

interesting, are ahistorical and ineffective. Two other criticisms concern methodology. In accordance with traditional scholarship, S. identifies shops mainly through their position along the streets, and through the existence of a large opening with the characteristic threshold. This remains, however, a presupposition that could have been questioned more resolutely: why should we not imagine a shop with another type of entrance? The chief problem, however, has to do with S.'s quantitative approach. Ostia is only partially excavated, and we still do not know how many and which kind of structures might hide in the unearthened parts. In addition, and in defiance of ch. 3, the dating of many Ostian buildings remains, at least from the third century A.D. onwards, highly problematic. Both of these considerations — the possible existence of several other shops, and the unreliability of absolute dating — lend a very provisional character to the numerous statistics and conclusions. Evidently, this uncertainty is not S.'s own fault, as he could neither excavate the lost parts of the city nor study each of the 1,263 shops in detail. The author could, however, have made a greater effort to highlight the limitations of his approach.

These critical comments apart, S.'s study is an interesting and highly commendable book on an often neglected category of evidence, that draws a vivid picture not only of the shops, but of Ostia's economy and urban landscape as a whole, using a rich body of archaeological, epigraphical and literary evidence. There is no doubt that S. will succeed in his aim of provoking thoughts and further discussion on the topic.

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FRIEDERIKE FLESS, STEPHANIE LANGER, PAOLO LIVERANI and MICHAEL PFANNER, *VATIKANISCHE MUSEEN, MUSEO GREGORIANO PROFANO EX LATERANENSE. KATALOG DER SKULPTUREN, BD. IV: HISTORISCHE RELIEFS* (*Monumenta artis Romanae* 40). Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2018. Pp. 191+96 p. of plates; ill., plans. ISBN 9783954903078. €125.00.

The Forschungsarchiv für Antike Plastik is committed to the documentation, research and publication of Greek and Roman sculpture. It acquires, newly commissions and hosts an unparalleled wealth of excellent photographs of sculptures in public and private collections (not least many English country houses), including the extraordinary archive of the late Gisela Fittschen-Badura. Their publication series *Monumenta artis Romanae* is dedicated to poorly known or published collections, which, through these lavishly illustrated books, are catapulted into the limelight.

The catalogue in question is the sixth volume on sculptures in the Vatican Museo Gregoriano Profano, a collection that is as important as it is (or was) poorly published. It contains twenty 'historical reliefs', a contentious term here understood as depictions that refer to historical events, and significantly including some tomb reliefs. It comprises both little known or unpublished items (mostly fragmentary) and some of the most controversial reliefs that have been discussed for decades, such as the 'Ara of the Vicomagistri' (1, Liverani), the 'Cancellaria Reliefs' (2, Langer and Pfanner), the 'Belvedere Altar' (7, Fless), the 'Manlius Altar' (9, Fless) or the relief with a decastyle temple in the background (12, Langer and Pfanner). Objects are exquisitely documented in photographs and drawings. Catalogue texts cover provenance, preservation, detailed descriptions, critical discussions of previously proposed interpretations and, where possible, new interpretations, and include extensive bibliographies where applicable. All authors are experts in the field and the standard of treatment is impressively learned throughout.

The volume's highlights are those entries that include new and detailed documentation of the reliefs' preservation and technical details, which contribute markedly to our understanding of the objects. For instance, that the inscription on the 'Manlius Altar' (9, Fless) is a secondary feature makes all the difference for its interpretation, which can no longer be derived from supposed links with Manlius. The altar was originally dedicated to an unknown divinity, and was re-dedicated to Manlius as a statue base only in a second phase of use. This result is exciting, and invites further consideration of how the monument would have been 'read' after its re-dedication. The detailed documentation of the heavily restored relief with togate men in front of a decastyle temple (12,

Langer and Pfanner) establishes which parts of the relief are ancient; its connection with the pediment showing the *lupa romana*, Mars, and Rhea Silvia in the Museo delle Terme; a likely reconstruction of the relief as a sacrifice in front of this temple; and a Claudian date, which rules out the majority of previous interpretations. The authors point to the extraordinary size and quality of workmanship of the relief, while emphasizing the impossibility of identifying the temple and event with any certainty; they tentatively suggest that it may refer to the *ludi saeculares* of A.D. 47, celebrating the 800th anniversary of Rome's foundation in front of the Pantheon.

The centrepiece of the catalogue is the Cancelleria reliefs, discussed over some seventy pages and documented in twenty-eight in-text illustrations and fifty-two plates (Langer and Pfanner). Despite the extraordinary attention these reliefs have attracted, this is their first full publication since Magi's initial 1940 monograph, with important corrections on measurements and technical details that impact on their interpretation. The reliefs were set into the façade of a building or monument (for which M. Wolf offers some tentative suggestions); they were executed on the building; and the entire building must have been destroyed at the time they were removed, with no re-use intended. It is now beyond doubt not only that the head of Nerva was reworked from a portrait of Domitian, but also that Vespasian's head was secondary, excluding the identification of the togate man opposite Vespasian as Domitian. As the authors convincingly argue, he is rather a generic figure, and should be seen as the representative of a group of people or a personification. The extensive discussion of possible interpretations does not arrive at any firm conclusions, beyond the general observation that relief A depicts a *profectio* in a military context and relief B an *adventus* in a civic context. Yet the authors stress the fact that Nerva is here referring back to Vespasian as his predecessor, in a legitimising strategy that is otherwise unattested.

Against this background, it is unfortunate that the same attention has not been given to the 'Ara of the Vicomagistri' (1, Liverani). Its fragments were found together with the 'Cancelleria reliefs' and are therefore discussed outside the otherwise chronological sequence of entries. Yet Liverani's very competent discussion is extremely compact, and makes no reference to the discussion of the archaeological context described in Cat. 2 (which also shows that the traditional Hadrianic date for the reliefs' deposition is unlikely). Liverani confirms that the two relief fragments cannot be linked directly, and possibly featured on two opposite sides of a larger monument (an altar like the one inside the Ara Pacis?). So why, then, does pl. 1 show the two reliefs combined? An up-to-date documentation of measurements and technical details as provided for other monuments in the volume would also have been appreciated.

Some readers may be disappointed that many discussions end in *aporia* when it comes to the identification of specific events and/or locations depicted in these reliefs. After all, our very definition of this category of 'historical reliefs' begs the question. Their original contexts are lost, and their iconographies are often unique, depriving us of our most powerful interpretive tools. The authors of this volume err on the side of caution, and expose uncertainties and contradictions in previous scholarship. Yet their discussions are models of how scrutiny of details, whether technical or iconographical, can achieve results even in the most difficult circumstances. Moreover, dating as they do predominantly to the first centuries B.C. and A.D., the reliefs demonstrate the quantity of such works being produced at this period, as well as their enormous variability and innovative character.

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NATHANIEL B. JONES, *PAINTING, ETHICS, AND AESTHETICS IN ROME* (Greek culture in the Roman world). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xviii + 291, illus. ISBN 9781108420129. £75.00.

Despite the rich scholarship on Roman replications of Greek sculpture, painting poses a problem. Roman frescoes may have looked to Greek panel paintings for inspiration, but there are few if any straightforward 'copies', and the discrepancy between archaeological evidence and literary sources gapes more widely than for other artistic media. Into this scholarly dilemma steps Nathaniel Jones,