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Temple Decoration and Cultural Identity in the Archaic Greek World

In this book, Clemente Marconi provides a new interpretation for the use of figural decoration in Greek temples of the Archaic period, through a study of the Archaic metopes of Selinus. The study of figural decoration on Greek temples has traditionally been identified with the broader study of architectural sculpture. At the same time, the original, articulated appearance of Archaic temples has been fragmented into a discussion of individual types. Marconi argues against both the typological approach and the tendency to investigate style and iconography as two aspects unrelated to the cultural and social background within which temple decoration operated. He explores the relation between style and function and examines the function of figures on temples within the cultural and social context of the communities for which these images were created. Critical to this exploration are the reintegration of the figures into the fabric of buildings, the space of Archaic sanctuaries and cities, and the ritual dimension that represented the context for the reception of the figural decoration of Greek temples. Marconi argues for a closer interaction between art history and disciplines such as semiotics, anthropology, and hermeneutics.

Clemente Marconi is the James R. McCredie Professor in the History of Greek Art and Archaeology at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. A scholar of Greek art and archaeology, he is the author of *Selinunte: Le metope dell'Heraion* and editor of *Greek Painted Pottery: Images, Contexts, and Controversies*.

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The Metopes of Selinus

Clemente Marconi

Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

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To my wife, Rosalia

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PREFACE

This book is both a new interpretation of the use of figural decoration in Greek temples of the Archaic period and a new edition and interpretation of the Archaic metopes of Selinus, one of the most important examples of this use.

The study of the use of figural decoration on Greek temples has traditionally been identified with the study of architectural sculpture, and at the same time the original visual appearance of Archaic Greek temples has been fragmented into a discussion of individual types: akroteria, pediments, metopes, friezes, and so on. The identification of temple decoration with architectural sculpture and its fragmentation in the name of typology are reflective of both the increasing specialization in the study of Classical sculpture during the twentieth century and the dissociation of that study from the larger context of the study of Classical art and culture. This book argues against both the typological approach to the study of Greek temple decoration and the tendency in the field of Greek architectural sculpture to investigate style and iconography as two aspects totally unrelated to the cultural and social background within which temple decoration once operated. Accordingly, it explores the relation between style and function and also examines the function of figures on temples within the cultural and social context of the communities for which these images were created. Critical for this exploration are the reintegration of the figures into the fabric of buildings, the landscape of Archaic sanctuaries and cities, and the ritual dimension that represented the ultimate context for the reception of the figural decoration of Greek temples. By doing so, this book expands the traditional discourse on Greek sculpture – today one of the most conservative fields within the context of Classical scholarship – by advocating a closer interaction with disciplines such as semiotics, anthropology, and hermeneutics. It is that interaction that makes this book a new interpretation of the use of figural decoration on Greek temples. This

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is said from a hermeneutic point of view, one that takes interpretation as an understanding that is historically situated and consists of the fusion of horizons.

In this book, this new interpretation is applied to a case study. The Archaic metopes of Selinus have been the object of intensive study and publication since their discovery in the nineteenth century. However, thus far the knowledge and the study of the sculptures were limited to the reliefs and the main fragments displayed in the Sala di Selinunte in the Museum of Palermo. Archival records concerning the excavation and the provenience of the sculptures have been ignored, as has been the fact that, along with the sculptures on display, a large number of fragments were excavated. This new edition of the metopes is based on the rediscovery both of the archival sources in Palermo and Rome and of many new fragments, some of which lay unpublished in the storerooms of the Palermo Museum, and others of which are on display in the Sala Gàbrici (and were published a few years ago without the recognition that they belonged to our series). This new evidence is the basis for this new edition of the sculptures and for a critical revision of the interpretation of their style and iconography. The Archaic metopes of Selinus offer a rare opportunity for reintegrating the figural decoration of Greek temples into the fabric of the buildings to which they once belonged as well as into the landscape of the sanctuaries and city where they once performed their function. In this regard, this book is about reconsidering these sculptures in the larger context of the construction of the colonial community's self-identity, exploring them both as expressions of the ideologies of the colony's society in a critical moment of its history and as active agents in the process of shaping the citizen's sense of belonging to a great, Dorian city.

