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978-1-107-16236-5 — The Frame in Classical Art
Edited by Verity Platt , Michael Squire
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1 Framing the Visual in Greek and Roman Antiquity

An Introduction

VERITY PLATT AND MICHAEL SQUIRE

The Frame in Classical Art is a book about the limits of visual representation. Contributors have been invited to explore the boundaries of what can be seen – the edges that defined, demarcated and contained the field of vision in ancient Greece and Rome. While the chapters that follow vary widely across time and place, all are structured around a common cultural historical concern: to analyse the literal frames and metaphorical frameworks that surrounded images in classical antiquity.

Despite its concern with 'limits', 'boundaries' and 'surrounds', our project is by no means marginal. Frames may seem an edgy – perhaps even fringe – subject for an edited volume: however assertively they exert themselves, frames all too easily lend themselves to overlooking; adumbrated by the framed object, cast to the interpretive sidelines, frames can prove all but invisible to modern eyes.[1] Yet frames are indissociable from the objects that they surround, supporting particular modes of visual response. Although scholarship all too often bypasses frames, deeming them peripheral to the self-contained project of art history, framing can consequently circumscribe a set of wholly central topics.[2] If frames enclose, they also open up, at once enwrapping and unravelling our view of (classical) 'art'. Even as it demarcates the boundaries of representation, the frame is what makes

We are grateful to a number of friends for their comments on an earlier draft of this introductory chapter – above all, to Jaś Elsner, Jonas Grethlein and Robin Osborne; special thanks also to Jennifer Trimble and her group of sharp-sighted students (Matthew Loar, Scott Weiss, Lora Webb and Dillon Gisch), who provided an additional critique following a graduate seminar at Stanford University.

[1] On the perceived invisibility of the modern frame, see e.g. Ortega y Gasset 1990: 188: 'The frame does not call attention to itself. Proof of that is simple. If each of you were to reflect upon the paintings you know best, you would find that you cannot recall the frames in which they are set. We are not used to *seeing* a frame.' When it comes to picture-frames specifically, scholarship defines the frame as an extrinsic part of the art-historical picture – and hence, for example, nearly always superfluous to photographic reproduction.

[2] For the scholarly polemic, see in particular Duro 1996a: 'The task of any discussion of frames and framing in the visual arts is first and foremost to counter the tendency of the frame to invisibility with respect to the artwork' (1).

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representation possible in the first place: while frames bound ideas about the ontology of the visual (what images are), they also encompass the phenomenology of visual response (how images themselves frame their viewers).

Of course, ours is not the first book to think about visual framing devices. Over the last twenty years, and not least in the wake of Jacques Derrida's seminal discussion in *The Truth in Painting*,[3] numerous studies have appeared, reorienting art-historical enquiry from the 'centre' to the 'margins', and by extension from framed 'art' to the visual cultures surrounding the act of representation.[4] Within the field of aesthetics – that is, the project of theorising, no less than problematising, the 'artwork' as an autonomous subject of philosophical critique – frames (and above all framed easel-paintings) have likewise come to play an important role.[5]

Working against this backdrop, but focusing on Graeco-Roman materials specifically, our book aims at a particular sort of historicist intervention. Above all, contributors think about ancient framing devices in the light of more modern ideological frameworks – the issue of how ancient frames both anticipate and diverge from those of later western traditions (alerting viewers to the cultural contingency of our own 'ways of seeing'). From this perspective, frames are intrinsic not just to the 'art', but also to the 'history' of 'art history': if frames help us to understand what images are, they also help us to reconstruct what images *were* – to see, within a broader western visual cultural trajectory, the at once similar and different ways in which

[3] Derrida 1987: esp. 15–147 (translating Derrida 1978: 44–168): for discussion, see below, pp. 47–52. For a bibliography of some earlier key works – both on the aesthetics of the frame generally and on different national traditions of constructing picture-frames – see Foucart 1987.

