

## I INTRODUCTION

The study of Greek art is always on the move. New discoveries, made in Greece or in the various regions of the ancient world with which the Greeks were in contact, add to and/or alter the overall picture. However, renewed investigation of the material already known, seen in the light of the fresh evidence, and the reinterpretation that may follow – whether of sculpture, architecture, pottery, texts, and so forth – can be of equal, if not greater, importance.

Traditionally, scholars and students of Greek art have approached the subject from aesthetic and stylistic points of view, and formal analysis is still strongly pursued, with emphasis on individual creativity and aesthetic effect. Greek art has been considered to have followed a straightforward development, and thus the historical approach continues to have its attractions. Following this approach, scholars pay attention to the individual objects and to their makers (what has been dubbed ‘object fetishism’). This view arose in the textual tradition (particularly from Pliny, whose statements had a profound effect on post-antique writers), with an adherence to named masters and the stress placed on the organic model of growth towards naturalism, then maturity, and consequent decline through time. Such a formulation has its attractions and is hard to jettison, but its drawback is that, as a consequence, Greek art may be thought to have an autonomous trajectory and hence be disembodied from social, religious, and physical surroundings.

Over the last few decades there has been what has been termed a ‘paradigm shift’ in the view taken of Greek art.<sup>1</sup> Scholars today emphasize the fact that Greek art and craftsmanship did not exist outside society, and they concentrate more on the purposes for which the objects were created and the contexts in which they were displayed, alongside the effect that they may have produced on those who viewed them, not only at the time of their making but also in the following centuries during which they were on view. The viewer has become a major figure in the study of the subject. Hence, for many, the individual agency and the moment of creation have ceased to be

<sup>1</sup> Snodgrass 2002; cf. R. R. R. Smith 2002.

the only, or indeed the main, centres of interest. Developments in the study of Greek art now pose the question of the validity of the terms ‘art’ and ‘artist’ in reference to the works produced during the Archaic and Classical periods. The lack of the word ‘art’ in ancient Greek is well known; *technē* (‘skill’) covered all manner of craftsmanship, including objects that – for the qualitative difference – we would today list as ‘fine art’. Bert Smith has expressed the difference well:

In the modern world art is by definition without function; it exists for its own sake in some sense as a commentary (often remote) by an artist on the society in which he or she lives. In the ancient world it was the business of the sculptor and painter to express the values and concerns of his patron and his community, and artworks nearly all had some kind of explicit religious, social, or political function.<sup>2</sup>

The development of Greek art was conservative and slow-moving; the craftsmen reworked and remodelled earlier themes, creating effective new versions. Thus, the significance of the material that has survived and is gradually being recovered must be judged against the whole production of any period. The majority of craftsmen were poorly paid, manual workers, who learned their trade within the family; the signatures that were added to some finished products indicate pride in a job well done and/or an advertisement of a commission. By the fourth century BC, some sculptors, picking up commissions from foreign kings and patrons, were paid large sums for their work, but this did not automatically lead to social acceptability.

Some of the new publications on Greek art adhere to the more traditional approaches; others strike out on an innovatory path. The one-volume histories are of larger or narrower compass, some including the Bronze Age,<sup>3</sup> others omitting the second millennium but including the Roman contribution;<sup>4</sup> yet others focus on the Archaic and Classical periods of the Greek centuries<sup>5</sup> or even on a shorter period (e.g. the fourth century). Some volumes concentrate on one medium (sculpture, pottery, terracotta figurines, etc.), while much

<sup>2</sup> R. R. R. Smith 1994: 263.

<sup>3</sup> Biers 1996; Spivey 1997; Pedley 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Boardman 1993; Onians 1999. The Greek and Roman stages are shared between Osborne 1998a and Beard and Henderson 2001. Spivey and Squire 2004 is a richly illustrated volume of wider compass. Ling 2000 is a useful introductory book. Whitley 2001 takes an archaeological approach.

<sup>5</sup> M. Robertson 1975 and 1981 are still standard treatments. Boardman 1996 is the fourth, expanded edition of his 1964 handbook. Fullerton 2000 has good colour illustrations and looks closely at the meaning of ‘classicism’. A. Stewart 2008a covers the same period as Pollitt 1972.

more detailed volumes look at a brief period or restricted region, or even an individual building or a single sculptor or vase-painter (see the following chapters). There is also a growing modern breed of multi-authored volumes.

All this is underpinned by a massive output of more academic literature in journals in all languages that gradually alters our understanding of and approach to the subject.<sup>6</sup> New finds and ideas take some time to filter through to popular or introductory treatments of the subject; and there are various ways in which new work on Greek art is disseminated. Two sources that have become more frequent than they used to be are museum exhibitions and international conferences. The former are often accompanied by sumptuous catalogues<sup>7</sup> and may be celebrated with a symposium at which scholars are invited to present their latest research. So the proceedings of both exhibitions and conferences present new material and some of the most up-to-date ideas.

