

Encounters with Andrew Stewart

Tonio Hölscher

Emeritus Professor, Institute of Classical Archaeology, Heidelberg University.
Tonio.Hoelscher@zaw.uni-heidelberg.de



Writing in memory of Andrew Stewart is an almost impossible task. For all who have ever met him he was, and still is, incomparably present, not only in his books and articles but as a person. Even using his official first name presupposes an inappropriate distance: he was and is 'Andy'. His scientific thoughts and insights are not just dated texts on paper but ongoing provocative challenges in life, beyond libraries, classrooms and desks. Those who have once been confronted with them continue to have them in their minds and before their eyes. Yet all this was never achieved by translating ancient Greek culture light-heartedly into notions of present-time actuality and 'identity'. On the contrary: he transferred himself and his audiences deep into the world of antiquity - and not only through his enormous erudition but by an emphatic and vital immersion, with burning curiosity, into this foreign world with its inhabitants. This was a past, but in a way it was not yet over: he brought these people to life.

Andy Stewart was a sailor. His boat on the Bay was his world. He spoke of it with glowing eyes, he took his friends on boat tours, and he was proud to steer it through stormy weather. This was precisely his scientific habit. He enjoyed staying in the middle of stormy debates, going the whole hog, always getting to the fundamental point.

He always held his views with great vigour, never avoided controversies, yet was totally free of any dogmatism. Around him, there was always an atmosphere of immense freedom, intellectual as well as personal. His preferred place to meet for academic and friendly encounters was the Free Speech Cafe on the Berkeley campus where the student movement had begun in 1967. There, on the terrace, he could stay for hours, forget time, and there was no issue that was not open for discussion.

My first encounter with Andy Stewart was literary: reading his 'Greek Sculpture' subtitled 'An Exploration', of 1990. In Germany, Classical sculpture was at that time considered a traditional German domain of the history of styles ('Stilgeschichte'), in the sense of absolute artistic creativity, which seemed to me leading more and more into a sterile dead end, being in urgent need of opening up towards the vitality of real life. This book was a revelation. It not only mastered with admirable sovereignty the whole spectrum of sculptures from the 'Dark Age' to Augustus, but it dealt with them as powerful factors in a wide horizon of social life. All such phenomena which in former research had played, if at all, an implicit ancillary role in dealing with 'art', were here given explicitly their full weight – and, crucially, were integrated in a comprehensive vision of cultural practice: sculptures' locations and situations; sculptors' materials, techniques and workshops; sculptures' markets, functions and social impact ('rewards'); last but not least, basic concepts of mimesis and artists' personalities. And significantly: these phenomena were not developed in a process of progressive generalization out of descriptions and analyses of the vast variety of works of art, but exposed in the first part of the book as the fundamental preconditions of artistic practice. Based on these general premises, this book on Greek sculpture acquires an enormous explanatory power: part two deals with sculptures in their historical contexts of epochs and places, while part three focuses on individual sculptors as exponents of their specific historical contexts. No earlier history of Greek art was so systematically conceived as an 'exploration' of art as social culture. And the path leads from the general to the individual, to societies and people.

This was typical of all his further work. Andy Stewart had a broad interest in, and a deep understanding of, modern and contemporary theory, be it philosophical, aesthetic, cultural or anthropological. Reviewing a book based on Foucaultian premises that did not convince him, he countered not only by archaeological arguments but above all by a better understanding of the French philosopher. Yet, for himself he never considered theoretical concepts an end in themselves: he never wrote a systematic book on archaeological or art-historical methodology, nor such demonstrative theoretical introductions to his books and articles as are en vogue today. Theory was highly appreciated and needed, but always in the service of better understanding historical reality.

For Andy Stewart, Greek culture was to a high, and astonishing, degree a culture of the body. After centuries of Classical Studies in which the naked bodies of Greek art were understood as symbolic *incunabula* of Greek idealism, which was another dead end in my eyes, he took them as what they first of all were: representations of real human bodies – yet not in the sense of blank realism but of a fundamental element of Greek culture and society. His book 'Art, Desire, and the Body in Ancient Greece', of 1997, deals with an immense spectrum of social practices and concepts of the body, collective and individual, public and private, male and female, political and erotic, divine, heroic and human, Greek and foreign, normative and transgressive. And the correlative phenomenon to this was, as he impressively demonstrated, the immense importance of visibility, of appearing as well as perceiving, and of the ever-present 'public eye' in Greek societies. A revolution.

