refers when arguing in his introduction that neglecting style is an unnecessary closing off of a range of valuable socio-historical evidence,³⁴ and subsequently when he talks of the ways Romans identified and used Greek period styles for their own purposes.

However, as my quotation from *Studies in Iconology* makes clear, what Hölscher also borrows implicitly from Panofsky is an interest in art as *communication* (beyond the lifting of hats) that combines questions both of form and of subject-matter. Like Panofsky, Hölscher is attempting to use the techniques of formal analysis as well as the theoretical basis on which it was established in conjunction with a form-related approach to meaning, to take the formalist tradition in new directions. The boldness of his own gestures towards a semantic model for Roman art is in danger of being camouflaged by the highly traditional formal language in which his treatment of monuments is expressed.

Like the history of the discipline of Classical archaeology, that of art history as a whole has not yet been (perhaps we should hope will never be!) authoritatively written. As with Brendel’s *Prolegomena*, a number of the attempts cannot be read as anything but highly partisan clarion calls from participants in the project.³⁵ As with his treatment of the historiography of Roman art, Hölscher leaves a great deal unsaid about where he situates himself within the tradition to which he alludes

by reference to Panofsky. His only other explicit historiographic references are an aside in chapter 2 about Winckelmann, the father of both art history and Classical archaeology, whose work represented the first systematic history of Greek art and was crucial in making Classical art accessible to a non-aristocratic audience, and a genuflection in chapter 3 to Wölfflin, who invented the notion of ‘period’ style.³⁶ Hölscher’s discussion of period style in his third chapter is interesting, since – although it is grounded in the issue of Roman borrowings from Greek art – its presuppositions are much broader. He rejects the notion of Roman Classicism as itself a set of temporal styles within Rome appropriating the characteristic styles of different periods of Greek art in a systematic alternation of ‘classical’ and ‘baroque’ trends. Instead, he wants the borrowings to be rooted not in formal or stylistic options (or indeed in temporal changes of taste) but in choices of subject-matter. The specific forms chosen throughout the history of Roman art are selected, according to Hölscher’s thesis, to communicate meanings in semantic units and structures. But, nevertheless, Hölscher accepts general style both in terms of particular ways of working marble which did change (or evolve) diachronically through Roman history, and also in terms of the periods of Greek art whose forms the Romans adopted. Again, what is clear here is a very careful positioning within the constraints of a deep academic dialogue conducted within the German tradition. Whether this positioning is consciously formulated or unconsciously imbibed through a lifetime’s education, the most significant aspect for our purposes is a much more serious concern with the problems of style and form as a means of writing history than has been the case in Anglo-American art history or Classical archaeology since the 1980s.

THE SEMANTIC SYSTEM

Hölscher’s solution to the ‘Romanness’ of Roman art is to emphasise the Romanness (despite its late Hellenistic origins) of the ‘semantic system’ by which the typical forms of different period styles in Greek art were adopted as types with specific meanings and manipulated in new ways (see especially chapter 8). This has resonances with

linguistic and semiotic theories that became so sweepingly applied to the visual arts in the Anglo-American tradition at about the same time (that is, the early 1980s when the book was conceived and the late 1980s when it was published).³⁷ In particular, Hölischer was influenced by the German translation of Umberto Eco's *La struttura assenta*, to which he explicitly refers in an important 1980 article on Roman art which anticipates some aspects of his thinking in *The Language of Images in Roman Art*.³⁸ In a brief autobiographical piece published in 1983, moreover, Hölischer signals his specific interest in theories of communication.³⁹ The notion of the 'semantic system' allows Hölischer to extend the linguistic metaphor to the 'paratactic' nature of Roman friezes (in chapter 7, for instance) and to present Roman art as primarily a visual culture of ideas, in which the forms and types are not only associated with the communication of meanings but acquire a hierarchical significance dependent on the culture's hierarchy of values (chapter 8). In all this, the language image and the notion of semantics act as a powerful metaphor for the process Hölischer is describing. But the idea of the 'semantic system', too, should be seen as motivated by and profoundly embedded in the German art-historical tradition, operating as something more fundamental than a mere metaphor.⁴⁰

