EARLY HELLENISTIC PORTRAITURE

This book examines the styles and contexts of portrait statues produced during one of the most dynamic eras of Western art, the early Hellenistic age. Often seen as the beginning of the Western tradition in portraiture, this historical period is here subjected to a rigorous interdisciplinary analysis. Using a variety of methodologies from a wide range of fields – archaeology, epigraphy, history, and numismatics – an international team of experts investigates the problems of origins, patronage, setting, and meanings that have consistently marked this fascinating body of ancient material culture.

Peter Schultz is Assistant Professor of Art History at The Concordia College. He is the coeditor of Aspects of Ancient Greek Cult: Ritual, Context, Iconography and the author of several articles on Athenian art and topography.

Ralf von den Hoff is Chair of the Archaeological Institute of the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. He is the author of Philosophenporträts des Früh- und Hochhellenismus and numerous articles on Greek art.
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The making of this book has a short prehistory and a long history. The short prehistory takes a little time to tell. The idea for this volume sprang from a number of conversations that took place during “The Macedonians in Athens” conference, a colloquium in Athens that was held in May 2001 and that was organized by Olga Palagia and Stephen Tracy. At that time, our idea was to organize a group of American and European scholars who might initiate a professional discussion based on different approaches to a specific body of ancient material evidence.

Since both of us were deeply interested in the field of ancient Greek sculpture, a conversation about a particular facet of this huge field seemed natural. Likewise, Athens seemed like the best venue for us to put this idea into action. The resulting conference, “Early Hellenistic Portraiture: Image, Style, Context,” was held at the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut on 9–10 November 2002 and treated problems specific to this subfield. The conference was a success — not on account of our efforts, but rather because of our expert panel of speakers and a very animated audience.

One of the greatest challenges in colloquia like this is always the question of language. Here, German, Greek, and Italian contributors generously volunteered to speak in English. Although this was a challenge for many of us, it was a concession that yielded much fruitful (and provocative!) discussion. We believe that this policy helped to open doors of mutual understanding.

The publication of the papers that came out of this discussion seemed natural. We are happy with the volume, but we do owe an apology for its tardiness. The book’s long production history can quickly be explained: In addition to the usual responsibilities for teaching, research, and administration, both of us undertook major family relocations during the past three years, and these moves slowed us down. We can only hope that the quality of this volume’s production and the care with which we have edited it might serve to offset our delay.

The present volume realizes the basic goal of our conference: Like the colloquium, it brings together scholars from many different specializations, traditions, and nations for the purposes of exploring portraits produced in the Greek world between ca. 350 and 250 B.C.E. We think that this transdisciplinary approach has provoked an interesting set of papers and ideas, and hope the book will both stimulate new interest in this key art-historical moment and prompt further discussion. We also hope to have illuminated the rich interpretive possibilities that remain unexplored in this fascinating body of ancient evidence.

This book was made possible by the kind and generous support of numerous friends, colleagues, and institutions. We are thankful to the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut and the American School of Classical Studies, Athens, for hosting and sponsoring the November 2002 conference. We owe a special debt to the directors of these institutions — Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier and Stephen Tracy — for their encouragement and unwavering dedication to Germano-American collaboration in Athens. The former director of the American School, James Muhly, was also instrumental in the organization of our colloquium; without his initial encouragement, we could not have moved forward. We are grateful to the Fritz-Thyssen Stiftung, Cologne, for liberaly supporting both the conference and this publication: Its generous grant allowed us to illustrate these chapters in a way that would have otherwise been impossible.
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We would additionally like to extend our deepest thanks to all our contributors and to all the conference participants who joined in discussing problems of early Hellenistic portraiture at the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in November 2002. Although their papers are not included here, Neil Adams and Antonio Corso added much to the discussion in Athens. We are also grateful to Johannes Bergmann, Sheila Dillon, and Ralf Krumeich, who did not participate in the Athens colloquium but were willing to contribute articles all the same. Our German contributors deserve a special thanks for patiently working with us to produce clear English versions of their important chapters. To all our dear friends and colleagues, we offer our sincere thanks for their patience, good humor, and superb contributions. Finally, we are deeply indebted to Olga Palagia for introducing us, for facilitating our collaboration, and for providing much encouragement along the way.
Aileen Ajootian is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Classics at the University of Mississippi. She works on Greek and Roman sculpture and is currently completing a book on Praxiteles and his sons as portrait artists.

Johannes Bergemann is Chair of the Archaeological Institute of the Ruhr-Universität of Bochum, Germany. He received his Ph.D. at the University of Munich in 1987 and taught Classical Archaeology at the University of Göttingen and Leipzig between 1987 and 2000. He was a Guest Scholar at Princeton University in 1991–2 and held a Heisenberg Professorship of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft between 1995 and 1998. His research interests are ancient portraiture, burial custom, Greek and Roman sculpture and its contexts, Greek colonization, and Roman Greece. He is currently working on survey projects on the island of Sicily.