Of course, such views implied fundamental personal choices. Andy Stewart's book 'Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art', of 2008, is an immensely powerful exploration of the 'Greek revolution' and what followed along the 5th century B.C. Most significant are the differences from Jerome J. Pollitt's famous 'Art and Experience in Classical Greece', from 1972, which Stewart was asked to replace, and which he judged, with all great respect for its author, as rather 'impressionistic', grounding the 'Classical' in general mental and psychological attitudes, such as 'consciousness', 'control' or 'the individual'. What he offers instead is an immensely rich 'socially grounded' approach in which works of 'art' are conceived as powerful factors in concrete historical situations. This implies giving a particularly strong impact to individual artists and individual works, most notably in his interpretation of the Tyrannicides' monument in Athens, which he sees as 'the' single founding monument of 'Classical' art as such. Contrary to earlier scholarship which had pointed out certain trends in late Archaic art leading towards 'Classical' styles, he emphatically insisted on the uniqueness of this revolutionary monument of the beginnings of Athenian democracy, with its overwhelming physical energy and presence. They 'formally inaugurated what art historians call the Severe Style in Greek art'. For Andy Stewart this was a kind of fundamental credo which he expanded in a recent contribution to this Journal on 'Rupture or continuity?' - a most powerful plea for art history as a field (in my words) of agency against pre-determination, event against process, human beings against 'structures'. Ultimately, we may consider this controversy to be less a matter of factual history than of historians' interests and perspectives. But whether one agrees with him or not, his view of the impact of individual actors and their individual works is a most formidable and provocative challenge for understanding how major changes in art and artistic practice generally occur. More or less unconsciously, this would probably have been his own understanding of his individual role as a scholar: he was convinced he could achieve great things. An attitude of Hercules.

This is not the place for a general appreciation of Andy Stewart's great scientific work, which would have to include wonderful articles such as on Stesichoros and the François vase (1983), and above all his groundbreaking books 'Attika' on Athenian Hellenistic sculpture (1979), 'Faces of Power' on images of Alexander the Great (1993), 'Attalos, Athens, and the Akropolis' (2004) on the 'Little Barbarians' and other Pergamene victory monuments, culminating in 'Art in the Hellenistic World' (2014). Of all periods of Greek art, Hellenism perhaps best suited his character: the powerful dynamics of Alexander and his followers, the storm-blown Nike of Samothrace on her steep ship's prow. Instead, I would like to come back to some personal experiences.

In 2004 I received, out of the sudden, an invitation from the Dean of the Department of Berkeley to give the Sather Lectures in 2007, and I guessed that Andrew Stewart must have played a major role in this initiative, although we had never met nor been in any contact until then. For him, this must have been a risky decision, for these lectures involved participation of colleagues from both departments, of Classics and Art History, and moreover a graduate seminar course: so, he had to cut a fine figure in front of many colleagues and his advanced students. But one of his characteristic features was that he firmly trusted those he had once decided for. His graduate students were just wonderful: eager to learn new approaches, inspiring with all sorts of challenging questions and ideas, highly experimental but always precisely to the point - and above all with an attitude of absolute intellectual freedom and equality. What they had got from him was much more than technical training: it was an academic habitus that was at the same time a vital cultural attitude, including political commitment and social coherence.

Andy Stewart was a great communicator. He was one of the central figures of Berkeley's very lively academic community. And he had his advanced students every week at his home: for a lively grill party. He was a wonderful and passionate cook, especially when he prepared the turkey for Thanksgiving parties with his wife Darlis, his family and his beloved grand-daughters.

TONIO HÖLSCHER

Andy Stewart knew that he was highly esteemed in the international world of Classical Studies, and he enjoyed very much to be honoured, in his last month, with the gold medal of the Archaeological Institute of America. But in his heart he was a modest person. He felt he was in the service of science, and he was happy to spend much time for this. During the last years of his life, he passed regularly several months in the storerooms of the Athenian Agora excavation, patiently ordering thousands of sculptural fragments, mostly quite insignificant – but finding out with an eagle's eyes those of which he most ingeniously reconstructed pediments and friezes of classical temples, or the history of the iconography of Aphrodite. And here, too, he enjoyed the company of some of his students.

This was Andy Stewart's world. In this world he will continue to be present.