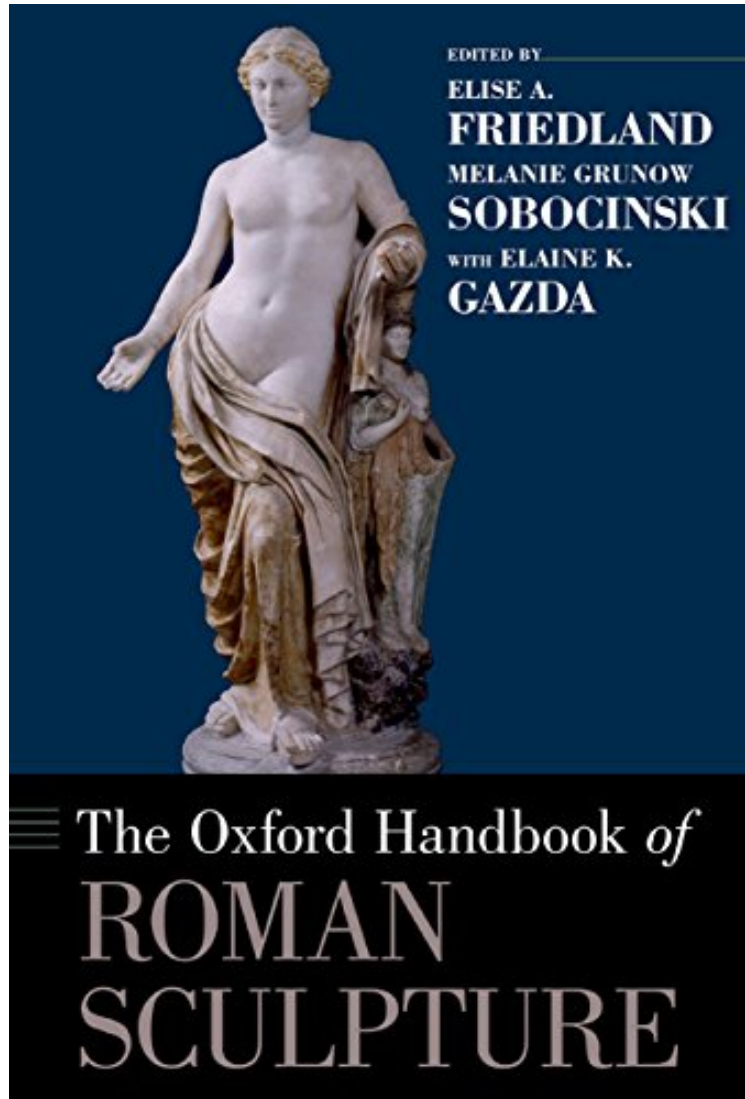


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The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture (Oxford Handbooks)

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From Oxford University Press : The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture (Oxford Handbooks) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture (Oxford Handbooks):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerGreat book not many photos but very informative4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant work on classical art, by the most renowned art historians.By B. WolinskyGreat art historians provide essays on classical sculpture in this excellent study. Elizabeth Bartman begins with an essay on just that; the beginning. She chronicles the origin of where the art form began, and the time when wealthy Italians began collecting the art of ancient Rome. All scholars will accept that serious