[4] See, for example, Celant 1982, Rosen 1989, Camille 1992, C. S. Wood 1993: 54–65, Kemp 1995, Duro 1996a, Van Thiel et al. 1995, Stoichita 1997: 53–63, Bailey 2002, Peers 2004, Zorach 2005: 135–88, Wolf and Bernhart 2006, Kalas 2007 and Körner and Möseneder 2008. In recent years (following the earlier work of Heydenryk 1963), numerous studies have been dedicated to frames as aesthetic objects in their own right (e.g. S. E. Fuchs 1985, Brettell and Starling 1986, Mitchell and Roberts 1996a and 1996b, J. Simon 1996, Wilner 2000, Bailey 2002 and Davis 2007), often related to specific collections and exhibitions (e.g. Newbery et al. 1990, Mendgen 1991 and 1995, Lodi 1994, Mosco and Revai 1998, Newbery 2002 and 2007, U. Haug 2004, Penny 2010 and Siefert and Friedrich 2010). On the philosophical and aesthetic importance of the frame, especially in response to Derrida, see e.g. Rodowick 1994, McIver Lopes 1998, Savedoff 1999 and Kiilerich 2001.

[5] The ultimate debt here is to Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, first published in 1790 – and specifically to §14 of Kant's 'Analytic of the Beautiful': for an English translation (based on Kant's 1793 edition), see Kant 1987, with discussion below, pp. 38–47. For a related approach to frames, see e.g. Simmel [1902] 1994; for a semiotic analysis, see Schapiro 1969; on issues of representation and ontology, see Lebensztejn 1994, Marin 1996 (republished as Marin 2001: 352–72) and Stoichita 1997 (discussed below, pp. 59–74); for a more recent phenomenological approach (which owes a great debt to Kant), see Crowther 2009: esp. 52–9.

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images were framed within the parameters of Graeco-Roman thought and practice.

Attentive readers will have already noticed our semantic slippage between material 'frames' and metaphorical 'frameworks', an aspect that is fundamental to our collective approach. Even when negotiating the boundaries *within* an image, after all, frames also look *outwards*, leading beyond the visual field that they delineate.[6] In this sense, the physical forms that contain images go hand in hand with the conceptual frameworks that structure responses to them. As devices that pertain simultaneously to what can and cannot be seen, mediating between different 'insides' and 'outsides', frames reflect and materialise (no less than challenge and interrogate) cultural modes of 'bounding' visual interpretation *tout court*. Although our interest in framing is therefore centred around formalist art history, it also perambulates the conceptual concerns of visual culture studies: on the one hand, frames lead us into intimate encounters with the physical properties of objects; on the other, they have us attend to the dynamic relations between objects and their beholders – to those social, cultural and cognitive aspects that structure visual experience.[7] While theories of 'framing' developed in the fields of linguistics, anthropology and literary studies inform our approach, our collective aim is to feed such theories back into art-historical practice, returning to the physical objects that give rise to the use of the frame as a material metaphor.[8] 'Neoformalist' would be one way of describing our resulting methodology, which pays close attention to the formal

[6] On this point, see esp. Derrida 1987: 54 (discussed below, esp. pp. 48–9).

[7] On forms of cognitive and behavioural 'frames', 'scripts' and 'schemata', see Bateson 1972, Goffman 1974, Schank and Abelson 1977, Tuchman 1978, Sacks 1995: 102–44 and Fauconnier and Sweetser 1996; cf. MacLachlan and Reid 1994 (with further bibliography). More generally on the rise of 'visual culture studies', and its impact on the study of Greek and Roman materials, see the bibliographic overview of Squire 2009: 79–87.

