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978-1-108-07810-8 - Roman Sculpture: From Augustus to Constantine

Eugénie Strong

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Roman Sculpture

Eugénie Strong (née Sellers, 1860–1943) studied classics at Girton College, Cambridge, and then classical archaeology in London. Her translations of Schuchardt's account of Schliemann's excavations at Troy, and of Fürtwangler's *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture*, are also reissued in this series. Among other distinctions, she was the first female student of the British School at Athens, and in 1909 (partly as a result of the 1907 publication of this book) was appointed assistant director of the British School at Rome. Roman sculpture had consistently been regarded as the 'poor relation' of what was seen as the superior art of Greece, but in this highly illustrated work, covering the period from Augustus to Constantine, Strong argues both for its particular aesthetic qualities and also for its importance as occupying a special place 'at the psychological moment when the Antique passes from the service of the Pagan State into that of Christianity'.

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University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108078108

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2015

This edition first published 1907

This digitally printed version 2015

ISBN 978-1-108-07810-8 Paperback

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FRONTISPIECE



I.—PORTRAIT OF CÆSAR

Museo Barracco

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ROMAN SCULPTURE

FROM AUGUSTUS TO CONSTANTINE

BY

MRS. ARTHUR STRONG, LL.D.

ASSOCIATE OF THE BRITISH SCHOOL AT ROME;
CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE GERMAN IMPERIAL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE



LONDON: DUCKWORTH AND CO.

NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1907

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07810-8 - Roman Sculpture: From Augustus to Constantine

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Printed by BALLANTYNE & CO. LIMITED
Tavistock Street, London

Cambridge University Press

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PREFACE

Ha in sè la luce d'un astro
Non i suoi cieli irraggia soli ma il mondo Roma.
GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO.

THESE beautiful lines from the *Elegie Romane* precisely illustrate the point of view I wish to bring forward in regard to the sculpture produced in the Roman world during the three centuries and a half that extend from the close of the Republic to Constantine—from the rise and establishment of the Imperial idea to the victory of Christianity. I have myself long ceased to look upon Rome as the sole or exclusive seat of artistic production, or even of artistic influence, during that period, but I regard her as the main centre whence radiated the ideas which animated or refashioned art throughout the contemporary civilized world. I venture to deplore, with Riegl, the materialistic distrust of all spiritual factors, which obtains in the modern science of archaeology.* Not that I would advocate a return to a pre-scientific interest in subjects alone, or to a Ruskinian toleration of bad and poor works of art, for the sake of subjects that appeal to our fancy. But the measure of

* "Spätrömische Kunstindustrie," p. 107.

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artistic achievement is in proportion to its success in expressing the thoughts and themes which inspire it. This little book, accordingly, attempts to indicate the nature of the impulse which takes its flight from Rome, though I have barely discussed (as I would in a more thorough-going or ambitious work) the local colouring of art in the different countries under Roman sway. During a recent visit to Athens, for instance, I became convinced that a much-needed book could be written on "Graeco-Roman art" in the true sense of the word: that is, on Roman artistic ideas working through a more distinctly Greek medium than was the case elsewhere. Yet in the present book I have scarcely tried to differentiate even between the two broad classes (fairly easy to define) of sarcophagi executed in Greece and of those executed in Rome or in Italy. My present purpose being to stimulate amongst students interest for a period forgotten and neglected, I have thought it sufficient to point to the leading characteristics which envelop and dominate art wherever the Roman spirit penetrated.

The following chapters are based upon a series of lectures delivered at different times during the last seven years. When I first lectured on Roman sculpture in May 1900, it was mainly in the form of a running commentary on the æsthetic ideas put forward by Wickhoff in the book on Roman art which I was then translating. To some extent this framework is now retained, in spite of the many additions and alterations which new matter and new points of view have forced upon me. I regret

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that I have not had time to recast the book more completely, and that it must perforce exhibit the faults peculiar to popular lectures—a loosely compacted and doubtless didactic style, with a tendency to parenthetical remarks. In compensation, it may be that some looseness of structure is not ill adapted to a subject which, though abundantly aired in monographs, has not yet been systematized. Many, indeed, think the time is not yet ripe for a book on Roman art, and that a subject which lends itself to conflicting views is among those “unsafe” to bring before students. I venture to think that in its freshness lies one of its many charms. The student is invited to weigh conclusions and to help in piecing together the body of truth, instead of listening in passive acquiescence to time-honoured and ready-made judgments, not, after all, necessarily true because they have been sententiously uttered *ex cathedra* for one hundred years, or maybe one thousand. “We reverence grey-headed doctrine, though feeble, decrepit, and within a step of dust.”

Yet I write this not without envy of the many scholars who dedicate their learning and trained powers of expression and exposition to the task of reasserting the supremacy of Greece—of proclaiming her achievement in the formative arts, unequalled and unapproachable, overshadowing all else. The outsider, struggling with accumulations of new material and facts not yet arranged, described, if at all, mainly in foreign tongues, may well admire and envy the comfortable pronouncements which, put in a form just sufficiently novel to

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arrest attention, are sure of the welcome readily accorded to traditional truisms.

I publish this book in full consciousness of its shortcomings, and, moreover, when I have little time for the special studies it entails. But I do so because I see no immediate prospect of any other work on Roman sculpture that will advocate the solidarity of artistic endeavour, or will discuss Roman art, as I have tried to discuss it, in view not only of its intrinsic merits, but of the special place it occupies at the psychological moment when the Antique passes from the service of the Pagan State into that of Christianity.

