

## Archaic to classical

**John Boardman, Andrew Parkin and Sally Waite (eds) *On the fascination of objects: Greek and Etruscan art in the Shefton Collection*. pp. xii+179, 85 colour plates, 33 b/w illustrations, 23 drawings, 1 map. 2016. Oxford: Oxbow Books. ISBN 978-1-78570-007-1 e-publication; ISBN 978-1-78570-006-4 hardback £60.00.**

This beautifully produced book is a celebration of Brian Shefton's activities in collecting antiquities for the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Thirteen scholars have collaborated to produce a series of discussions of particular objects or groups of objects in the collection, and these are prefaced by a short memoir of Brian Shefton by John Prag, and a short account of the development of the collection by Antony Spawforth and Andrew Parkin. The book not only does what it says on the can (the title was in fact supplied by Brian Shefton himself), by revealing the fascination of the objects in the collection, but reveals much of the fascination of the man behind the collection. The hundreds of classical archaeologists in whom Brian took an interest will find their memories warmly revived by this book; those who never knew him will acquire at least something of the flavour of the man, or perhaps better something of his accent.

Not the least charm of this book comes from the variety of approaches that the different scholars take. Some provide bare catalogues of the artefacts about which they write—so John Boardman merely catalogues ten 'Newcastle Gems'. Others catalogue a whole class of artefact or type of iconography to provide a context for the Newcastle examples—as Alessandro Naso catalogues Etruscan bronze funnels, or François Lissarrague, on an unusual *askos* with two pairs of helmets, catalogues occurrences of isolated helmets. Some, without actually cataloguing, provide an account of a class of artefact in order to make sense of a Newcastle object, as Diana Rodríguez Pérez on an Attic plemochoe (or exaleiptron), Brian Sparkes on Attic stemless 'Castulo' cups, and Athena Tsingarida of two Attic coral-red bowls. They situate fragments in Newcastle by judicious comparisons to particular objects elsewhere that enable their provenance and date to be established, as Dyfri Williams effectively places fragments of gold jewellery in relation to better-preserved and provenanced material from Lydia. Others again exhaustively explore one particular object collected by Shefton, tracing its collecting history as well as its own particular features of form and/or iconography. Sally Waite

does this for an Attic red-figure *kalathos*, David Gill for an Attic *bolsal* once in the Nostell Priory collection. Some papers concentrate more or less exclusively on iconography, as do Susan Matheson in discussing farewell scenes on both red-figure and white-ground pots in Newcastle that can be attributed to the Achilles Painter, and Judith Barringer on the 'Shefton dolphin rider', a fragmentary marble relief that she suggests should be identified as Phalanthos, who appears riding a dolphin on Tarentine coins. By contrast Elizabeth Moignard concentrates exclusively on shape in conjuring up what is special about round boxes with lids in relation to ten examples in the Newcastle collection of diverse materials, periods and provenances. Moignard's observation that 'We hold a round box, especially a small one, in a different way from one with angles and corners and the sense that we hold a small world in our hands is very strong' wonderfully conjures up the tactile charm of these objects and the way in which shape affects, and effects, interaction.

From the volume as a whole one gets a very effective impression of the peculiar wealth of this small collection and the extraordinary capacity of Brian Shefton to spot objects of unusual interest and significance. Although Brian Shefton had an ability to persuade his university to spend rather more than they might have intended on purchases of antiquities, the collection that he built up involved rather modest expense. The whole collection is quite without showy pieces, but therein lies its value. This is not a collection that makes visitors gasp and ask how much such objects must be worth, but a collection that seduces those who spend time with it into becoming archaeologists, that is into discovering how relatively unassuming individual objects can open up a window on another world. This book is not a catalogue of the collection, but something far more valuable, a book that shows how variously the mute objects in a museum can be made to talk and the wide range of past experience which they can be made to talk about. Although no substitute for a visit to the Great North Museum in Newcastle, this recreates, rather wonderfully, the lost pleasures of conversing with, or perhaps rather being talked at by, the ever-eager and eye-twinkling Brian Shefton himself.

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**Allison Glazebrook and Barbara Tsakirgis (eds) *Houses of ill repute: the archaeology of brothels, houses, and taverns in the Greek***