In the 1890s, Riegl – the only great scholar who figures with as much distinction in the history of art history as he does in that of Classical archaeology – had produced successive manuscripts for a book entitled *A Historical Grammar for the Visual Arts*. This remained unpublished at his untimely death in 1905, only saw the light in the 1960s and has never been translated into English.⁴¹ In an academic tradition where form acquired the independent historical and socio-cultural significance accorded to it by the Austrians and Germans, and even – in the neo-Hegelian developments of Riegl – a kind of will of its own,⁴² the structural and specifically linguistic interpretation of art became hard to resist. In the 1930s, for instance, there were distinguished attempts by such scholars as the Renaissance specialist Julius von Schlosser (1866–1938) – the great Viennese teacher of Pächt, Kris, Kurz, Ladner and Gombrich among others – specifically to explore the structural parallels of stylistic and linguistic models for the visual arts.⁴³ The Viennese-trained Classical archaeologist Guido Kaschnitz-Weinberg

wrote an important 'structuralist' account of early Italian art in 1933,⁴⁴ one of its author's series of examinations of the structure of ancient art,⁴⁵ which occasioned a fierce polemic on precisely the issue of the linguistic parallel from Bianchi Bandinelli.⁴⁶

Ultimately, there may be more than one way to read Hölscher's convergence of language and artistic form. One might argue that the forms of Roman art (though not their specific handling by artists at different times) are *stripped* of specifically stylistic significance and relegated (to use Hölscher's own word, but one might equally say 'elevated') to the sphere of semantic expression. A second approach may be to say that the visual appearance or style of works of art has certain language-like (Hölscher's term is 'semantic') properties, such as structure and organisation, but that it still communicates through the sensuous means of form, and thus carries with it some specific entailments of form as elaborated above all by the German tradition of style art history. The difference between these two interpretations lies in how one understands the relationship between signs and what they signify. Is the meaning given to signs (including the visual arts) only a matter of prevailing cultural convention at different times or is it in some sense intrinsically related to and even essentially encoded in the signs which communicate that meaning (for instance, the *sound* of words or the *sensual properties* of visual forms)? Hölscher's book is not explicit about this issue, but in the letter he wrote to me in response to the first draft of this introduction he mentions his serious problems with the essentialism underlying the formal 'structuralism' of the Vienna School.⁴⁷ This is not in itself a full endorsement of the first of the two interpretations suggested here, but it certainly distances itself from the second. This, however, is one of those areas where perhaps readers might take over from the author (and his various interpreters), and develop their own positions on one of the key questions of how art – and indeed all cultural signs – communicate.

The fact that *The Language of Images in Roman Art* is deeply indebted to Hölscher's own historiographic tradition should not blind us to its originality. Like the very Roman art which Hölscher discusses, his own book is deeply imbued with the intellectual strategies and theoretical models of the past. But its originality – like that of the finest examples of

Roman art – lies in how expertly it plays with those typologies, transforming familiar monuments and familiar art-historical terminology (familiar at least to those bred in the German tradition!) to new ends and innovative arguments. The result is something very like the best Roman art in Holscher's own account – a deep analysis, conscious of what it borrows (even if not always explicit about it) but novel in how it redistributes the elements it has inherited, convincing in the way it makes those elements its own and compelling as an interpretative picture of Roman art for our time.

NOTES (For further reading, see pp. 141–7 below)

I am grateful to Tonio Holscher, Natalie Boymel Kampen, Rolf Schneider, Michael Sharp and Jeremy Tanner for their very helpful comments on the first draft of this foreword.

1. See for a general account e.g. Skinner (1985). For art history, see for instance among a plethora of recent titles, Bryson *et al.* (1991); Melville and Readings (1995); Cheetham *et al.* (1998).
2. A full history has yet to be written. For an outstanding account of the politics of Classical archaeology (focussing on philhellenic rather than Roman interests, and largely excluding that significant part of the German-speaking tradition which hailed from what was once Austria-Hungary rather than Germany proper), see Marchand (1996), esp. 228–368.
3. In a brief autobiographical piece published on the occasion of his election to the Heidelberg Academy, Holscher reports that he owes his interest in Roman art to the influence of Erika Simon. See Holscher (1983), 29–33, esp. 30. I am very grateful to Rolf Schneider for sending me his copy of this piece.
4. For Holscher's own brief comments on post-war German Classical archaeology, see Holscher (1983) 31–2.
5. Brendel (1979). 'The Problem of Roman Art' is the title of the first chapter, p. 3. See also Bianchi Bandinelli (1936).
6. For Bianchi Bandinelli's work in this area, see for instance, Bianchi Bandinelli (1970), esp. 51–106 and Bianchi Bandinelli (1978a), 19–78, as well as Bianchi Bandinelli (1979). For some other theoretical contributions in English, in addition to the (mainly German) bibliography cited by Holscher himself, see for instance Vogel (1968) and Nodelman (1993) (first published in 1975).
7. Among the developments have been the brilliant analysis of the relations of art and power in Rome by Zanker (1988) (published in German in the same year as Holscher's book in 1987); an increasingly deep understanding of the sociological nature of Roman images (for instance Gregory (1994) and Tanner (2000)); a particular interest in problems of sexuality and gender (see

