

Diana Rodríguez Pérez (ed.). *Greek Art in Context: Archaeological and Art Historical Perspectives*. pp. xxiii + 282. 59 illustrations. 2017. Abingdon: Routledge. ISBN 978-1724-574-5 5 hardback £84.

As the editor observes, 'context' has become a buzzword (p.1). Why? The editor has concluded, following the 2014 Edinburgh conference designed 'to discuss the issue [of context] and clarify its terms', from which this book derives, that 'How each of us understands the term depends on one's field of specialization and on the nature of the material under study' (p.12). That seems to me nonsense. What context is relevant depends on the question being answered. It is not whether something is a pot or a statue, or whether I am an historian or an archaeologist or an art historian that matters, it is what I want to know. If your question is about pot-painters' hands, then the appropriate context is other pots displaying similar graphic habits; if your question is about pots representing peltasts, then the appropriate context is other pots with pictures of peltasts (or from which peltasts are surprisingly absent); if your question is about pots in (Athenian or Etruscan) graves, then the appropriate context is the assemblages found in (Athenian or Etruscan) graves. The growth of interest in 'original' contexts of deposition was not a consequence of a growth in the number of specialists in excavation, but of the growth of interest in questions about first social and economic, and later, religious life. The more recent growth of interest in the museum context is not because of a growth in the number of curators, but because there is more interest in questions about how modern display contexts influence people's assumptions about antiquity. And so on. It is not in fact the case that 'contextualization' has become more important, or new that 'considering 'things' in context' is 'the ultimate scientific approach' (p.1): everyone who has ever written about anything or anyone has done so by putting them into a context. The more vocal insistence by archaeologists on looking at things 'in context' has been part of a move to change the questions asked, and to insist that the most fundamental questions are the questions which relate to the context in which an archaeological object has been found.

The contents page reveals the importance of the question fighting to get out. For although the introduction lists as types of context 'The find-spot', 'Secondary find-spots', 'The Museum as context' and 'Texts as contexts', the volume itself is organised into sections named 'Location and the find-spot', 'Experiencing material culture', 'Historical and

artistic contexts', and 'Recontextualizations'. What is 'experiencing material culture' doing here? How is this not a matter of 'historical and artistic context'? Here, for a moment, the question of 'How was X experienced?', a question that turns out to involve different contexts depending on exactly what X is, has taken precedence over starting from a context and then searching for what questions can be answered on the basis of that context.

'Experiencing material culture' starts with a paper by Bonna Wescoat and Rebecca Levitan in which they seek, in the face of recent denials from Clemente Marconi, to answer the question of whether the Parthenon frieze could be seen when in situ, and whether its relief and/or colour helped its visibility. To answer that question required putting the frieze into its original viewing context, something impossible on the Athenian acropolis but possible on the full-sized replica Parthenon in Nashville. The answers are clear. Although different viewers were more or less able to distinguish detail, both colour and relief aided visibility and very few had difficulty distinguishing the figures when coloured. The vast majority also found themselves wanting to move with the figures on the frieze, and that the columns helped the viewer to focus. In terms of the modern debate, this is pretty decisive support for those against whom Marconi was arguing.

Winfred van de Put isn't really asking a question about experience, he just happens to offer different experience as an answer. He describes how he became aware that the iconography on sixth-century lekythoi from Attica was different from the iconography on sixth-century lekythoi from Athens. Unfortunately, we are given a great deal of abstract discussion of methodology, in which van de Put initially seeks the moral high ground for questions arising from archaeological context above questions arising from other contexts, only finally to concede that there is no objective context, but we are given no data to illustrate his claim about the difference between Athens and Attica, other than the mention of a single lekythos; the suggestion that this might correlate with different experiences is not developed.

Katerina Volioti asks how repetition of similar iconography in Athenian black-figure pottery was experienced by the viewer. She first shows examples of repetitive iconography from the Haimonian group of black-figure cups and lekythoi and then suggests that repetition aids 'processing fluency' as well as creating a 'brand'. Effectively she shows that there is a context, the theories of modern cognitive psychology, which will enable us to make sense of

why a workshop produced what modern scholars have reckoned to be low grade products.