[8] On the role of frames in discourse analysis (understood by Ensink and Sauer 2003: 2 as 'an overall sense of the function of the discourse in the social situation'), see Minsky 1977, Tannen 1993, Lee 1997 and Ensink and Sauer 2003. In the wake of Derrida's intervention, frames have been critical to poststructuralist literary analysis, particularly the study of narrative: see in particular Kanzog 1977, B. Johnson 1980: 110–45, Caws 1985, Boldt-Irons, Federici and Virgulti 2005 and Wolf and Bernhart 2006. The concept of framing is also key to Genette's notion of the 'paratext' or 'threshold' ('seuil'): see Genette [1987] 1997, with Jansen 2014b on ancient Roman 'paratexts', Eisen and von Möllendorff 2013 on ancient literary and visual metalepsis, and H. Smith and Wilson 2011 (treating the Renaissance). On framing devices in ancient literature, see e.g. Goldhill 1991: esp. 259–61 and Martindale 2005: 55–107. Among the most self-conscious 'framings' of ancient texts are those found in novels, such as the dizzyingly complex prologue of Apuleius' *Golden Ass* (parsed extensively in Kahane and Laird 2001), and the celebrated opening of Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* (framed as a response to a self-standing picture: see e.g. Hunter 1983: 38–52, Bartsch 1989: 40–79, Zeitlin 1990 and R. Webb 2009: 178–85); cf. Morales 2004: 36–95 on the opening frame of Ach. Tat. 1.1.

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qualities of the frame, certainly, but which also reflects upon the figurative affordances to which framing gives rise.[9] In particular, contributors focus on the relationship between material frames and the cultural interventions that frame all representation: the structural means by which images are contained entail myriad ways of conceptualising the dynamic relationships that bind objects to their environments, thereby bypassing the heuristic oversimplifications that notions of inert 'context' can imply.[10]

How, then, might a 'cultural history' of framing in classical art be organised? Needless to say, there are multiple ways in which we could have structured this volume, as indeed our present introductory overview. One traditional historicist mode might have been to organise analysis chronologically, concentrating on the development of the 'framed' visual field over time – an approach championed by Jeffrey M. Hurwit in a pair of important articles on early Greek figurative art, and more recently developed by Nikolaus Dietrich.[11] Another approach might have been to distinguish between different media, discussing the specific ways in which free-standing statues, paintings and mosaics – or for that matter sculptural reliefs, gems and coins – delimit their internal space;[12] in similar vein, we might have asked how Greek vase-paintings define the visual realm (dis)similarly to panel-painting, or indeed how three-dimensional statues both perpetuate and break the frames of relief sculpture. Alternatively, the volume might

[9] On the concept of 'affordances', see Gibson 1977 (developed in Gibson 1979), with Knappett 2004 and Hodder 2012: 48–54 (on the concept's relevance for the archaeological analysis of objects and environments).

[10] For a critique of 'context' as 'not given but produced' (ix), see the preface to Culler 1988, which prefers the sense of agency and process conveyed by the concept of 'framing' (xiv): cf. MacLachlan and Reid 1994: 6–10 and Bal 2002: 133–73, as well as below, pp. 74–84, on 'framing contexts'.

[11] See Hurwit 1977 and 1992 (developed from Hurwit 1975 – an unpublished doctoral dissertation on 'Border and denial: The relationship between representation, field and frame in Greek art, 1000–423 BC'); cf. Dietrich 2010: 106–302, esp. 114–37. Although the chapters in this volume are greatly indebted to Hurwit's pioneering analysis, our 'neoformalist' interest in framing somewhat reorientates his formalist analytical mode (cf. Hurwit 1977: 1, on how 'the relationship of the pictorial image to the frame that contains it is a reliable and significant guide to form and style').

[12] One thinks here in particular of Werner Ehlich's important work on *Bild und Rahmen im Altertum* (Ehlich 1953; we have not been able to consult Ehlich 1986). Working from a variety of extant media, Ehlich attempted to chart the development of the frame in Greek (and subsequently Roman) art, above all in the context of painting. In doing so, however, he found a rather oversimplistic ancient archaeology for modern (which is to say Kantian) ideas of the frame, 'denn die antike Welt scheint … das Ideal der Schönheit für alle Zeiten festgesetzt zu haben' (Ehlich 1953: 226). As Dietrich 2010: 584, n. 19 puts it, 'diese materialreiche Monographie, welche sämtliche griechische und römische Bildgattungen behandelt, fragt weniger nach den Konzepten von Bildbegrenzung, die aus antiken Bildern zu erschließen sind, sondern versucht, möglichst enge Entsprechungen unseres Konzepts vom Rahmen in der Antike zu finden'.

