

the next moment, however, the sophist offers an ornithological excursus on the cooperation of the tern and seagull (*Imag.* 2.17.11).

My third point regards medium. While T. persuasively shows how the natural sciences informed the production and interpretation of *subject matter* in Hellenistic and Roman art, there is no discussion of what bearing they had on the manufacture and understanding of *medium*. With regards to painting, it must be significant that authors like Theophrastus and Pliny so often embedded in their scientific exegeses of rocks, plants and animals commentary on the different pigments that can be derived therefrom. By integrating discussion of the natural science of pigment into his argument, T. could have further highlighted the entwinement of ‘art, science, and the natural world’ in antiquity, especially since he so often hypothesises Hellenistic paintings as the prototypes for Roman mosaics. But I also wonder how far the medium of mosaic related to the taxonomic tendencies of Hellenistic and Roman geology, and the cultures of collecting marbles and gems that the Hellenistic and Roman empires participated in. T. comments on how the different coloured gems represented in the rocky landscape of the Praeneste Nile mosaic reflect Ptolemaic interest in mining and geology (pp. 83–5), but I missed discussion of how these gems might function as self-conscious commentary on the mosaic *itself* as an arrangement of diversely sourced stones.

As will be clear, this is a genuinely stimulating book that is set to inspire further interdisciplinary enquiries. Although T. humbly refrains from using such strong language, this monograph is a rallying cry to dismantle the disciplinary boundaries that keep the historians of art and science separate in the modern university. Its conclusions appear especially remedial at a time when the UK government is fomenting a culture war between the creative arts (useless, self-indulgent, expensive) and STEM subjects (useful, beneficial, good value), not least by siphoning off funding from the former to the latter. T. shows that science and art have always been disciplines more complementary than competitive.

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A STUDY OF EARLY FRESCOES

MORGAN (L.) *Wall Paintings and Social Context. The Northeast Bastion at Ayia Irini.* (Keos 11.) Pp. xxxiv + 533, b/w & colour ills, b/w & colour maps, colour pls. Philadelphia: INSTAP Academic Press, 2020. Cased, £55, US\$80. ISBN: 978-1-931534-97-0.

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This monograph is the eleventh volume in the series Keos, which publishes the results of excavations at Ayia Irini on the island of Kea in the Cyclades, conducted by the University of Cincinnati under the auspices of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA). M. has been a distinguished member of the team since the 1980s, when she was invited by the then director of excavations Elizabeth Schofield to study material from the fresco assemblages. She focused on the building conventionally dubbed Northeast Bastion and submitted her first publications on the specific material in the 1990s. This volume comprises the definitive publication of the wall paintings of the Northeast Bastion.

The weighty monograph opens with a preface providing an outline of the contents, followed by a prologue. From the start (p. xxvi) M. sets out the theoretical framework of her study. Her main emphasis is on 'the symbiotic relationship between wall paintings, architecture and human action and response. Through their structure and context, images play a role in sociocultural memory'. This assertion defines the methodology followed for the reconstruction of a heavily fragmentary assemblage, as is the one from the Northeast Bastion. It also expresses by and large the aim of scholars working on the reconstruction and interpretation of wall painting compositions dated to the Late Bronze Age. M. describes the process of the reconstruction of the compositions under the title 'From specific examination to visualization' (p. 14) and adheres to these methodological principles throughout the study.

Following a presentation of the island of Kea, M. focuses on the archaeological site of Ayia Irini (Part 1, Chapter 1), the geomorphology of the area, and, finally, zooms in on the Northeast Bastion and specifically the two rooms, 18 and 20, where the frescoes were found. M. discusses the wall paintings within the wider context of the Minoanisation phenomenon, using extensive references to the relations of Kea with other Aegean islands, in terms of trade interactions and artistic interplay, in particular with Thera and Crete. Missing in this chapter is more information on the history of the excavations of such an important settlement such as that of Ayia Irini and the Northeast Bastion in particular as well as more extensive references to the excavation data of the frescoes and the history of their conservation, an extremely time-consuming and arduous process undertaken by skilled collaborators, as noted in the introduction.