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones asks what is happening on the Eurymedon oinochoe. His answer is: 'Obliquely and craftily, the vase shows anal penetration' (p.109). To arrive at this conclusion he claims that the Persian should be interpreted as leaning up against the surface of the oinochoe (as if the oinochoe were glass and the Persian were inside it), and that 'if we think about the three-dimensionality of the vase then in fact the Greek's arm reaches into the vase's interior space and his hand makes contact with the Persian's shoulder' (p.108). I confess that I don't see that. No viewer of the pursuer would construe the outstretched arm as reaching into the interior, any more than they would construct the Persian's backside as directly behind his head. Having a pursuer on one side of a pot and the pursued on the other was regular. Llewellyn-Jones offers various, to my mind unconvincing, parallels for the claim that the Persian is leaning against the pot surface, but none for the arm that reaches into the interior space. The reading of the pot ends up being unconvincing precisely because it is essentially decontextualized.

If there is a lesson from these essays, it is that the more convincing the context for answering the question, the more convincing the answer. How do the other essays which lead off from context, rather than question, fare?

Sheila Dillon and Tim O'Shea, in chapter 1, and Elizabeth Baltes in chapter 2 effectively ask whether one can learn anything by looking at the find-spot of sculpture. Baltes shows from literary and epigraphic texts that moving statues around was a long-established practice, and then reviews various micro-contexts of statues in the Agora and the impact of the Odeion project and Augustan replanning. Dillon shows that find-spots of tombstones from the area of Athens eastern cemetery show that that cemetery commemorated children, citizens, foreigners and a slave, indicating (have scholars really believed otherwise?) that citizens were not buried apart and that richer and poorer were here buried together. O'Shea reviews the way in which the history of the redisplay of some statues, and the long-continued display of others, can be deduced from the find-spots of relevant statue, portrait heads, and statue bases. That the context of finds might tell you what was where, and that the company statues keep should be borne in mind, are important conclusions, but hardly novel.

Eleni Manakidou surveys the pottery found in cemeteries and settlements (and the occasional sanctuary) from central Macedonia in the Archaic

period, effectively asking what they used imported pottery for. The information here would have been more clearly presented if tabulated. The picture that emerges is of imported pottery being widespread in cemeteries as grave goods, but local pottery largely used as burial/ash containers. Whether the site was 'colonial' or indigenous seems to have little influence on the assemblage at coastal sites; inland sites seem largely to have imitated non-local pots rather than to have imported them.

Carmen Sanchez Fernandez, whose paper is curiously in a different section from Manakidou's, discusses the contexts in which Attic pottery is used in the Iberian Peninsula in the fourth century. This is material that is not well known, and the ways in which local pottery is used in conjunction with imported pottery are particularly fascinating. There is strong evidence for the Iberian market being very selective about the shapes it is interested in, having large vessels made especially for it, and for some pots being special commissions. There is also evidence for the trimming of the tondos of broken cups to serve as saucers (and even perhaps the trading of such items). Examining these pots in their tomb groups illuminates not only Iberian society but the nature of the Athenian pottery trade.

Context proves to do rather less when examination is limited to a single class of vessels. Stine Schierup's discussion of the import and local production of amphorae of Panathenaic shape in Southern Italy does little more than show that Panathenaics were both imported and (later) imitated.

Two papers (again in different sections) puzzle over the iconography of sculpture. Marion Meyer asks how we are to understand the display of the contest between Athena and Poseidon on the Parthenon's west pediment, and concludes that, although contemporary fifth-century sources seem not to have a single story, they are the best evidence that we have (though she resurrects certain features known only from later stories). Here is it not at all clear that contextualisation helps in more than the most basic way – we simply have too little of the sculptural evidence surviving, and the texts we have are scant and hard to use. Alice Landskron examines the imagery of the sculpture of the Heron at Trysa. Although some reference is made here to other Lycian friezes, this paper cannot be distinguished from standard discussions, like them it draws eclectically on iconographic parallels and known features of the local society to construct a case for how the monument might have been read locally.