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have been structured around formal typological frameworks, categorising different sorts of framing devices – whether 'ornamental' patterns like meander, guilloche and palmette, or architectural features such as aedicula and naiskos forms. Tracing the history of these and other 'ornamental' devices, we might again have explored how such conventions developed and evolved – the ways in which they criss-cross between different media, contexts and visual cultural frameworks, and across variables of time and place.[13]

Some of these approaches (and numerous others) are reflected in the chapters that follow. But we have chosen a more theoretical means to structure the remainder of this opening frame for the volume. The second section of our introduction returns to the volume's larger framework, laying out its structural rationale ('Binding the book', pp. 85–97). First, though, we lead off with a more preliminary question: what is it that frames do? By offering a variety of answers to that question, we survey just some of the frame's many purposes and functions, as well as some of the ways those functions differ between the ancient and modern worlds. Still more importantly, we set out to demonstrate what frames have to teach us – and what they reveal about the frameworks of Graeco-Roman visual culture in particular.

I What do Frames do?

One initial answer to our question 'What do frames do?' might relate to a practical purpose. Within western artistic traditions, and above all in the wake of the Renaissance, the conventional picture-frame has played a predominantly supportive function. In this capacity, the work of the frame takes its lead from the earlier precedents of altarpieces and diptychs.[14] Whether protecting the fragile edges of the canvas, making it transportable from one place to another, or else rendering an image 'hangable' on the wall, the picture-frame at once insulates and consolidates; it turns the flat field of two-dimensional representation into a self-delineated object (with its 'painting' contained within). The extent to which such practices (and practical functions) find a precedent in antiquity is something to which subsequent chapters will return, with particular reference to the panelled

[13] For this approach, see most recently Swift 2009, discussing 'the function of Roman decoration in the shaping of everyday social devices' (25) across a range of media – from mosaics, paintings and portable objects, through dining and drinking vessels, to jewellery and dress. On the whole category of the 'ornamental' in classical art, cf. the essays collected in Squire and Dietrich forthcoming.

[14] See Tronzo 1999 and C. Hecht 2008; for a helpful survey of Mediaeval framing traditions, see the entry on 'frame' in Hourihane 2012: vol. 2, 554–71 (with further bibliography).

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frames of Greek *pinakes* and Roman *tabulae/tabellae* (cf. Figure 4.19).[15] It is worth stating from the outset, though, that the frames of antiquity also tender the promise of approaching framing from *beyond* the framework of this post-Renaissance history: above all, they remind us that the conceptual affordances of the frame can extend to a wider variety of materials and genres – not to mention functions.

In an age before our modern picture-frame, with all its attendant social and aesthetic categorisations, the 'edges' of the visual field seem to have worked somewhat differently.[16] To consider framing devices in Graeco-Roman imagery therefore entails thinking about the broader purposes that frames serve, and across two- and three-dimensional forms alike. Yet it also entails thinking about both similarities and differences in larger intellectual and cultural historical frameworks. Whether we consider architectural mouldings marking out particular areas of figural or ornamental adornment, or the make-believe 'buildings' that define the edges of monumental reliefs (e.g. Figures 1.21 and 1.24, below; cf. Figures 8.4–8.8), we see Greek and Roman frames structuring an array of related supportive functions. The same also holds true of free-standing sculpture – from the stone and marble bases that yield the literal and metaphorical *basis* of a statue, to the interior frameworks of wooden armature that quite literally propped up chryselephantine statues from within (cf. Figure 8.1).[17] Wherever we look within the

[15] Cf. Squire's chapter in this volume, pp. 238–53. For introductions to the terminology and bibliographic reviews, see Moreno 1965, Scheibler 2007, Plantzos 2012 and N. B. Jones 2014a: esp. 296–9 (above all on the terms used in extant second-century BC Delian temple inventories): *pinakes* and *tabulae pictae* could be made of e.g. wood (Figure 4.19), ivory, metal, stone or fired clay.