collecting of Roman sculpture began in the Renaissance, but Bartman tells of how the bas reliefs were the most popular. The connoisseurs were after any kind of Roman art that would tell them about the history, and it was the reliefs, on sarcophagi and the triumphal arches, that told the story of Rome's history. Though she doesn't mention it, Trajan's Column was a popular artefact for scholars, thanks to its numerous depictions of war. Thanks to its height, most of it was spared from the defacement at the hands of the Christians, for nobody could reach the higher reliefs in order to destroy them. Someone did, however, manage to remove the statue at the top and replace it with one of St. Peter, leaving the original of Trajan to be lost to history. One thing that Bartman discusses, which I have waited years to read about, is why the Popes of the Middle Ages tolerated the pagan symbols. For some reason, the Popes of the Renaissance era didn't object to statues of Zeus, Medusa, and Poseidon, whereas earlier Popes had Roman arches and reliefs defaced. Perhaps these Popes loved art? Were they enlightened by Greek scholars who fled Constantinople after the Turkish conquest? Bartman's essay is about the origins of the study of classical sculpture, but Jerry Podany, of the Getty Institute, discusses the early conservation of the artifacts. For starters, the wealthy Italians who displayed the statues in their villas and palaces can be credited with saving them. Today we'd say they plundered archeological sites and accuse them of theft, but in their day, that was the only conservation available. If the Medici family hadn't desired ancient sculptures for their gardens, the marble would've ended up being ground into plaster. Most of the statues they acquired were broken, so they would hire sculptors to create replacement limbs out of marble and plaster, which were then stuck on. Today we can't be sure of the accuracy of these medieval restorers, but we must credit them with drawing attention to these classical masterpieces. Few ancient marbles, save for those on the Parthenon, were found intact, so the restorer had to use his imagination. As for bronze statues, they were rarely found intact, as bronze was valuable and frequently recycled. Collecting in America gets a small chapter, and not surprising, given that the US patrons of the arts weren't especially fond of Europe. While the British nobility had classical educations, and even gone on the famous Grand Tour, most American millionaires didn't care much for classical art. Andrew Carnegie, for instance, had his home decorated by American artists, who sculpted and painted American wildlife. For a US millionaire, Audubon's Birds of America were more desirable than marble statue of Zeus. Not mentioned in the book is The Metropolitan Museum's sculpture collection, which eventually turned out to be full of junk. In the 1880s, the museum hired an Italian general (and Civil War veteran) Luigi Palma di Cesnola as its curator for antiquities, and he proceeded to stuff the galleries with randomly-collected artefacts from Kurion. Even in the 1880s, there were debates as to whether his 'digs' were in fact looting, and the restorations, which he directed, were considered inaccurate even then. He was merely an amateur archeologist, with no experience, study, or training, but he was an Italian, so to the Americans, he was an expert. When the wing was reopened in 2006, some of the marbles he brought to New York were now thought to be scraps from art schools of the time. The professor must've taken his students' homework, thrown it in a box, and said 'here General Palma, ancient marble feet and hands.' This Italian 'genius' couldn't tell the difference! One of the best essays in this book is by Bjorn Ewald, with his treatise on Roman sarcophagi. While the bas reliefs depict war, and the statues depict Roman gods, the burial boxes tell you about the regular people. You'll quickly learn what they wore, what they did, how they lived, and what class they belonged to. Togas and hairstyles depict the social class, while different symbols show the kinds of jobs they had. Women are usually depicted in luxurious poses, probably because a woman who could afford a stone sarcophagus would've been a very wealthy woman! Wreaths symbolize the patrician class, grapes, associated with Bacchus and Dionysus, symbolize luxury and wealth. Poppies, found on some marble funeral sculptures, symbolize freedom from pain. This is a brilliant work, using Roman sculpture as a primary source for studying history. However, I would like to have read some discussion on Giovanni Battista Piranesi, whose etchings depict the Roman ruins half-buried in the earth. The Roman Catacombs are not mentioned, probably because no sculptures are found there. The Catacombs are, however, a great source of frescoes depicting early Christianity. Perhaps we'll see another book like this, about Roman paintings?

The study of Roman sculpture has been an essential part of the disciplines of Art History and Classics since the eighteenth century. Famous works like the Laocoön, the Arch of Titus, and the colossal portrait of Constantine are familiar to millions. Again and again, scholars have returned to sculpture to answer questions about Roman art, society, and history. Indeed, the field of Roman sculptural studies encompasses not only the full chronological range of the Roman world but also its expansive geography, and a variety of artistic media, formats, sizes, and functions. Exciting new theories, methods, and approaches have transformed the specialized literature on the subject in recent decades. Rather than creating another chronological catalogue of representative examples from various periods, genres, and settings, *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture* synthesizes current best practices for studying this central medium of Roman art, situating it within the larger fields of Art History, Classical Archaeology, and Roman Studies. This comprehensive volume fills the gap between introductory textbooks and highly focused professional literature. *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture* conveniently presents new technical, scientific, literary, and theoretical approaches to the study of Roman sculpture in one reference volume while simultaneously complementing textbooks

and other publications that present well-known works in the corpus. The contributors to this volume address metropolitan and provincial material from the early republican period through late antiquity in an engaging and fresh style. Authoritative, innovative, and up-to-date, The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture will remain an invaluable resource for years to come.

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