Two papers concern pots in museum collections. Frank Hildebrandt's discussion of a group of

Apulian red-figure pots attributable to the Darius Painter acquired by the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, offers a description of the reconstructed pots and puzzles over how the pots, by a single painter, with related themes, and apparently deliberately broken in antiquity, came to be acquired. The only paper which seriously tackles what one can do with pots that have been removed from their ancient context, and given a new context within a collection, is by Sally Waite. She starts with the little-known Kent Collection of Cypriot pottery in Harrogate, and explores a number of individuals involved in collecting antiquities in the nineteenth century to make the case that understanding what is in their collections, and what we might learn from that, depends upon understanding something about the collectors themselves.

All these papers offer some new knowledge of antiquity, and all in some sense contextualise their material, but the questions asked and the techniques of analysis deployed are very familiar. They mainly reveal that shared interest in context is a very weak thread with which to tie a collection together. Ironically the papers that push context hard are the papers which are most unsatisfactory – indeed in some ways positively dangerous.

Matteo Zaccarini seeks to show that the Stoa of the Herms (or possibly only the Eion herm monument, it is never quite clear) was a fourth-century invention. He achieves this by dismissing, without discussion, what scholars have taken to be fifth-century evidence for the monument, saying simply that ‘its value and nature is rather debatable’ (p.134). There is no attempt to understand why a herm monument might have been appropriate in 470s Athens (he merely remarks, in a footnote, regarding my own suggestion thirty years ago that herms should be associated with hoplite identity, that hoplite identity is ‘hardly a demonstrable entity’ [p.140]!). The earliest fourth-century mention of the monument, in Demosthenes’ Leptines speech, is ignored, and no attempt is made to explain why fourth-century Athenians might have needed to invent the herm monument and its three inscriptions. It is certainly true that various bits of history were faked in the fourth century, but the motivation for doing so is normally easy to provide; without such an explanation, dismissing a monument without consideration of either the historical or the archaeological context, simply because it happens not to receive an indisputable early reference, is poor scholarly practice.

Equally inadequate is the attempt by Samantha Masters and Alexander Andrason to question the identification as representations of the seduction

of Helen by Paris of scenes on Athenian pottery showing an erotic encounter (signalled by the presence of Aphrodite or Eros or a similar figure) between a well-adorned woman and a man portrayed as a traveller or Oriental. Masters and Andrason believe Paris’ seduction of Helen could not be shown because adultery was so seriously frowned on in fifth-century Athens. Since they assume that to show Paris’ seduction of Helen is to approve it (!), they think that these images must ‘simply show idealized courtship and valorize beauty and romance as an ideal for marital bonds and harmony’ (p.164). The paper never illustrates a single scene, never tells us how many such scenes there are, nor their range of dates, and ignores the fact that in one example the figure of Helen is named. To allow a fantasy about Athenian morality, based on a highly selective reading of literary sources, to trump close examination of the actual evidence is to move scholarship into a post-truth era.

Helle Hochscheid’s paper on status and labour specialization in Athenian sculpture is similarly problematic from the scholarly point of view, in particular in its failure to give adequate references to the standard epigraphic corpora for the inscriptions that it quotes (for the record, the Stele of Euktitos is no. 103 in P. A. Hansen’s *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* Vol. 1 and IG ii² 11429a, and the stele of Mannes is no. 87 in *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* Vol. 1). But the real problem here is quite different. Hochscheid complains that interpretations of Athenian fifth-century sculpture have relied on ‘democracy, civic organization and the ensuing – upper-class – status concerns as explanatory principles’ and seeks instead to put sculpture into the context of ‘Art Worlds’ (referencing the sociologist Howard Becker). But citizens at Athens are *not* upper class (qualification for citizenship is birth, not wealth) and civic organization encompassed everyone (citizen and non-citizen alike). By contrast, whether one can talk of an ‘Art World’ is seriously questionable. Hochscheid herself realises that the art critics and the art dealers who are part of Becker’s ‘Art World’ did not exist in antiquity, but proceeds as if this makes no difference. Without wanting to subscribe to James Whitley’s repeated claim that ‘art’ is not an appropriate category of analysis for Greek antiquity, I find it impossible to see how the production of ‘art’ differed from the production of utilitarian items. Philo’s arsenal was designed and built in much the same way as the Parthenon; and if the Erechtheum accounts show that specialist and skilled jobs tend to be done by metics and citizens rather than slaves, this hardly requires that they were done differently because ‘art’. Hochscheid claims, on the basis of a very selective survey of the data, that sculpted stelai

