

GREEK ART AND THE ORIENT

For more than a century, scholars have recognized an “Orientalizing period” in the history of early Greek art, in which Greek artisans fashioned works of art under the stimulus of Near Eastern imports or resident foreign artisans. Previous studies have emphasized the role of Greek and Phoenician traders in bringing about these contacts with the civilizations of the ancient Near East and Egypt, debating their duration or intensity in the Greek world. In this study, Ann C. Gunter interrogates the categories of “Greek” and “Oriental” as problematic and shifts emphasis to modes of contact and cultural transfers within a broader regional setting. Her provocative study places Greek encounters with the Near East and Egypt in the context of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which by the 8th and 7th centuries B.C.E. extended from southern Turkey to western Iran. Using an expanded array of archaeological and textual sources, she argues that crucial aspects of the identity and meaning of foreign works of art were constructed through circumstances of transfer, ownership, and display.

Ann C. Gunter is a professor of art history at Northwestern University, and previously served as curator of ancient Near Eastern art at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. She is the author and editor of numerous books on ancient Near Eastern art and Anatolian archaeology.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book had its origins in a paper I presented in a session titled “Defining Modes of Influence: Artistic Relations between Ancient Greece and the Near East,” organized by Margaret Cool Root for the College Art Association Annual Meetings in 1985. As my thinking gradually evolved, I concluded that a study focused largely on the conceptual framework of the questions under debate might prove useful in reevaluating the assumptions and categories of description and interpretation we currently employ. Given the enormous range and complexity of the material, and the vast literature generated by an impressively prolific group of scholars engaged in the study of “East-West” interaction, this book is necessarily selective in its treatment of many issues and previous studies. I have chosen to emphasize historiographic and methodological concerns and propose different frameworks for investigating cross-cultural interaction, and I realize that I often raise many more questions than I answer. I hope that my book will engage both Hellenists and Near Eastern specialists and further the lively ongoing dialogue on this fascinating and important set of issues.

A study concerned with issues of influence and interaction will particularly absorb its author in identifying the many sources of inspiration without which it would not have come into being. Margaret Cool Root and Amélie Kuhrt encouraged me to pursue this investigation, and their scholarly example and friendly support have been vital to my completing this task. Betsy Bryan, Jerry Cooper, and Glenn Schwartz made helpful comments on an early draft, Steven W. Cole kindly corrected several errors, and Richard Jasnow provided welcome moral support. Carla M. Antonaccio and François de Polignac read an earlier draft and offered many useful suggestions for its improvement. Jan Stuart kindly steered me toward the work of Craig Clunas, whose influence will be readily evident in these pages. I am also grateful to the three anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press, who pointed out mistakes and helped me reshape the book’s focus and scope. Mariana Giovino

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Ann C. Gunter