Part 2 comprises the main section of the study, with the presentation and analysis of the wall paintings material. Chapters 2–7 cover the analysis of the miniature frieze from room 20, and only Chapter 8 deals with the plant panels from room 18. The iconographic units constituting the fragmentary wall painting compositions are presented in detail. Chapter 7 presents the 'visualization' of the miniature frieze, i.e. the final stage of the reconstruction process of a wall painting and its presentation to the beholder. The same process, albeit to a more limited extent, is also followed for the plant panels. Each chapter concludes with a detailed catalogue of the fragments by iconographic unit, which significantly facilitates comprehension, as each photograph of the fragments is accompanied by a sketch drawing by M. The description of the iconographic units is diligently supplemented by iconographic parallels, thus facilitating the identification of many fragments that are particularly problematic. These parallels are cited from contemporary sites with relevant material, either wall paintings or seals, such as Thera, Crete and Phylakopi, the Mycenaean palaces of Mainland Greece (Mycenae, Pylos, Tiryns) and the palaces of the Middle East and Egypt (Tell el-Dab'a).

In the essential central part of the study under the title 'Visualizing the Past: the Composition of the Miniature Frieze' (Chapter 7) M. brings together the iconographic units and reconstructs them into larger panels, in an effort to reproduce the original compositions and place them in the architectural context of the building. The entire process, efficiently described in the previous sections in exhaustive detail, finally leads to this chapter, where readers can see and understand the results of the lengthy and demanding work of the scholar. However, the presentation of the reconstruction is oddly organised by image and not by room/space or walls, as would be expected for the reconstitution of the original space layout. It presents the colour rendering of the reconstructions with aesthetic restorations in drawings, in which the parts corresponding to the ancient fragments are distinctively denoted. The same drawings are also presented with only the outline of the fragments, which is perhaps unnecessary, as these are working sketches by M. Finally, at the end of the chapter, the reconstructed compositions are tentatively placed on the wall surfaces of the rooms from which they were retrieved.

The same principles of presentation and analysis are followed in Chapter 8, which discusses the material uncovered in room 18, where the miniature fresco was found. The study of the material results in eight reconstruction proposals, exclusively depicting plant elements. Here, too, M. visually reconstructs the compositions in space and offers the restoration proposal of the walls of room 18.

In Part 3 M. devotes two chapters (9 and 10) to the presentation of the technology of pigments and colours, in accordance with high current standards in integrated publications of similar materials.

In Chapter 11 (Part 4) the 'intercultural connections' in prehistoric Aegean, Crete and the Near East are extensively discussed, with reference to influence, exchange, interplay, innovation and other processes with impact on the artistic production. The compositions from Ayia Irini, mainly those of miniature paintings, are compared with relevant material and are integrated into the architectural space of the buildings and the tradition of the period, thus offering the contextual framework for the material from Kea. M. also discusses technical issues on the artistic production and who these artists were, their origins and mobility, a debate that at the moment does not offer conclusive answers, only general observations and assertions.

The last chapter discusses the representation of feasts and gift exchange, rendered in the main scene in room 20, suggested by the iconography to take place on the beach, as outdoor activities, according to M. In the last few decades public feasting with mass communal participation, as documented in the archaeological record from Aegean Bronze Age sites, has been studied and interpreted as an important factor in promoting social cohesion and community identity. In this light M. offers an integrated discussion of the main scene of room 20, drawing upon relevant evidence and representations of convivial gatherings and their connotations.

This monograph epitomises M.'s long itinerary in the study of the wall paintings of the Bronze Age Aegean, exemplified by a plethora of scholarly papers, as M. has studied wall paintings from Tell el-Dab'a, Akrotiri on Thera (resulting in M.'s 1988 significant monograph on the miniature fresco from the West House) and from Minoan Crete. It is one of the few published monographs discussing exclusively Bronze Age Aegean wall paintings, and especially material from the Cyclades. Only a few fresco assemblages have been uncovered in excavations, and this is because the material is very sensitive and prone to the taphonomic circumstances prevalent in the area. As a result, the recovery of fresco fragments in substantial enough quantities to become the exclusive subject of a monograph is rare. This is the fortuitous case of the prehistoric settlement at Ayia Irini, being one of the few sites that has provided material for the reconstruction of fresco compositions, and for this reason this volume is valuable. Another difficulty lies in the fragmentary preservation of the material, which renders a convincing reconstruction extremely difficult, along with the consideration of all the excavation and architectural evidence. On this front M.'s in-depth knowledge and consistent use of iconographic parallels limits the questioning of her reconstruction. However, readers may be distracted from the material by the discussion of parallels.

Nonetheless, this volume is extremely valuable for the study of prehistoric iconography and contributes immensely to our understanding of the period, the prevailing practices and ideology. It constitutes a reference point for scholars specialising in the iconography and art of the period.

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