

Othmar Jaeggi, **Die griechischen Porträts. Antike Repräsentation. Moderne Projektion.** Editor Dietrich Reimer, Berlin 2008. 240 pages with 64 figures.

On the cover of this handsomely produced and provocative book is a heavily restored marble head from the collection of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Havana. The head, which is identified as a Roman copy from the Claudian period of a high Hellenistic model, illustrates the very practical problem that was the impetus for this theoretical study. How, in the absence of any external evidence, such as an inscription, a statue body, a provenance, or an original display context, can one recognize or identify a head as a portrait rather than, say, as an ideal image? What qualities, stylistic or otherwise, differentiate a Greek portrait from other kinds of Greek sculpture? What does one do when faced with a series of anonymous, disembodied, and undated marble heads, as the author was while writing the catalogue of the Condes de Lagunillas Collection in Havana? How does one organize and categorize this material? This book, the author's Habilitation, wrestles with these very practical questions as it takes on a much bigger question: what is a Greek portrait? The result is a book that should be required reading for anyone interested in Greek or Roman portraiture.

After briefly examining the terms *Bild* (image) and *Bildnis* (portrait), and the concepts of realism and idealism, Jaeggi suggests in Chapter One that a more productive way to approach Greek portraits is to divide them into three basic aesthetic categories: the aesthetic of youth, the aesthetic of wisdom, and the aesthetic of femininity (pp. 18 f.). His inclusion of female portraiture as one of the three main aesthetics is an important interpretive move, as images of women are all too often simply left out of histories of Greek portraiture, particularly those interested in the kinds of larger theoretical questions that the author tackles here. His approach to the material is centered on the following questions. How are these aesthetic categories characterized? What are the elements that each of these categories consists of and what do these elements mean? What are the individualizing or portrait-like traits of each category and what are they meant to express? Is there a formal or aesthetic difference between an image (*Bild*) and a portrait (*Bildnis*)?

As Jaeggi's project seeks to move beyond questions that have traditionally concerned Greek portrait studies, such as the relationship between the actual appearance of the portrait subject and the portrait itself, he provides in Chapter Two a critical overview of the main approaches to the study of Greek portraiture. This review is focused primarily on German-language scholarship (e. g., Ernst Buschor, Nikolaus Himmelmann, Luca Giuliani, Tonio Hölscher, Paul Zanker), as German scholars have indeed been the main players in the study of ancient portraits. The author elucidates two basic positions (pp. 35 f.): On the one hand, a portrait combines elements of observable reality derived from the subject's appearance with sculptural conventions that express specific character

traits; or on the other, a portrait expresses the subject's role in society and the qualities that are associated with that role. The first position also embraces the idea that a portrait in some way expresses the inner psychology of the sitter, a notion that Jaeggi dismisses as anachronistic, the evidence for which he lays out in the third Chapter. His own approach is definitely firmly in line with the second position.

In Chapter Four Jaeggi gives us his definition of a Greek portrait (p. 62): it is »a representation of a human figure, which mostly expresses a public or political message and is recognizable through its precision and differentiation«. As this definition is very broad and somewhat non-specific, he adds that each of the following elements of a portrait's visual vocabulary would have played a crucial role in the monument's meaning: intention, patron, display location, date, base, inscription, material, coloring, size or scale of the statue, gender, pose, dress, possible further attributes, age, hairstyle, facial expression, and other small details (pp. 62 f.). Each of the author's three portrait aesthetics has its own semantic codes, its own visual vocabulary, which he explores in the next three chapters. Chapter Five looks at ruler portraits and the aesthetics of youthfulness; Chapter Six examines the aesthetics of age and wisdom, focusing mostly on philosopher portraits; and Chapter Seven explores female portraiture and the aesthetics of femininity and beauty. In each chapter the author lays out a clear framework for recognizing and analyzing the visual details that define each of his three categories, based primarily on portraits that are externally identified. Jaeggi concludes that the aim of a portrait was to express visually the aesthetic category to which the subject belonged and not the individuality of the subject, that is, his or her physical aspects. Indeed, the notion of individuality or even realism in relation to ancient Greek portraiture should perhaps simply be jettisoned.

Some will undoubtedly resist such a revolutionary conclusion; I found it refreshing, indeed liberating. The same goes for the author's dismantling of the traditional model of the stylistic development of Greek portraiture in Chapter Eight; the idea that sculptural style changed over time in any predictably measurable way is shown for what it is – wishful thinking. Style is determined by aesthetic category, not by date. Stylistic change therefore occurs when the social or political roles that portrait subjects represent or the ideas that they were meant to express change. And this is primarily an additive process; that is, new portrait styles were added, while older ones were retained. The widely held view that the chronology of Hellenistic sculpture is imprecise because there are few securely dated monuments is simply incorrect; there are in fact a large number of Hellenistic portraits whose dates we know. The truth is that Hellenistic sculpture in general and Hellenistic portraiture in particular does not evolve or change in a discernable, linear fashion, and we need to stop expecting it to behave in this way. This book should, therefore, not only revolutionize the study of Greek portraiture, but also make us rethink some of

our basic assumptions about Greek sculpture. Indeed, Jaeggi's theoretical framework of aesthetic categories could usefully be applied to all kinds of Greek sculptural production. Ultimately this study shows us that the tendency in the scholarship on Greek portraiture to focus primarily on disembodied heads is not particularly helpful or productive; we must also consider statue bodies, their costumes, poses, and attributes, as well as inscribed statue bases and the contexts of display. For those of us who are already moving in this direction, this elegantly concise book is a very welcome addition to the field of Greek portrait studies.

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