

ART IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

What was Hellenistic art, and what were its contexts, aims, achievements, and impact? This textbook introduces students to these questions and offers a series of answers to them. Its twelve chapters and two “focus” sections examine Hellenistic sculpture, painting, luxury arts, and architecture. Thematically organized, spanning the three centuries from Alexander to Augustus, and ranging geographically from Italy to India and the Black Sea to Nubia, the book examines key monuments of Hellenistic art in relation to the great political, social, cultural, and intellectual issues of the time. It is illustrated with 170 photographs (mostly in color, and many never before published) and contextualized through excerpts from Hellenistic literature and inscriptions. Helpful ancillary features include maps, appendices with background on Hellenistic artists and translations of key documents, a full glossary, a timeline, brief biographies of key figures, suggestions for further reading, and bibliographical references.

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PREFACE

I have spent twenty years writing – or more accurately not writing – this book. When my editor, Beatrice Rehl, asked me in the mid-1990s if I would like to produce a new survey of Hellenistic art, after downing a stiff drink I immediately thought of reworking my own lectures (one semester’s worth from a course that I normally offer every three years). The resulting outline was a baggy monster: twenty-six chapters; hundreds of objects, facts, theories, and illustrations; and potentially enormous outlays of money that neither the Press nor I could afford – and, a fortiori, also well beyond any student’s pocket.

So, after several futile attempts over the years to put this dinosaur on a diet, I finally decided to kill it off and substitute something more evolved. Instead of a comprehensive chronological and geographical survey, I have chosen a selective, thematic, and socially grounded one. Regrettably, however, my space and illustration allowances are limited, so this step forward in one direction has dictated a step backward in another. I have had to forego detailed discussion of the eastern and western margins of the Hellenistic world (Baktria, India, Etruria, Rome), although in partial compensation, Baktria does make a cameo appearance in two chapters and Roman Italy in several others.

After the obligatory introduction that is still longer and more list-heavy than I would like, each chapter addresses a major, avowed concern of Hellenistic art and its public, onto which one or more genres can be mapped with some confidence. (Because style follows genre in this period, stylistic development, when discernible, comes a distant third.) I have taken some care not to impose these themes upon the material, and only that of Chapter 12 – reception – has no exact equivalent in Hellenistic Greek. By the same token, I have avoided certain well-entrenched terms, such as “theatricality,” because they cannot be translated into Greek, have no equivalent in ancient critical

writing, and are too vague and sweeping to be useful in the study of the subject as I understand it.

For convenience, these twelve chapters are grouped into three sets of four, loosely related and punctuated by two shorter “focuses” on key originals (the Great Altar of Pergamon and Hellenistic mosaics). These “focuses” both help to draw together the various strands of the quartet that precedes them and announce others treated in the next one. Two appendixes translating some key documents and discussing the artists, a glossary, a chronology, and forty-two biographical sketches of various key players conclude the book.

Many people have generously contributed their time and expertise to this project. Kristen Seaman, Anne Stewart, and Graham Zanker have kindly read and commented on sample chapters. They and two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press have suggested numerous improvements and have saved me from many errors and infelicities. For those that remain, mea culpa. Erin Babnik, Beryl Barr-Sharrar, Paul Bernard, Osmund Bopearachchi, Matthew Brennan, Antonio Corso, Bernard Frischer, Françoise Gaultier, Hans Goette, Erik Gustafson, Chris Hallett, Tonio Hölscher, Frank Holt, Ludovic Laugier, René Lecuyot, Laure Marest-Caffey, Becky Martin, Craig Mauzy, Jari Pakkanen, Olga Palagia, Alain Pasquier, Jim Porter, Évelyne Prioux, Céline Rebière-Plé, Susan Rotroff, Peter Schultz, Bert Smith, Candace Smith, Michael Squire, Anna Trofimova, Jacquie Williamson, and no doubt others whom I have neglected to record or remember (again, mea culpa!) have generously contributed bibliography, ideas, suggestions, corrections, and/or pictures.

For more than three decades I have had the enormous pleasure of reading most of the Greek texts I address in the congenial biweekly company of the Berkeley Greek Club. I thank its present and past members, the late Fred Amory, Jock Anderson, Louise Chu, Marcia DeVoe, Betsy Ditmars, Mark Griffith, Gary Holland, Sharon James, Leslie Kurke, Rachel Lesser, Kathy McCarthy, Rodney Merrill, Jack Nickel, Amy Russell, Chris Simon, Anne Stewart, Michael Tillotson, and Tom Walsh, for their friendship and countless invaluable contributions to my understanding of these texts.

Beatrice Rehl, my long-suffering editor at Cambridge University Press, has answered innumerable queries and solved numerous problems with her usual geniality and dispatch. It is a pleasure to publish for a fourth, and perhaps last, time with my alma mater and under her expert guidance and now also that of her assistant, Isabella Vitti. Jason Hosford, Senior Digital Curator of our departmental Visual Resources Center, has helped to research and edit illustrations and has saved me countless hours of letter writing and negotiating permissions and prices for them; Erin Babnik, Lynn Cunningham, Hans Goette, and Julie Wolf also kindly spent much time cleaning them up, sizing them, and editing them. Erin Babnik created the maps with her usual skill, and Candace Smith produced the splendid Ofellius and Lykosoura reconstructions. John McChesney-Young expertly prepared the index. U.C. Berkeley’s Committee on Research and Nicholas C. Petris Chair endowment provided generous grants for research assistance and for pictures and permissions, as, in the latter case, did Cambridge University Press. And finally, these grateful acknowledgments would not be complete without mention of the warm companionship and support of Darlis, Buddy, Dinah, Maxie, Poly, and Shadow.