were cheap, and then claims that there was a large body of specialist artists satisfying the demand created by these low prices. Various monuments are signalled as made for not very wealthy patrons. These include the stele of Euktitos, described simply as small and said to indicate that he was ‘clearly not a member of the elite’ (p.151). That is undoubtedly true, but the fact that the stele is inscribed with a verse epigram, and that the inscribed letters are deeply cut and almost monumental, suggests that this was actually a man whose commemorators were in a position to produce a striking monument. It is a monument that contrasts sharply with the monument of Mannes the Phrygian wood-cutter, whom Hochscheid proceeds to mention. Mannes too has an epigram, but one that is miswritten and unmetrical. Here was an attempt by a man’s friends to produce for one who had died in war a suitable memorial, but who could not access writers or inscribers of adequate skill – we are here beyond the limits of the work of ‘professional sculptors and the network of artists and support personnel contributing to their production’ (p.152). It is precisely by putting these items into context that we see just how far outside the normal they are, but Hochscheid fails ever to look closely enough at the examples cited or indeed at the bigger picture. The paper is built on a false dichotomy and a massively inadequate sample of material.

Unwittingly, this collection tells us a lot about context. The best papers show that a well-defined question can be definitively answered by re-establishing the appropriate context (so Wescoat and Levitan), and that thinking hard about what is found in a particular context can illuminate questions that extend beyond the understanding of that context to understanding what created the conditions in which those materials could come together in that place (so Carmen Sánchez Fernández and to some extent Eleni Manakidou and Sally Waite). But many papers show how limited can be the information derived from find context, and some show how dangerous can be assertions about context that are based on inadequate investigation of the evidence (material and textual).

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Lisa Nevett (ed.). *Theoretical approaches to the archaeology of ancient Greece: manipulating material culture*. pp. 338, b/w illustrations. 2018. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. ISBN 978-0-47213-023-8 cased \$85.

What is ‘archaeology’, and how is ‘theory’ relevant to it? We might reasonably have thought we could now answer this question coherently for students wrestling with it (or that we had at least thoroughly discussed the topic in the publications of the last four decades; I cite a relevant few, not very recent, Anglo-Saxon examples here)¹. In particular, most scholars have accepted ‘archaeology’ or ‘archaeological methodology’ (the application of a theory-informed, systematic and explicit query and interpretative framework to the recovery/analysis of a numerically and contextually representative set of data) as the most productive, balanced means of researching the material culture of the past in any quantity or diversity, where the aims are reconstructive, illuminative and interpretative, – especially when the ancient past is concerned. Yet this book, a collection of papers from a conference, throws up very basic related questions, not through direct intent but through a mixture of implied and stated definitions/approaches to both archaeology and theory in its thirteen main papers (excluding a ten-page introduction text by the editor (pp 1-15) and 3.5 pages each of response/commentary by L. Foxhall and Z. Archibald (pp 297-307). This suggests some dissociation from the current state of archaeological scholarship on the ancient past as outlined above. The papers are only very loosely tied together in purpose and effect, despite the insertion of linking subheadings as follows: ‘Disciplinary Context’, ‘Artifacts’, ‘Civic and Religious Landscapes’ and ‘Funerary Landscapes’. Perhaps as a result, the volume’s introduction and short response chapters pick out/describe papers in a somewhat desultory manner without being able to pinpoint exactly how the book contributes forcefully or as a whole to how we should think about ‘Classical Archaeology’ and its relationship to theory today. The somewhat random mix of expertise and approach may be explained by some reliance on personal connections in building contributions: a number of authors are linked by work within an existing field team or institution, including as past students of other authors. Though in some circumstances such links might give rise to a coherent and/or innovatory set of thoughts/perspectives, this is not the case here.

¹ See also Haggis 2018.