Marianne Bergmann is Professor of Classical Archaeology at the Georg-August-Universität at Göttingen. Her numerous publications treat Roman portraits, the pictorial language of political imagery in the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman Empire, sculpture of late antiquity, and the history of archaeology. She is currently studying various aspects of Graeco-Roman Egypt and excavates the ancient site of Schedia near Alexandria in collaboration with the University of Bern.

Sheila Dillon is Associate Professor of Art History, with a secondary appointment in Classical Studies at Duke University. A recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Academy in Rome, and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, she has recently completed a book entitled Ancient Greek Portrait Sculpture: Contexts, Subjects, and Styles (Cambridge, 2006), and is coeditor of Representations of War in Ancient Rome (Cambridge, 2006). Her current research focuses on the female portrait in Greek art and society.


Catherine M. Keesling is Associate Professor of Classics at Georgetown University. Her publications include The Votive Statues of the Athenian Acropolis (Cambridge, 2003) and numerous articles on Greek sculpture and epigraphy of the Archaic and Classical periods. She is writing a book on the epigraphical evidence for ancient Greek portrait statues.

John H. Kroll, Harvard University Ph.D., taught Greek archaeology and history in the Department of Classics at the University of Texas at Austin. Recently retired, he now lives in Oxford, England. He is the author of The Athenian Agora, vol. 26: The Greek Coins (1993) and numerous other writings on Greek coinage and inscriptions.
Ralf Krumeich is Assistant Professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Bonn. Before that, he taught at the University of Munich, 1995–2001. His publications include Bildnisse griechischer Herrscher und Staatsmänner im 5. Jahrhundert v. Chr. (Munich, 1997) and Das griechische Satyrspiel (Darmstadt, 1999, coedited with Nikolaus Pechstein and Bernd Seidensticker). Together with Christian Witschel, he is leading a project on the votive statues of the Athenian Acropolis and on the function of this sanctuary in the Hellenistic and imperial periods.

G. J. Oliver is Lecturer in Ancient Greek Culture at the University of Liverpool. He is the author of War, Food, and Politics in Early Hellenistic Athens (Oxford, 2007) and is preparing a new edition of the inscribed Athenian state laws and decrees (321–301 B.C.E.) for the third edition of Inscriptiones Graecae.

Olga Palagia is Professor of Classical Archaeological at the University of Athens. She is a specialist in Greek sculpture and has published extensively on a wide range of related topics. She has also edited books on Greek sculpture and coedited a series of conference proceedings. Her publications include The Pediments of the Parthenon (1993); Regional Schools in Hellenistic Sculpture (1998, coedited with William Coulson); The Macedonians in Athens 322–229 B.C. (2003, coedited with Stephen Tracy); Ludwig Ross und Griechenland (2005, coedited with Hans Goette); and Greek Sculpture: Function, Materials and Techniques in the Archaic and Classical Periods (2006, edited for Cambridge). She is currently preparing a monograph on Macedonian painting.

Stefan Schmidt is Privatdozent of Classical Archaeology at the University of Augsburg, Germany. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Bonn and has held grants from the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton. His main fields of interest include the imagery of Greek vase painting, Hellenistic sculpture, and the cultural exchange between Greece and Egypt. His recent publications include Grabreliefs im Griechisch-Römischen Museum von Alexandria (2004) and Rhetorische Bilder auf attischen Vasen (2005). His current work centers on the urban culture of Hellenistic Alexandria.

Peter Schultz is Assistant Professor of Art History at The Concordia College. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Athens in 2001 and has held advanced fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation, the A. G. Leventis Foundation, and the American School of Classical Studies, Athens. He is the coeditor (with Jesper Jensen, George Hinge, and Bronwen Wickkiser) of Aspects of Ancient Greek Cult: Ritual, Context, Iconography (Aarhus, 2007) and the author of several articles on Hellenistic and topography. His research interests include Greek sculpture and architecture, archaeological theory, and Macedonian history before Alexander. He is currently preparing a monograph on the sculptural program of the Temple of Athena Niké in Athens.

Andrew Stewart is Professor of Ancient Mediterranean Art and Archaeology in the Departments of History of Art and Classics at the University of California at Berkeley. He specializes in Greek art, in the Greeks in the Levant before and after Alexander, and in the Renaissance and later reception of ancient sculpture. He currently excavates at the Phoenician, Israelite, Persian, Greek, and Roman harbor town of Dor in Israel. His recent publications include Greek Sculpture: An Exploration (1990); Faces of Power: Alexander’s Image and Hellenistic Politics (1993); Art, Desire, and the Body in Ancient Greece (Cambridge, 1997); and Athens, then and now: The Geometric, Archaic, and Classical Periods (2006, edited for Cambridge). He is currently preparing a monograph on Macedonian painting.

Ralf von den Hoff is Chair of the Archaeological Institute of the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. He received his Ph.D. at the University of Bonn in 1992 and taught Classical archaeology at the University of Munich between 1994 and 2004 and at the Department of Classics at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore between 1999 and 2000. During 2004–5 he was Redaktor of the German Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum at the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Munich. His research interests are ancient portraiture, ancient sculpture and its contexts, and Greek iconology. He is currently working on a field project at Pergamon.