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That this large paperback is intended as an undergraduate textbook is made explicit in the front matter, where directions are given to ‘[online] resources created by the author to help you use this book in university courses, whether you’re an instructor or a student’. It comprises fifteen chapters, examining material from the fourth millennium to the first century B.C.E., but the table of contents reveals that the volume is not just the History of Greek Art proposed in the title: readers will also find discussion of architecture in almost every chapter, for example palaces in (2), domestic housing in (5), sanctuary layout and the architectural orders in (7) and Hellenistic cities in (14). The ‘university courses’ the author has in mind are clearly those in Greek art and architecture.

The volume appears attractive and helpful. The soft-bound colour pages sit conveniently open without the need for ‘notetaker’s elbow’, while their contents and format are constructed with the student in mind: the front matter includes maps and a timeline; the introduction includes a guide to primary sources; throughout the text, useful terminology is highlighted in colour and glossed in the margin (these terms can be found again in a seven-page glossary in the end matter); each illustration is accompanied by a brief, sensible caption, also indicating whether the subject has been restored or if the image is a detail or reconstruction; each chapter ends with recommended reading, all in English, to assist independent research (although this does come at the expense of main bibliography); and the book ends with a good (and based on limited testing, accurate)index.

The structure of the volume requires the author’s explanation (pp. 15–16). It is, overall, arranged chronologically as follows: (2) ‘The Early and Middle Bronze Ages’; (3) ‘The Late Bronze Age’; (4) ‘The Sub-Mycenaean, Protosemitic and Geometric periods’; (6) ‘The Seventh Century’; (8) ‘The Sixth Century’; (10) ‘The Fifth Century’; (12) ‘The Hellenistic Period’, topped and tailed with an introduction and a short epilogue (predominantly on cultural connections with Persia). These are interspersed with synchronic chapters, considering themes across several periods. The first of these, (5) ‘Contexts I: Civic, Domestic and Funerary’, is a motley collection of short sections which might have sat more comfortably under a title such as ‘Polis and Oikos’. But while the sections of this chapter are individually interesting (‘The City and its Spaces’, ‘The Agora’, ‘Houses and Domestic Spaces’, ‘Textiles’, ‘The Symposion’, ‘Graves’ and a special text box on Gell’s theory of agency), they are not woven together so as to form a coherent whole. This could be improved with only small changes. More successful are the synchronic studies of (7) ‘Sanctuaries and [their] Architecture’, (9) ‘Narrative’, (11) ‘The Production of Greek Art and its Market’ and (13) ‘Identity’ (comprising gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.). There is no obvious reason why these synchronic studies should sit between the particular chapters that they do, but their current locations are pedagogically preferable to their relegation to the back of the book. Many instructors will have come across the kind of students who initially respond to Greek art objects, of all kinds, as holy relics and
write fulsomely on the emotions they inspire. To encourage their inner historian, this gradual exposure to the original purpose and context of artefacts, in sections such as ‘Rituals and Offerings’ (pp. 172–7), is very welcome indeed. Also welcome, to both students and instructors, are the text boxes which finish each chapter. These provide brief accounts of both current and well-established ‘hot topics’ in the study of Greek art, whether theoretical approaches (e.g. network theory, information theory, Gell’s theory of agency), technical processes (e.g. the Beazley method, the study of polychromy in sculpture) or heritage considerations (e.g. the Parthenon and cultural patrimony, the value of Greek art). For students looking for dissertation topics, these introductions to academic debates may prove a useful starting point.

The illustrations are abundant and mostly excellent – large and in colour, with some given a whole page. There are some, however, which are less helpful, for example the Siphnian Treasury (fig. 8.1), a photo so badly lit that, despite occupying a whole page, details are difficult to make out; and the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus (fig. 12.4), an oblique view of a scale-model, with its sculpture marked by abstract cut-outs, which can only be deciphered by cross-reference with the text. To make comments about the quality and pricing of images supplied by cultural institutions for publication, is to risk climbing on my hobby-horse, but some of these providers might like to see how their photos fare against others in this volume.

Preventable gripes with the book’s images are few but worth mentioning: in a book so generous with its illustrations, it is a shame that the Doryphores (fig. 10.7) is only given a quarter-page, putting him visually on a par with the Etruscan bronze mirror that faces him, and leaving him dramatically overshadowed by the full-page drama of Paionios’ Nike overleaf. At this scale, he hardly appears ‘canonical’. The maps in the front matter have been thoughtfully selected – the eastern Mediterranean, mainland Greece, the Aegean and Southern Italy, each one set landscape and full-page. But they are, unfortunately, very ugly, in all their GIS accuracy. Framed by bright, royal blue seas, locations are marked with red dots that struggle against the khaki landmass, and are labelled with a slightly fuzzy sans-serif font in black outline. These, alas, will look dated very soon. Another odd choice of colour is the unfortunate shade of brown used for the tables, which is not very sympathetic to the overlaid text.

A personal disappointment, for someone with a particular interest in the art of the period, is the overall account of Hellenistic art (14). It is explicitly, and rather uncritically, dependent on J.J. Pollitt’s canon of five characteristics, coined in 1986 (although S.-O’D.modifies Pollitt’s ‘theatricality’ to ‘theatricism’). Uncritical too, is the use of the terms baroque and rococo, which have not been academically en vogue, and certainly not used without scare quotes, for some time. But while not the most up-to-date account of the period, the selection of material is interesting, and there is nothing dangerous or divisive here. Perhaps inevitably, colleagues who specialise in particular periods may find themselves choosing to recommend some additional reading to their students as the need arises. There has been a flurry of Greek art books in recent years, and we might wonder why we need another. I certainly had my doubts. But I do not know of a similar book that covers so much, so sensibly, and that encourages students to engage with terminology and academic debates with such sympathetic assistance. S.-O’D.’s experience as an instructor is woven through the volume.
At £40, this paperback is too expensive for me to recommend as a hardcopy textbook for students. It is available as an e-book, however, and I will be asking my university library to acquire copies. For some institutions, this book could be used as the backbone of ready-made ‘Greek Art and Architecture’ courses, working through from start to finish, using the online resources (which include image slides and, significantly, sample syllabi) and spinning off to review recommended reading. For other institutions, like my own, it will complement existing reading lists for various courses in Greek history and material culture, providing accessible, well-illustrated discussion of a variety of topics. In either case, this is a very useful book.

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