### Ancient written evidence

When Greek and Latin texts were basic tools for a well-educated scholar and the material evidence for classical antiquity was limited, it was natural that students of Greek art should turn to written sources for information and gratefully accept the statements and opinions that they read as the foundation for their research into Greek art. Today those sources take a less central, but still indispensable, position. Classical historians and comic dramatists, orators and philosophers, writing in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, provide vitally useful, if indirect, social and economic clues to the background against which material culture developed. What we do not have are the treatises on working practice written by sculptors of the fifth century such as Pythagoras of Rhegion, Myron of Athens, and Polykleitos of Argos, and by such fourth-century painters as Apelles. Nor do we have any of the critical and art-historical theories that began to be compiled in the third century BC; these have been filtered to us through the statements of much later authors. Art was then judged to be an 'autonomous

<sup>6</sup> *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (<http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu>) is an easily accessible and quick guide to new publications across the whole of the Classical field.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Williams and Ogden 1994 (on gold jewellery); Pasquier and Martinez 2007 (on Praxiteles); Cohen 2006 (on Attic pottery).

phenomenon', and fifth-century sculpture became the ideal construct that we have tended to accept today.<sup>8</sup>

Classical authors, mainly of the Roman period, who set down their information on classical art, are increasingly scrutinized and no longer treated as unimpeachable sources. Texts are as much archaeological objects as is material culture. Attention is concentrated more and more on the date of the writing, the purpose of the work, the sources from which the content has been derived, and also how rhetoric, propaganda, or the moral prejudice of the time affected the statements made. These later authors interpreted earlier evidence, whether read or seen, within the cultural framework of the age in which they were writing – many generations, indeed centuries, later than the time in which the works were originally created.

Of the later writers, the trio of Vitruvius, Pliny the Elder (both writing in Latin), and Pausanias (writing in Greek) have received most attention. Vitruvius (fl. 30–20 BC) was mainly concerned with architecture and the place of artists in Roman society, and his ideas on the beginnings of the architectural orders formed the basis for an understanding of their origins that Renaissance scholars accepted. His theories are now being questioned and are shown to be too systematically organized; they are only a loose fit with the archaeological evidence that we have today.<sup>9</sup> For centuries, the *Historia Naturalis* of Pliny the Elder (AD 23/4–79) was treated as the key source for students of Greek art. He did not write books 33–7 of his *HN* as a detached history of art, but for many years they were misused as a quarry for primary information. As with Vitruvius, his work has to be seen against the background of Roman society.<sup>10</sup> He was speaking of the need for artists to serve the community and denounced the abuse of nature, with its emphasis on luxury and avarice, that was spreading the seeds of moral decline in the first century AD. In contrast to this picture of his own day, Pliny's verdict on earlier ages was more accommodating and positive. He is unreliable over dates, places too much emphasis on

<sup>8</sup> An invaluable collection of sources is to be found in Overbeck 1868/1959. This has been re-edited and enlarged by Muller-Dufeu 2002, with a French translation facing the original texts and the inscriptions. A useful selection, with introduction and comments, is to be found in Pollitt 1990, and A. Stewart 1990 gives translations of some of the texts on sculpture (19–22) and the more important inscriptions (22–4). On the emergence of art criticism, see Pollitt 1974: 73–84 and Tanner 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Barletta 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Isager 1991/1998; Carey 2003.

individual artists, and is apt to give works of art to the most famous name in any family business.

Pausanias (fl. AD 150–75), who presents us with a tour of the Greek mainland, has seen his status rise through recent studies and he may be considered to have taken an art historian's stance. Habicht's treatment of him is the cornerstone of modern research.<sup>11</sup> He showed that, although Pausanias 'did not have a brilliant mind', he made notes from personal observation and was more reliable and accurate than many had previously believed. Habicht pointed out that 'nearly all surviving Greek statues that are mentioned by ancient writers and are securely identified owe their identification to Pausanias'. He was naturally at the mercy of the local guides, who were the antiquarians of their day (see Chapter IV on the Temple of Zeus at Olympia), but from the inscriptions he read on site or the books he studied, he evaluated the works he saw through a mixture of style, technique, and materials – no easy task. His main interest was in the antiquities of Greece, together with history and works of art, but he is also an author who is being appreciated for the significance of what he reveals of his own day.<sup>12</sup>

Among the other authors who provide us with information (e.g. Cicero, Quintilian, Plutarch), brief mention might be made of two Greek authors of the Roman imperial period who furnish us with material. Athenaios of Naukratis (fl. c. AD 200) is still the main source of quotations from literature of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, many of which provide references to material culture. Lucian of Samosata (on the Euphrates) (b. c. AD 120) expresses sardonic views on painting and sculpture.