- for example the edited collections of Kampen (1996) and Koloski-Ostrow and Lyons (1997) and a renewed focus on issues of spectatorship (see for example Elsner (1995); Zanker (1997); Bergmann and Kondoleon (1999)).
8. Spoliation is a big topic, especially in German art history. In English, see the fine recent articles by Kinney (1995) and Kinney (1997) with further bibliography. On the Arch of Constantine, see Elsner (2000), with bibliography.
 9. See, for example, Nelson (1996); Cutler (1996); Zerner (1997); the essays in Payne *et al.* (2000); and specifically on Laokoön (the supreme ancient statue with a modern afterlife) Settis (1999) and Brilliant (2000).
 10. See, for example, Foster (1983); Kaplan (1988); Brooker (1992); Bhabha (1996).
 11. However, see also Bianchi Bandinelli (1978b), 117–67 for a more methodologically orientated twentieth-century historiography of Roman art.
 12. For an important discussion of the Americanness of the *Prolegomena* in the era of McCarthyism, see Kampen (1997). Kampen makes the point that the very ‘pluralism’ upheld by Hölscher, which Brendel claims as his own contribution (along with other scholars like Hinks, Blanckenhagen and Hamberg, Brendel (1979) 122–37), belongs quite specifically within the discourse of the United States during McCarthyism.
 13. The 1930s lecture is Brendel (1936), republished in Brendel (1982) 3–20; the original publication of the *Prolegomena* was in Brendel (1953).
 14. For some discussion of Brendel’s position, see Bianchi Bandinelli (1961/1979) 234–58, esp. 235–8; Settis (1982) and Denti (1985). On the problems of writing a history of Roman art, see Kampen (1995).
 15. See Kampen (1997) 383.
 16. Brendel (1979) 4–9. For a sensitive and historiographically commanding review of the problem, that postdates the original publication of Hölscher’s book and applies some of its findings, see Settis (1989).
 17. See F. Wickhoff’s contribution to Ritter von Härtel and Wickhoff (1895) (translated by E. Strong as Ritter von Härtel and Wickhoff (1900)) and Riegl (1901) (translated by R. Winkes as Riegl (1985)). There are several discussions of this literature in English, not least that of Brendel (1979) 25–37, but also Olin (1992), 129–53 and Iversen (1993), 71–90.
 18. Brendel (1979) 9, 41.
 19. Brendel’s account is in (1979) 101–21; see also Settis (1989) 833–41.
 20. See Bianchi Bandinelli (1970) and Bianchi Bandinelli (1971). Clearly Bianchi Bandinelli’s influence on Hölscher was significant. The latter spent a year in Rome as a student under the supervision of Bianchi Bandinelli, to whom he attributes the grounding of his understanding of art theory: see Hölscher (1983) 30.

21. See Rodenwaldt (1935), esp. 25–7.
22. Von Blanckenhagen (1942); Holscher (1992).
23. Most recently on pluralism, see Settis (1989) 823–63.
24. For a recent restatement of ‘bipolarity’, see Torelli (1996), 930–1, 956–8. For an interesting account of the ways the Greek/indigenous version of bipolarity has governed the historiography of a single monument, see Conlin (1997), 11–25.
25. On the English side, we should not forget Hamberg (1945) (to which Holscher refers several times). This is the work of a Swedish scholar whose engagement (like Brendel’s) is almost entirely with the German tradition. One suspects that it would have been published in German and not English, had Hamberg’s reaction to contemporary history (what he calls ‘circumstances only too well known’, p. 6) not diverted him.
26. Museology is a field that has radically ‘taken off’ in Britain and America since Holscher first wrote this book. For some significant collections of essays, see Vergo (1989) and Karp and Lavine (1991); also Crimp (1993) and for some specifically art-historical pieces, Preziosi (1998).
27. Panofsky (1962), 3 (this introduction was revised in 1955 as ‘Iconography and Iconology’ in Panofsky (1957), 26–54).
28. For a brief account of these distinctions, see Lash (1996), 89–98. Frankly, I myself think the distinction is not entirely free of woolliness. In his 1955 rewriting of the introduction, Panofsky substituted the term ‘iconology’ (1957, p. 31) for what he called in 1939 (in italics) ‘*iconography in a deeper sense*’ (1962, p. 8). In parentheses added to the 1939 version he wrote in 1955: ‘I conceive of iconology as an iconography turned interpretative and thus becoming an integral part of the study of art instead of being confined to the role of a preliminary survey’ (1957, p. 32), but nonetheless admitted the danger that ‘iconology will behave, not like ethnology as opposed to ethnography, but like astrology as opposed to astrography’ (1957, p. 32). Accordingly, when he then used the term ‘iconological interpretation’ in his 1955 revision (1957, p. 38) to replace his 1939 formulation ‘the interpretation of the *intrinsic meaning or content*, dealing with what we have termed “*symbolical values*” instead of *images, stories and allegories*’ (1962, p. 14, his italics), one wonders whether astrology rather than ethnology had not already taken over in 1939 and was being covered up by a convenient but actually rather meaningless shorthand.
29. On Panofsky’s relations with formalism – especially in his theoretically more creative German period before emigration to the United States – see Alpers (1979), esp. 104–6; Holly (1984), 46–96; Wood (1991); Iversen (1993) 149–66.