[16] Important overviews of pre-modern modes of framing include Camille 1992 and Grebe 2006 (on the cultural, representational and ideological stakes at play within the margins of Mediaeval manuscripts); Peers 2004 (on the theological implications of Byzantine framing practices); and Whatling 2010 (a sophisticated doctoral thesis on narrative in Late Mediaeval art which includes an extensive analysis of the ontology of frames); cf. also below, nn. 83 and 88, on non-western traditions. On the development of modern frames (with all their attendant aesthetic affordances, sealing off the privileged space of the artwork), see Sheehan 2000, arguing that, with the rise of the modern museum, 'picture frames (and statue pedestals) lost their function as architectural elements that linked objects to the building and instead became visual aids that separated objects from their environment and thus connected them to the viewer' (quotation from 41).

[17] On the internal armatures of chryselephantine statues, see Lapatin 2001: 70–3. Cf. Marin 2001: 355–6 on how these different framing functions are foregrounded in later terminology – from the French word *cadre* (which 'emphasizes the notion of edge') and Italian *cornice* (which prioritises 'the values of ornamentation and projection'), to the English word *frame*, itself derived from the stretcher of a canvas, and which suggests 'the sub-structure of the support mechanism and of the surface of representation'. On the tension between the frame as containing 'border' and as 'stretcher', see also Schapiro 1969: 225–6.

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Graeco-Roman visual world, we find frames at once outlining, supporting and enabling the field of representation; whenever we probe those frames, moreover, we find them circumscribing distinctive cultural attitudes to the materials that are framed.

In attempting to survey the various performative functions of frames – and in thinking about their cultural work across the chronological spans of both classical antiquity and more modern western art history – we therefore structure our responses to the question 'What do frames do?' around seven distinct subheadings: 'the frames of taxonomy'; 'delineating the visual field'; 'categorising space'; 'ideologies of signification'; '"ill-detachable detachments"'; 'the self-aware frame'; and 'framing contexts'. As will become clear, each of these categorical frameworks seeps into every other. Ultimately, all our responses revolve around the question of exactly how to delineate frames – issues about where to draw the bounding limits around the frame's formal and cultural work. The 'limits' of the frame are something to which the end of our survey returns (p. 80). We begin, though, by introducing the history of discussing frames within classical art history – a topic that launches us not only into the formal functions of the frame, and into the development of framing devices over time and across different media, but also into the cultural historical frameworks of modern western aesthetics.

(a) The Frames of Taxonomy

In one sense, this volume's interest in the frame follows in the footsteps of a much longer scholarly historiography. Contributors to this book are not the first to consider framing devices in Greek and Roman art. By interrogating the work that frames do in classical visual culture, however, they are among the first to consider the dynamic relationships between the frame's practical functions, aesthetic effects and cultural implications – and they do so in markedly different way from previous studies.

In asking what frames do in Graeco-Roman art, the conventional classical archaeological response has been to offer a classificatory sort of answer: frames help us to tabulate, catalogue and systematise. Academic discourse offers its own distinctive (re)framing here: as a discipline, art history perpetually imposes its own methodological frameworks on the materials at hand. Within the field of classical archaeology specifically, frames have provided a bordering device for tackling core historical issues about date, attribution and stylistic development. If our first answer about the function of frames takes us to the historiography of classical art history, it therefore also

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introduces larger issues of ideology. As we shall see, frames have traditionally been viewed as a typological means to a historicist and positivist end. But by approaching the frame in these terms, scholars have also structured their approach around a modern paradigm of framing, one that allows frames to be dismissed as decorative ornamentation, and hence peripheral to more privileged projects of interpretive analysis.