### Collecting

The desire to possess works of art, from classical antiquity or from any other era or country, has always been strong, whether they be monumental sculptures, silver plate, gems, painted pottery, religious icons, tapestries, or rare manuscripts. The reasons for collecting have been many and various: personal greed, plunder for gain and glory, imperial prestige, social cachet, love of beauty. In antiquity, the

<sup>11</sup> Habicht 1998; quotes from 162 and 159–60, n. 80. Peter Levi's Penguin translation was also a catalyst.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Arafat 1992, 1996; Elsner 1998; Alcock, Cherry, and Elsner 2001; Pretzler 2007.

looting by invading armies is frequently mentioned (the Persian sack of Athens, Alexander's destruction of Persepolis, the Roman pillage of Syracuse and Corinth). Indeed, for the historian Livy (25.40.1–3) the beginning of Roman enthusiasm for Greek works of art originated with their sack of Syracuse in 212 BC, together with what he calls 'this general licence to despoil everything whether sacred or profane'. Rome became the repository of ancient sculpture, and Cicero's prosecution of Verres for extortion in Sicily in the 70s BC coupled with his own eagerness for collecting antiquities show the complex nature of the pursuit.<sup>13</sup>

In more recent centuries, European royal palaces, papal residences, and aristocratic mansions have acted as repositories for Greek and Roman artefacts, not always with any consequential understanding of what was being collected.<sup>14</sup> Some of these collections are still intact; others have been dispersed, either into other private collections or into national museums, helping the latter to become 'encyclopaedic' or 'universal' storehouses of material objects. The museums that were established when classical objects were widely available, were subject to no legislation that prevented the wholesale transfer of material from classical lands to the stronger and more developed nations.<sup>15</sup>

As time has passed, the constraints on such transfers have become tighter and the availability of collectibles scarcer. This has not prevented looters and dealers from supplying private individuals and museums with antiquities to add to their store. The last generation has seen even more stringent moves, in attempts through cultural heritage laws to legislate against the illegal export of objects from classical lands, particularly the UNESCO Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Antiquities issued in 1970, to which most museums now adhere.<sup>16</sup> Statistics show, however, that illegal trading still continues worldwide. As for classical antiquities, as long ago as 1834 the government of the newly independent Greece passed a law that required all antiquities to stay in Greece – without success. Now, authorities in classical lands, led by Italy, have taken more positive steps to retrieve objects that can be shown to have been illegally looted and exported from their shores. The

<sup>13</sup> Beard and Henderson 2001: 89–96; Miles 2008, mainly on Cicero but ranging more widely.

<sup>14</sup> Haskell and Penny 1981 is fundamental.

<sup>15</sup> Jenkins 1992 and 2006 on the acquisition of the classical collection by the British Museum; Dyson 1998 on American interest in classical art and archaeology. There has been an emphasis recently on Sir William Hamilton: see Jenkins and Sloan 1996.

<sup>16</sup> See Renfrew 2000; Greenfield 2007; Rhodes 2007; Waxman 2008.



**Figure 1** Parthenon Gallery, The New Acropolis Museum.

success of these operations seems to be gathering strength, and some illegally acquired objects have started to be returned to their actual or presumed country of origin. The much more complex problems of the sculptures from the Athenian Acropolis that Lord Elgin had shipped to England have historical, legal, moral, and political aspects and are still unresolved. The layout of the New Acropolis Museum gives visible shape to the dichotomy (Figure 1).

The damage done to our understanding of the classical world by destroying the contexts in which the objects were discovered is serious; the find-spot is lost, or sometimes falsely invented by dealers to disguise their source of supply.<sup>17</sup> Wealthy collectors have paid increasingly large sums of money to secure their trophies, and the present-day prices demanded for Greek painted pottery bear no relation to their original cost and so misrepresent the place of such items in their original religious, social, and commercial contexts.<sup>18</sup> The country in whose

<sup>17</sup> Chippindale and Gill 2000 give a detailed critique of dubious practices in collecting antiquities that have recently surfaced. Watson and Todeschini 2006 is a trenchant exposé of illicit dealings.

