

Bryn Mawr College Scholarship, Research, and Creative Work at Bryn Mawr College

Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology Faculty
Research and Scholarship

Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology

1975

Review of *Polyklet*, by Thuri Lorenz; *Der Kanon des Polyklet: Doryphoros und Amazone*, by Hans von Steuben

Brunilde S. Ridgway
Bryn Mawr College, bridgway@brynmawr.edu

R. Tobin

[Let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.brynmawr.edu/arch_pubs

 Part of the [Classical Archaeology and Art History Commons](#), and the [History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#)

Custom Citation

Ridgway, Brunilde S., and Richard Tobin. 1975. Review of *Polyklet*, by Thuri Lorenz; *Der Kanon des Polyklet: Doryphoros und Amazone*, by Hans von Steuben. *American Journal of Archaeology* 79:100-102.

This paper is posted at Scholarship, Research, and Creative Work at Bryn Mawr College. http://repository.brynmawr.edu/arch_pubs/68

For more information, please contact repository@brynmawr.edu.

shrewd and independent judgments, and is rich in original observations and suggestions.

It is presented as a survey on historical lines, with several additional chapters on special topics such as shapes, chronology, subject matter, myth, and the like. The text is succinct, yet explicit, and an amazing number of painters and groups are mentioned and deftly characterized. It is not simply the masters who are discussed, but the full range of production, hacks included. And there are numerous illuminating cross references to the other arts and to the contemporary social and political scene, and a sense for the inter-relationship of Athens with other parts of the Greek world, and with the Mediterranean at large.

The illustrations are abundant, many of them hitherto unpublished or available only in publications not ordinarily accessible to college students. Their quality is uneven, the tone often dark and the details indistinct, but by and large they are serviceable. Some sacrifice of quality can be understood in an effort to hold down the price. Indeed it is a marvel that in these days a text with almost 400 illustrations can be sold for as little as \$10.

The interests of the student have been kept in mind throughout, and many useful hints are unobtrusively inserted, of great value to the beginner and to those more advanced as well. The author's assessments of groups and painters will doubtless be challenged at one point and another, but they are not dogmatic pronouncements, and should challenge readers to test against them their own impressions and observations. (One typographical error might be mentioned, on page 195, where the date for late Middle Corinthian is a century too early.)

For many, certainly, the book is bound to raise still another question. What is to be the future direction of studies of Attic vases? Is attribution to remain the central concern? The reviewer agrees with Boardman that "we miss a lot in our understanding of antiquity by letting lists and shapes and alleged affinities dominate study" (p. 13). Such connoisseurship will always be of the first importance, but one need only glance at the writings of the greatest of the connoisseurs to be aware that beyond the brilliant stylistic analyses there was always a larger vision illuminating the whole of ancient life.

CEDRIC G. BOUTLER

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

POLYKLET, by *Thuri Lorenz*. Pp. 90, pls. 32, figs. 4 (line drawings). Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1972. DM 64.

DER KANON DES POLYKLET. DORYPHOROS UND AMAZONE, by *Hans von Steuben*. Pp. 83, pls. 51, figs. 22 (mostly line drawings). Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, Tübingen, 1973. DM 63.30.

Polykleitan studies have recently enjoyed a revival

of interest, particularly among German scholars who have produced several articles and dissertations on the Peloponnesian master and his school. These two books stand out for the excellence of their photographs and their wealth of details (only the grainy views of the basalt Uffizi torso form a surprising exception to the very high quality of the other plates in von Steuben's publication). Thus the illustrations alone would be worth the price of the books. Still there is much more to praise in these two attempts to define the artistry of Polykleitos.