One of the clearest examples of such taxonomic approaches comes in the field of Roman wall-painting. Following the influential model of August Mau in the late nineteenth century, scholars have approached the frames of Campanian frescoes as a scheme for defining the so-called 'Four Styles' of Pompeian painting between the second century BC and the Vesuvian eruption of AD 79 – an interpretive framework to which we shall return below (pp. 21–5).[18] By looking at the different ways in which painted surrounds could structure the representational space of a wall, the predominant objective has been to harness such framing adornment to the project of historical dating. Mau himself (taking his lead from Vitruvius in the late first century BC) was rather more sensitive to the interpretive centrality of the frame in Pompeian painting, orienting his study around the contemporary cultural significance of framing devices. In the hands of Mau's latter-day followers, however, mural frames have served as a way of charting (with ever more apparent precision) the medium's chronological development, as indeed the relations between different painters. Crucially, this has been coupled with a tendency to isolate the framed figurative panels from the formal framing devices judged to 'adorn' them (cf. Figures 4.1 and 4.2).[19] Just as archaeologists have so often extracted the central 'pictures' of Pompeian wall-paintings from their walls – reframing them as free-standing panels within the Naples Archaeological Museum (and elsewhere) – so too

[18] Mau's classificatory scheme is laid out in Mau 1882 (translated as Mau 1899, with summary on 446–74): P. Stewart 2004: 74–92 (esp. 82–6), Strocka 2007 and Lorenz 2015 provide excellent reviews of Mau's system, as well as some alternative approaches; for further discussion, see Squire's chapter in this volume, esp. pp. 211–13.

[19] The assumptions are particularly evident in Ling 1991, which begins with chapters on each of the Four Styles, but then discusses 'mythological and historical paintings' as well as 'other paintings' (including landscapes, gardens, still lifes, portraits and genre scenes) in isolation from their larger mural surrounds. More recent work on Roman wall-painting has sought to recontextualise figurative panels within their framing surrounds – as exemplified by e.g. Clarke 1991, Bergmann 1992 and 1994, Leach 2004, T. O'Sullivan 2007 and Lorenz 2008 – though analysis of such devices is still generally subordinated to discussions of narrative 'content'. Particularly noteworthy here is Valladares 2014, on the 'paratextual role' of marginal 'floating figures' in Roman wall-painting: responding to Schwinzer 1979, Valladares exploits the intellectual framework of Genette [1987] 1997 to explore how such figures in the Casa dei Vettii at Pompeii (VI.15.1) 'become pictorial paratexts that extend, comment on, and sometimes subvert the the messages encoded in the central panels' (181).

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has scholarship on wall-painting divorced the study of frames from that of pictorial interpretation.[20] While mural frames are part of a formalist toolbox for approaching the historicity of the artwork, classical art history has frequently deemed them culturally and aesthetically tangential: as so often, frames are judged extraneous to the central task of visual interpretation.

Such attitudes towards the frames of Roman wall-painting find numerous scholarly parallels. Consider, for example, the case of Greek vase-painting. For Sir John Beazley in the first half of the twentieth century, the framing devices of Attic black- and red-figure vases were primarily important for what they conveyed about artists and workshop relations.[21] Once again, we find the formal frames of vase-painting serving a primarily historicist end, albeit this time bound up within a differently configured connoisseurial project. When it comes to the field of vase-painting, this critical failure to overlook the interpretive edges of the vase chimes with a much larger scholarly historiography – one that has reframed three-dimensional pots as self-standing, two-dimensional artworks (cf. Figure 2.2).[22] In line with other fields of classical archaeological scholarship, such harnessing of the frame raids an image's borders for the sake of taxonomy and classification.

This is a conceptual framework that we find played out in numerous other scenarios – whether scholarly approaches to the 'decorative' frames of Roman mosaics (exploited as a device for charting workshop patterns),[23] or the naiskos frames of Attic grave stelai (used to date a particular example in relation to others).[24] Something similar might be said of scholarship on classical architecture: for Lucy Shoe Meritt, to cite just one example, the entire history of Greek, Etruscan and Roman monumental buildings could

[20] Cf. Squire's chapter in this volume, esp. pp. 188–95.