30. For some useful introductions to style, see Schapiro (1994), 51–102; Ackerman (1963), 164–86; Gombrich (1968); Sauerländer (1983); Davis (1990); Elsner (2003). Specifically on individual style, see Wollheim (1979) and Wollheim (1995), esp. 40–6.
31. On Berenson's connoisseurship, see Berenson (1902) and Berenson (1927), with, for example, Calo (1993) and the attack of Schapiro (1994) 209–26.
32. On Beazley, see Kurtz (1985); Neer (1997); Whitley (1997).
33. On Morelli, see Wind (1985) 30–46; Wollheim (1973) 177–201; Ginzburg (1983); Maginnis (1990); Zerner (1997) 15–34.
34. This is a position recent Anglo-American sociology of art would support: see Witkin (1995), 5–15, esp. 12–13; likewise the most recent major study in the anthropology of art, see Gell (1998), 155–220 (though Gell finds the art-historical formulation of 'style', which he accesses through the work of Wollheim, one 'we probably cannot make anthropological use of', p. 156).
35. For example, Belting (1987) (originally published in German in 1983); Pächt (1999) (originally published in German in 1986). Perhaps the most balanced general account is Podro (1982).
36. For Wölfflin on general style, see Wölfflin (1950) 6–17. A useful critique (indeed a rejection of the concept) is Wollheim (1995) esp. 46–8.
37. See, for instance, Bal and Bryson (1991) with a rich bibliography. Of course, I do not mean here to imply that semiotics was *new* to art history in the 1980s. For a much older tradition of its application, see the famous essay by Schapiro (1969) in Schapiro (1994) 1–32.
38. See Holscher (1980a), esp. 267, n.7. Eco's *La struttura assenta: La ricerca semiotica e il metodo strutturale*, Milan, 1968 was translated into German as *Einführung in die Semiotik*, Munich, 1972. Rolf Schneider, who was a student in Heidelberg in the 1970s, tells me that Holscher's seminar at this period was much concerned with applying Eco's 'structuralism' to various types of Roman images.
39. See Holscher (1983) 31: 'Kommunikationswissenschaft'.
40. For an anglophone philosophical exploration of the parallelism of art and language, see Wollheim (1980), esp. 104–58; and for some recent Anglo-American discussions, see the essays in Kemal and Gaskell (1991).
41. Riegl (1966). See Scarrocchia (1986) 68–74 and Olin (1992) 113–28.
42. See Zerner (1976), esp. 180–2 and Wood (1991), 7–16. For an early and acute American critique of this tradition, see Schapiro (1936).
43. Schlosser (1935) (published in Italian as Schlosser (1936)).
44. Kaschnitz-Weinberg (1933).
45. Conveniently collected in Kaschnitz-Weinberg (1965). For an interesting attempt to compare Kaschnitz's 'structuralism' with that of (his rough contemporary) Claude Lévi-Strauss, see Nodelman (1966). Until very recently,

none of Kaschnitz's work was translated into English, but see now his 'Remarks on the Structure of Egyptian Sculpture' (1933) in Wood (2000) 199–242. There is a long review of his work by Bieber (1967).

46. Bianchi Bandinelli (1937), esp. 191–2, with the response of Kaschnitz-Weinberg on pp. 280–4, and the riposte of Bianchi Bandinelli on pp. 284–6 of the same volume. See the discussions of this debate by Sedlmayr (1959), esp. 21–4 and Scarrocchia (1986) 145–9.
47. For an English opening to the Vienna School see the introduction and essays in Wood (2000). This is a very useful collection, but might be criticised for over-emphasising the so-called 'Second Vienna School' of the 1930s and underplaying the concerns with style art history and *Geistesgeschichte* of the previous two generations in Viennese art history.