The authors' scopes differ. Lorenz tries to follow the sculptor's career from beginning to maturity, progressing from safe to tentative attributions and assessing contemporary trends and Polykleitan influence on other artistic circles. An analysis of the ancient sources closes with critical comments on some replicas of the Doryphoros. Von Steuben focuses exclusively on the Canon, attempting to reconstruct the measuring system which formed the basis of all Polykleitan creations but was particularly embodied in his Spear-carrier. Comments on other statues are incidental, and a study of the Amazon is included solely to settle the controversy over the attribution and to explore the sculptor's solution for dealing with a draped rather than a naked body.

Although the two scholars cover somewhat the same material, their conclusions are as different as their interests. Any overlap occurs largely in their discussion of the ancient sources, which must perforce be the same though their interpretations vary. Von Steuben relies upon them as an aid in finding the metrical Canon; Lorenz admits that they echo it, but they do so in such vague and perhaps misunderstood fashion as to provide inadequate basis for our research. Interestingly, von Steuben reads Pliny's *quadrata* as defining the block-enclosed poses preferred by Polykleitos, which appear at their best in purely frontal or lateral views, while intermediate points weaken or obscure their meaning. In contrast, the Doryphoros for Lorenz is intended for in-the-round viewing; the apparent frontality of the copies is caused by the Roman desire to display sculpture as flat façades in front of architectural backdrops. The very definition of *quadratum*, Lorenz argues, could only originate with Varro, at a time when a plastic rendering could be described by means of a two-dimensional image.

According to Lorenz, Polykleitos's innovation was to make his figures support their weight entirely on one leg. This pose, with concomitant shifts and motions within the human body, was reached through experimentation. Thus the Diskophoros and the Idolino, who rest both feet on the ground, represent the master's early work. After the breakthrough of the Doryphoros comes the Diadoumenos, different not in terms of years but in conception. The Hermes and the Herakles come between the two with respect to their motion, and Herakles is restored with club on the ground near the right foot. Next comes the Amazon (the Capitoline type); her pose is no longer "labil" as

she is wounded and must lean on her spear. The so-called Westmacott Athlete (who may not be the Kyniskos of the Olympia base since foot imprints are insufficient to reveal the stance of the total figure) is restored with a fillet hanging down from his raised right hand, thus adding a vertical accent alongside the body comparable to the Amazon's spear. The victor would be in the process of removing the band after the festivities, his stance revealing the efforts of the competition. The Dresden Youth is identified with Pliny's *nudum talo incessentem*; he is not standing, like the Doryphoros, but moving forward for the throw of the knucklebones which he holds in his left hand, his lowered right hand clutching the satchel for the dice. The Narkissos and a few other statuettes share with the Dresden Youth the possibility of being works of the school rather than of the master himself.

Obviously not all scholars will agree with this list and especially with the grounds upon which individual attributions are made. If we recognize Polykleitan works because of the typical stance, how can we ascribe to him statues that lack it, or rather, retain a balance which continues to be rendered well into the fourth century? Why is the "early" hair of the Idolino more probant than the "advanced" face and torso? Can the Annecy bronze substantiate the claim for a Polykleitan Hermes when its shoulder-rendering strongly recalls the Hellenistic Herakles in Syracuse? Dorothy K. Hill's article on the Hermes is quoted (note 21) yet no account is taken of her theory on the type. Finally, if the Doryphoros portrayed Achilles (and the Diadoumenos Paris) Pliny would have said so in listing Polykleitos's works. Instead he refers elsewhere, in most generic terms, to *effigies Achilleae hastam tenentes*. Size alone seems insufficient basis for heroic identification, and the very demonstrative nature of the Canon statue—as an embodiment of the perfect human form—could have suggested a larger-than-life scale.