<sup>18</sup> For a useful account of the collecting of Greek vases, see Rouet 2001: ch. 1. For museums and the collecting of vases over the last fifty years, see Nørskov 2003.

confines the objects are excavated is considered to have entitlement to the finds, but some argue that, as today's nation-states are modern constructs, their connection with the small communities that existed in antiquity is slight and their claims to the illegally exported objects as state property are self-serving. The attitude of 'Please, may we have our ball back?' is too simple.<sup>19</sup> The magnificent Attic red-figure cup with scenes of the sack of Troy that was one of the most attractive works on view in the J. Paul Getty Villa at Malibu (Figure 44) has been shown by its Etruscan graffito to have been clandestinely excavated from a sanctuary of Herakles at Cerveteri in Etruria.<sup>20</sup> Now handed back to Italy and on exhibition in the Villa Giulia in Rome, it is ironic that it is a supreme example of the many Attic vases that were exported to Etruria in the sixth and fifth centuries BC and dedicated or buried there but was never itself a part of Roman or Italian cultural history. By contrast, the acrolithic statue of 'Aphrodite' (Figure 11), now 'repatriated' to Morgantina in Sicily, can be presumed to have stood for many years in the local temple and to have had a place in the religious history of the city. Questions are also raised over the return being made to countries whose social, political, and religious bases are no longer related to the earlier culture and whose inhabitants have no regard for and maybe antipathy towards the material remains beneath their soil. Repatriation is a delicate matter, and 'many happy returns' are not always the outcome of the transactions. Extreme nationalism has always had its drawbacks, and by a judicious selection of archaeological objects states can present a picture of their nation's past that suits the present ideology.

Solutions have been proposed to help reduce the trade in antiquities from illicit excavations, such as 'partage' (i.e. the sharing of newly excavated material between the excavators and the host country), more loans or gifts, the selling of lesser or duplicate antiquities, and travelling exhibitions. Certainly, halting illegal trading and organizing repatriation are both difficult procedures.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See Cuno 2008a and 2008b.

<sup>20</sup> Williams 1991: 47 ff.; Sgubini Moretti 1999.

<sup>21</sup> For the conference on illegal trading and repatriation, held in Cairo in April 2010, see Beresford 2010.



### Polychromy<sup>22</sup>

Greek and Roman statues, when unearthed during the Renaissance, were white, and antiquarians of the day presumed that such was their original appearance. The respect paid to classical precedence was so strong that surfaces that by chance had retained their colour were sometimes treated to detrimental cleaning. By the early nineteenth century, it had been realized that polychromy had been practised, and excavations in the later nineteenth century showed how vivid the colour could be, particularly on statues dating to the Archaic period (e.g. on the Aigina pedimental sculptures (Figure 15) and the Acropolis *korai*). However, there was still a certain reluctance to accept the idea that colour was widespread, though the nineteenth-century English sculptor John Gibson spoke strongly for painted statues:

I am convinced that the Greek taste was right in colouring their sculpture...The moderns, being less refined than the Greeks in matters of art, are, from long and stupid custom, reconciled to the white statue. The flesh is white, the hair is white, the eyes are white, and the drapery white – this monotonous cold object of art is out of harmony with everything which surrounds it.<sup>23</sup>

It is now clear that, in accepting that monochrome was their default appearance, our understanding of the purpose and the effect of buildings, of architectural and relief sculpture, and of free-standing statues was misrepresented to a larger extent than was previously realized. The colouring of the Greek stone statues brings them into line with the practice of treating wood, terracotta, and ivory, and with the approach adopted in other cultures.

In the last generation, colour has become a major subject of research, in particular through the work of Vinzenz Brinkmann. His work has involved close observation, supported by modern technology such as ultraviolet fluorescence and infra-red reflection, and by the practice of taking photographs in raking light to reveal the ghosts of vanished colours and incised sketches that helped the painter to pick out the areas to be coloured. All these approaches have revealed much more information than was previously available. The pigments used (Figure 2) were mainly of mineral extraction: ochre (red and

<sup>22</sup> Rolley 1994: 78–83; Koch 1999; Ridgway 1999: 103–42; Tiverios and Tsifakis 2002; Brinkmann 2003; Jenkins 2006: 34–44; Brinkmann and Wünsche 2007 (English version); Panzanelli et al. 2008; Bradley 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Eastlake 1870: 212.



**Figure 2** Pigments (malachite, azurite, red ochre, cinnabar, haematite, Egyptian blue, realgar, and auripigment).

yellow), azurite (blue), cinnabar (red), malachite (green), and so forth. Alongside these modern studies of the pigments, a renewed look has been taken at the references to colouring in classical literature.<sup>24</sup> It was well known that there were professional craftsmen who finished the statues by adding the colour.

There is now no doubt that the presence of colour was a fundamental element in the total effect – eyes, hair, and clothes that were sometimes decorated with figured scenes (see, for example, Figure 28). There was also the red and blue background to relief sculptures. Inserted eyes of glass paste, attached jewellery, and additions of metal for diadems, bridles, reins, and the like, further helped to enhance visibility and the impression of realism. Major work has been carried out on colours of the archaic period, on free-standing statues such as the *korai*, on reliefs, and on architectural sculptures and their background, such as

<sup>24</sup> Primavesi 2007. Ancient colour terms are difficult to decipher.