

Seeing Color in CLASSICAL ART



Seeing Color in Classical Art offers a new critical account of color as material in ancient Mediterranean art and architecture. Traversing sites from Athens to Antioch, Stager traces color across a variety of media, including handheld panel paintings, painted monumental reliefs, alloyed bronzes, and mosaic floors. This book explores the materiality of color from the ground up through analysis of the pigments, dyes, stones, soils, and metals that artists crafted into polychrome forms. Artistic practices also shaped a literary and philosophical landscape encompassing Sapphic lyric, Presocratic atomism, and Theophrastan natural history and produced a discourse on color by ancient Greek writers that reverberates in the present. Despite these abundant traces of color, ancient Mediterranean art has long been reduced to the white marble of its ruins to stage an idealized, monochrome picture of the past. Stager examines the process by which this reception tradition has elevated whiteness and feminized and racialized color. In response, this book illuminates the construction of the category of the classical in modernity and challenges its claims to order and exceptionalism. Ultimately, Stager harnesses ancient ideas of materiality, care, landscape, visual exchange, and artistic atomism to theorize color in the ancient Mediterranean and its afterlives.

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**CLASSICAL
ART**

THEORY, PRACTICE, AND
RECEPTION FROM
ANTIQUITY TO THE
PRESENT

JENNIFER M. S. STAGER

Johns Hopkins University





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For Astrid, Felix, and Soren in all of your vibrant colors

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