If Lorenz is skeptically sensitive to the problem of the copies and the import of their own stylistic period on their rendering, von Steuben is equally confident of recapturing the original through the replicas and "breaking" the Canon. His solution is reached by detailed measurements, first of the bronze Doryphoros herm from Herculaneum, then of the full statue from Pompeii, with the Pourtales and Uffizi torsos utilized mainly for comparisons. The initial clue is obtained by measuring the hair locks, from the central whirl on the crown to the subsequent rows ending in a contrapposto arrangement of patterns around the face. The system is then tested on the Capitoline Amazon, with appropriate modifications. Von Steuben claims that Polykleitos used no basic module but adopted "the Greek measuring system" of finger, palm, foot and cubit supplemented by a total height unit for each statue that could be broken down into fractions at key points on the body. He admits that several areas of the statue cannot be converted into meaningful values, and that parts of the same feature (e.g. the Amazon's

mantle) measure best now in feet, now in cubits. But he finds that theoretical linking of features within face and torso creates patterns of squares-within-squares, thus providing confirmation for his solution.

One prerequisite for any proposed explanation of the Canon is that it work, but such a criterion is not the major one. More basic is that the answer be 1) truly practical, consistent with what is known or assumed to be fifth century sculptural practice; 2) consistent with the ancient sources, or at least not in contradiction to them; 3) consistent with, or not in contradiction to, mid-fifth century mathematical thought and practice; and finally 4) consistent, to some extent, with the theoretical basis which the ancient sources attribute, however obscurely, to the Canonical treatise upon which the Doryphoros was constructed.

With regard to 1, von Steuben's method seems far from practical. It is unlikely that any master would burden his memory and workshop movements with such complicated tables of measures (no matter how empirically obtained with a plumb line) that require endless verification on the model. The procedure outlined by the author would seem much more feasible for a copyist pointing off from an original, over-regularizing and perhaps rounding off his figures to the nearest approximation, thus creating the surprising correspondence noted by von Steuben. It is also logical that correspondence would exist among parts of a body which nature has created, as it were, in a bilaterally symmetrical version, and any number of meaningful relationships could be established on a living being without implying the adoption of a canon. The written expression of such a complex method in a theoretical treatise appears even more improbable.

More important (point 2) no basis for such a method is provided by the ancient authors; for instance Galen suggests clearly a progression from finger to finger, fingers to palm and wrist, "all these" to the forearm, the forearm to upper arm, etc. Von Steuben's system often tends to measure apparently arbitrary points on the body, omitting what does not fit as an expression of the sculptor's freedom, choosing the unit (and the nearest figure) which seem best to fit, and thus leaning toward a circular argument.

But the basic objection (3-4) may be that the proposed solution is in contradiction with both the theoretical and practical areas of fifth century thought, central to which was mathematics, essentially Pythagorean. And for the Pythagoreans, mathematics was essentially geometry. However vaguely the Roman sources understood symmetry, number, and square, these were key concepts for fifth century mathematicians and philosophers. If Polykleitos did devise a canonical treatise that employed mathematics, it would most likely have been a genuinely geometric scheme, since geometry (and not arithmetic, with its fractional and thus "irrational" numbers) is the logical tool for a sculptor constructing a figure to be cast in bronze.

One final word on the Amazons: can the Capitoline type be attributed to Polykleitos when the "Ephesos

type" corresponds to it in so many details? If the two were meant as one commission, they cannot be reconciled with Pliny's anecdote, yet his text is our only basis for attributing an Amazon to Polykleitos. Nor can the question of authorship be decided by contrast with the other Amazon types, since they may belong to different artistic periods. What can be wholeheartedly supported in von Steuben's argument is that the Capitoline type is indeed fifth century and a masterpiece. His solution for the Canon, and its somewhat strained application to the Amazon, fail however to carry complete conviction. Should it be felt that the burden of proof lies with the carping critics, BSR's ideas on the Amazons have already appeared in this Journal, and RT's proposed solution to the Canon has been submitted for publication.

BRUNILDE SISMONDO RIDGWAY
RICHARD TOBIN

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

ANTICLASSICISM IN GREEK SCULPTURE OF THE FOURTH CENTURY B.C., by *Blanche R. Brown* (Archaeological Institute of America and College Art Association Monographs). Pp. xv + 104, figs. 103. New York University Press, New York, 1973, \$15.