[21] Take for example Beazley's identification of the 'ULFA' border pattern ('upper, lower, facing alternately'), which played a key role in his attribution of certain vases to the Berlin Painter and his workshop (Beazley 1911: 278–81, 1974: 7 and 1989: 71–4). On the significance of pattern-work for Beazley's method, see Kurtz 1985: 237–8 and Sparkes 1991: 116–18; note, however that, in line with the Morellian tradition, trends in the depiction of human anatomy remained 'the single most important aspect' of Beazley's connoisseurial technique, while pattern-work was regarded as 'subsidiary' (Kurtz 1985: 247, 249). For a Beazleyan study that concentrates almost exclusively on framing 'patterns' rather than figural content, cf. Kurtz 1975.

[22] Cf. Marconi's chapter in this volume, pp. 118–22, along with the rich introductory survey of Lissarrague 2015 (discussing numerous aspects of framing in Greek vase-painting).

[23] Consider, for example, Gozlan 1976 and 1990, looking to the 'ornamental' borders of mosaics from Roman Africa to identify the products of local workshops. More generally on attempts to classify the framing 'ornaments' of Roman mosaics, see e.g. Salies 1974, Balmelle et al. 1985 and Schmelzeisen 1992 – along with the well-referenced overview of Ovadiah 1980 and Dunbabin 1999 (with discussion of 'geometric' and 'floral-vegetal designs' at 291–8).

[24] On the significance of framing devices to the chronology of Attic grave stelai, see Clairmont 1993–5: vol. 1, 8–46, von Moock 1998: 47–54 and Grossman 2001: 5–6 and 2013: 19–23, 52–64.

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be narrated by charting shifting trends in the profiles of their architectural mouldings.[25] A related assumption also underlies the study of Greek and Roman statue bases. For most archaeologists, the chief significance of such bases (and, wherever applicable, their epigraphic texts) has been the historical information they yielded about display context, inscribed subject, or artist; while fundamental to historical contextualisation, such frames have been deemed 'detachable' – and as something that can therefore be disassociated from the 'artwork' proper.[26] Of course, the physical detachability of statue and base means that often they do not survive together within the archaeological record; yet to examine each component in isolation from the other is to ignore the significance of the formal, aesthetic and semantic unit that they comprised within their original contexts of display.[27]

In all these cases, the underlying problem is not that previous scholarship has failed to examine Greek and Roman framing devices. If our project in this book has a polemic, it instead concerns the status that scholars have tended to ascribe the frame, frequently deeming it central to the project of historical contextualisation on the one hand, and yet as extraneous to critical analysis on the other. As 'decorative', 'ornamental' and 'cosmetic', frames have been judged historically useful but artistically superfluous – and as such peripheral (both literally and metaphorically) to the central task of interpreting ancient visual culture.

(b) Delineating the Visual Field

A more sensitive answer to the question 'What do frames do?' might therefore begin somewhat differently, starting out with the ways in which frames delineate a visual field. At the most fundamental level, frames serve to articulate boundaries: they apportion space, at once marking out a realm for representation and zoning that realm in relation to a larger visual or topographical sphere. In two-dimensional terms, frames can separate 'field' from 'ground', establishing the confines in which an image is understood to operate.[28] In the different but related case of free-standing statues and

[25] See esp. Shoe 1936, 1952 and 1965.

[26] Take, for example the publication of artists' signatures independently of their objects in Marcadé 1953–7, or the role of bases in the process of *Meisterforschung* (demonstrated by Tracy 2008, on bases of statues ascribed to Praxiteles).

[27] On this issue, see Platt 2007b, J. Shear 2007 and Ma 2007 and 2013; cf. Trimble, this volume, esp. pp. 317–21. On the reframing of objects within antiquity (for instance as spolia), see below, pp. 83–4.

[28] The classic analysis is Schapiro 1969. Other important contributions include J. F. A. Taylor 1964: 1–67 and Arnheim 1974: 239–41.

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