

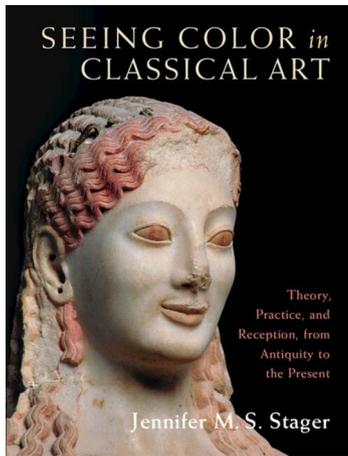
Book Review

Seeing Color in Classical Art. Theory, Practice, and Reception, from Antiquity to the Present

Stager (J.M.S.) Pp. xiv + 328, b/w & colour ill.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.
Cased, £39.99. ISBN: 978-1-316-51645-4.

Timothy Adelani

Pimlico Academy, London, UK
TimAdelani@outlook.com



Teaching around statues and art in the Classical world has changed significantly, and while the discussion of colour and pigment in art has become increasingly important, it still lacks in-depth analysis of the effect that colour has on our interpretation of art. This book does a very effective job on this and provides a helpful overview of how colour in art changes the story that an object can tell. This book provides students

and teachers with a very different perspective on colour in

Classical art because it is centred around the conclusion that art was full of colour, and the discussion stems from that point.

What is immediately noticeable about this work of scholarship is that it is written with a mixed audience in mind. There are concepts around art, trade and art theory which could be complicated for a general reader, but they are explained simply, and tied into illustrated examples which make them hugely more accessible.

This book also provides context and history around the creation and use of colour in the ancient world. By examining the pigments and dyes that were used in various pieces of Classical art, and looking at their wider context and culture, the book helps to build a much more comprehensive picture of the role that colour played in the wider society. With an examination of the sourcing and process of the pigments, and a discussion of its place within ancient economies, the book provides readers with alternative approaches to engaging with polychromy in art in the Classical world. The analysis of the importance and far-reaching nature of the trade of pigments, and how they are interlinked, is necessary for students to better understand the importance of polychromy to the ancient viewers.

Furthermore, the book is particularly engaging for students and teachers due to its use of a high number of illustrations and pictures. While the book, as expected, is based on the use of the different types of objects including sculpture, paintings, architectural sculpture and mosaics, without the inclusion of images the accessibility of the book would have been greatly reduced. In its current form, this book is an amazing teaching resource as it allows educators to effectively tie the academic discussion of the book into concrete examples. This would be particularly useful to add more depth to classes with GCSE and A level students who are looking at free-standing and architectural sculpture as part of Classical Civilisation. Furthermore, this book is accessible enough that the content can be adapted for students studying the Classical world throughout KS3.

doi: 10.1017/S2058631023000533