In this relatively short volume, the author tackles an old and thorny problem: how to evaluate fourth-century Greek art in relation to the High Classical and Hellenistic styles. In Chapter I Brown poses the main questions: is the style of the fourth century just a continuation of that of the fifth? is it merely transitional, or "does it constitute a separate definable period?" "When does a decisive change in content and form occur that marks a qualitative shift to a new idea and a new configuration?" In posing the problems, Brown summarizes the opinions of other scholars regarding the periodization of Greek history and art history.

In Chapter II Brown's intent is to examine sculpture in particular in order to establish the precise point at which "decisive change" occurs. Commendably she relies here chiefly upon originals rather than copies. She is by no means alone in seeing premonitions of change in the late fifth-century Rich style. However, she argues that a real break with the High Classical is first discernible in the female riders (*akroteria*) of the west pediment of the Temple of Asklepios at Epidauros. This new style, which Brown terms "Anticlassical," is also apparent in other major works of the fourth century.

The next chapter consists of an up-to-date and interesting account of the evidence, historical, literary and epigraphical as well as stylistic, which must be weighed in order to arrive at a chronology for the relevant works of art analyzed earlier. Accordingly Brown concludes that the decisive change took place between 380 and 375 B.C. A rapid survey of the other arts in the fourth century ensues in Chapter IV. In each case

she finds, perhaps too frequently at second hand, important changes occurring more or less contemporaneously and in a similar direction with those she observed in the sculpture after 380.

An attempt to justify in history these artistic changes is then made in Chapter V in which the main issue, as Brown sees it, is the point at which the *polis* is replaced by the imperial system in Greek thinking. She regards the King's Peace between Sparta and Persia as critical. This occurred in 386—only six years before the Temple of Asklepios was begun. Fourth-century transformations in military organization, economics, patronage, religion, philosophy, and science appear further to bolster Brown's basic thesis that before the first quarter of the fourth century was over the mental climate in Greece had significantly altered. Another manifestation of change was the rise of portraiture as instanced in the statue of "Maussollos" which she dates about 360 B.C. By the end of the chapter the author states that she has convinced herself that she has "found justification in history as in art for a changeover from the Classical period to a definable new period" beginning somewhere around 380-375.

Yet she does not convince this reviewer. While several important cultural changes certainly did occur in the early fourth century, they all bore still more significant fruit after the death of Alexander and as a result of his conquests. But still another problem arises: to what extent are contemporary historical or cultural circumstances reflected at any time in Greek art? Some authorities would reply there was no direct correlation at all. That historical factors had instantaneous influence, as Brown suggests, is difficult to accept.

Perhaps the most original chapter is the last. Having rejected the traditional date of 323 for the beginning of the Hellenistic period, Brown would prefer to place the critical juncture early in the third century as seen, for example, in the well-known statue of Demosthenes. For much of the third century, she argues, we may identify a "Second Anticlassical" style, which subsequently gave way in the later third to the "Baroque" or "Grand" style as exemplified in the Gaul Committing Suicide.

The pivotal chapter is the second, in which Brown must permit the visual material to speak for itself and determine whether or not an "Anticlassical" style can really be detected in certain works of fourth-century sculpture. Unfortunately the examples and illustrations she chooses do not unequivocally demonstrate the decisive change she insists upon. Sometimes this is because neither specific comparisons nor contrasts are offered to assist the reader in seeing the change for himself (e.g. figs. 30 and 33 are analyzed individually); sometimes round is inappropriately compared with relief sculpture (e.g. fig. 8 with 9, fig. 26 with 27); and quite frequently a stylistic observation seems overdrawn (e.g. p. 20: "extreme example . . . of fragmented diagonals" in the "Alexander Sarcophagus," or p. 22: "the composition by disparate movement" among grave stelai).