The scattered and fragmentary nature of the material, the inadequate bibliographical equipment anywhere outside the great archaeological libraries of Berlin and of the German Institute in Rome, have led me to give fuller footnotes and far more illustrations than is usual in the books of this series. But even some hundred and seventy illustrations scarcely suffice to call up an image as yet so unfamiliar as that of Roman sculpture. So I have described, from end to end, at the risk of being tedious, the sculptures of monuments like the *Ara Pacis* and the column of Trajan. The popular prejudice against Roman art is largely rooted in ignorance of its most obvious manifestations. Much could be done by more accessible and cheaper reproduction, and it is a reproach which our teaching world should aim at effacing that the reliefs of the Trajanic column, for instance—the delightful picture chronicle which should

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be in the hands of every schoolboy—are only known from two costly foreign publications, entirely outside the reach of schools or even of ordinary libraries.—Precisely as I revise these lines comes the great news from Rome that Commendatore Boni has had the whole series of sculptures of the Trajanic column photographed for the first time, from the original. This noble achievement marks an era in the study of Roman art. Scarcely less important is the removal to the Museo delle Terme of all the fragments of the *Ara Pacis* discovered, in 1903, under the Palazzo Fiano. This is doubtless an omen that the Italian Government intend to collect at the Terme all the fragments of the *Ara* scattered in the Museums over which they have control. Were friendly museums to follow suit, we might hope to see in the Terme, at no very distant date, an Augustan altar vying in beauty and interest with the famous Pergamene altar at Berlin.

I have to thank Professor Eugen Petersen, so often quoted in the following pages, for extending to me by correspondence, and by the loan of valuable photographs, the help he freely gave to me in Rome, as to the many English students privileged to use the library of the German Institute; to Emanuel Loewy, Professor in the University of Rome, and to Signor G. Rizzo, Vice-Director of the Museo delle Terme, for obtaining for me photographs of the newly-discovered fragments of the *Ara Pacis*, and for permission to republish them here; to Senator Baron Giovanni Barracco for the gift of beautiful photographs, and the

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permission to publish for the first time certain Roman portraits in his unique Museum ; to Mr. G. F. Hill, of the British Museum, for guidance in selecting the coins of Emperors given in the chapter on portraiture. For the rest, I will not follow a favourite practice and fill this Preface with a list of names which might serve to shed a borrowed lustre about my work, rather than to evince a student's gratitude, but shall acknowledge, each in its place, the many friendly acts which scholars and workers of every degree so readily show to one another all the world over.

Could I claim for this book the merit I once hoped it might possess, I should have liked to dedicate it to the Memory of the First Editor of this Series. He understood, as no one else I have ever known or heard of—as only one or two are beginning to understand it now—that there is historical continuity in art as in all else, and that no one point can be adequately grasped save in relation to the whole. Like Renan, he admitted that history has its sad days, but none that are sterile or void of interest. Roman art, especially in its later phases, attracted him, for he knew that in every branch of history the great lessons are to be learnt from periods of transition. . . . But this book, the outcome of many reflections made in common, remains without the revision which alone, in my eyes, could have given it real value.

EUGÉNIE STRONG.

(née SELLEERS.)

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ERRATA

P. 30, *n.* 1. 2, *for* "Capitol" *read* "Conservatori."

Plate 80, *for* "Lucillus" *read* "Lucilius."

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JULIO-CLAUDIAN DYNASTY								
B.C. 28-14 A.D. AUGUSTUS=Ivivia	98-117 TRAJAN=Plotina	193-211 SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS=Julia Domna						
14-37 TIBERIUS=Vipsania	117-138 HADRIAN=Sabina	211-217 CARACALLUS=Plautilla (Geta, d. 212)						
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{	1. Julia Paula							
	2. Aquilia Severa							
	3. Annia Faustina							
		(son of Julia Soemias)						
		222-235 SEVERUS ALEXANDER=Orbiana (son of Julia Mamaea)						
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{	Herennius Hostilianus							
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69	OTHO VITELLIUS	MARCUS AURELIUS = Faustina the Younger LUCIUS VERUS = Lucilla	253-268	GALLIENUS = Salonina Valerius Saloninus
	FLAVIAN DYNASTY		268-270	CLAUDIUS II. (Gothicus)
69-79	VESPASIAN = (Domitilla)		270-275	AURELIAN = Ulpia Severina
79-81	TITUS = (Marcia Furnilla) Julia		275-276	TACITUS
81-96	DOMITIAN = Domitia	180-192	276	FLORIANUS
		COMMODUS = Crispina	276-282	PROBUS
96-98	NERVA		282-283	CARUS
			283-284	CARINUS and NUMERIANUS
98-117	TRAJAN = Plotina	193	284-305	DIOCLETIANUS = Prisca
		PERTINAX = Flavia Tytiana DIDIUS JULIANUS = Manlia Scantilla Pescennius Niger	286-305	MAXIMIANUS
		193-211	305-306	CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS = Helena
		SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS = Julia Donna (193-197 Clodius Albinus)	305-311	GALERIUS = Galeria Valeria <i>Fourth Century.</i>
			306-312	MAXENTIUS
			306-337	CONSTANTINE the Great

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07810-8 - Roman Sculpture: From Augustus to Constantine

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PLATE II



AUGUSTUS

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