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This book began its life as a dissertation at Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa (1997) on the metopes of temple C. My thanks to Prof. Salvatore Settis, my dissertation advisor, and to Prof. Tonio Hölscher, its outside reader, for their advice and comments on my work. When I moved to Columbia in 1999, the project begun with my dissertation expanded into a planned edition and analysis of all of the Archaic metopes of Selinus, to be studied within the contexts of the monumental architecture in Sicily during the Archaic period and Selinus's urban development, building policy, and social and cultural history. My thanks to the Directors of the Museum of Palermo, Dr. Carmela Angela Di Stefano, Dr. Rosalia Camerata Scovazzo, and Dr. Agata Villa, as well as to Dr. Lucina Gandolfo, for their generosity and assistance, both of which have made this long research project possible; I would also like to thank all of the personnel of the Museum of Palermo. I am very grateful to my senior colleague at Columbia, Prof. Richard Brilliant, for his very valuable comments on the manuscript of what at the time (2001) I thought was my book.

The current book is the result of the good advice of Dr. Beatrice Rehl, Senior Editor at Cambridge University Press, who prompted me to reframe my discussion of the Archaic metopes of Selinus within the larger context of Greek temple decoration of the Archaic period. I had been working on the topic for many years, but that was the first time I understood the need to conceive a more ambitious project, one that would reexamine the use of figures on Greek temples during the Archaic period throughout the entire Greek world, addressing the phenomenon from an anthropological perspective. In the end, the edition of the Archaic metopes of Selinus has become only a portion, and a case study, of that larger project, of which this book is the first step, covering as it does the period from the beginning of the Orientalizing period to the beginning of the Late Archaic

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period. The larger project (*Kosmos: The Imagery of the Archaic Greek Temple*) is almost near completion.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity of discussing my work with many friends and colleagues. I cannot mention all of them here, but I would like to express my special thanks to Dr. Gianfranco Adornato, Prof. Nunzio Allegro, Prof. Carmine Ampolo, Prof. Claudia Antonetti, Prof. Malcolm Bell, Prof. Barry Bergdoll, Prof. Nicola Bonacasa, Prof. William Childs, Prof. Ettore Cingano, Prof. Joseph Connors, Prof. Francesco De Angelis, Prof. Monica De Cesare, Dr. Stefania De Vido, Dr. Caterina Greco, Prof. R. Ross Holloway, Prof. John F. Kenfield, Prof. Diego Lanza, Prof. Robin Middleton, Prof. Margaret M. Miles, Prof. Jenifer Neils, Prof. Cecilia Parra, Dr. Francesca Spatafora, Dr. Fabrizio Santi, Prof. Luigi Enrico Rossi, Dr. Stefano Vassallo, Prof. Paul Zanker, and Prof. Fausto Zevi.

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I would also like to thank Prof. Francesco D'Andria and Prof. Grazia Semeraro of the University of Lecce for involving me in their ambitious project (LAND–LAB, 2004–5) of architectural study and digital restoration of temple C. The digital restoration of the facade of temple C shown in this book (elaborated by the architect Francesco Gabellone; see Fig. 64), is one of the results of that project, which has also resulted in an in-depth analysis of the building (together with Prof. Carla Maria Amici), including the architectural terracottas now in the Museum of Palermo. The project's results will soon be published in the form of a monograph.

I am very grateful to Rebecca Marie Molholt, Prof. Hérica Valladares, and Erin Thompson for the editing of the text.

Special thanks go to my wife, Rosalia Pumo, to whom this book is dedicated. Not only she has patiently read the many different versions of this book, providing me each time with very good advice, but she also shared with me the experience of the rediscovery of the fragments of the metopes and assisted me in their study. Together, we have been working on the architectural study and digital restoration of temple C with the University of Lecce, and on a new study of the architectural terracottas from Selinus in the Museum of Palermo, which will soon be completed and published.

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Since I began to work on this book, I have had three battles with cancer. If I am today still able to write these words, five years later, it is thanks to the love of my family and friends and to great doctors: I would like to mention, in particular, Dr. Mark L. Urken and Dr. Richard J. Meyer. They made this book possible, and this book is also dedicated to them.

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