

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

---

1-1-1983

### Hellenistic Art and Hellenistic Style: A Problem of Definition

Brunilde S. Ridgway

*Bryn Mawr College*, [bridgway@brynmawr.edu](mailto:bridgway@brynmawr.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://repository.brynmawr.edu/arch\\_pubs](https://repository.brynmawr.edu/arch_pubs)



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

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

---

#### Citation

Ridgway, Brunilde S. 1983. Hellenistic Art and Hellenistic Style: A Problem of Definition. *American Journal of Archaeology* 87:253.

This paper is posted at Scholarship, Research, and Creative Work at Bryn Mawr College.

[https://repository.brynmawr.edu/arch\\_pubs/41](https://repository.brynmawr.edu/arch_pubs/41)

For more information, please contact [repository@brynmawr.edu](mailto:repository@brynmawr.edu).

Previous studies have concentrated on the relationship of the busts to Imperial portraits in the round, neglecting the significance of the two overarching themes equally emphasized in the design of the gem: fecundity and military victory, linked visually with the heads. An emphasis on such themes implies not simply *pietas* for the deceased members of the Imperial family and a desire to link Claudius with them, but rather a commemoration of an important military success and a celebration of renewed peace and continued prosperity within the empire.

The iconography of the linked cornucopias is used in Ptolemaic coinage to emphasize the relationship of parents to their children, and is adopted by some early Imperial coin issues with the same meaning. Together, the compositional elements indicate that the Vienna cameo shows Claudius and Messalina with their two children Britannicus and Octavia at a time of peace and prosperity within the Roman empire after the subjugation of Britain.

Obvious divinization of the figures on the Claudian gem and the implications of dynastic continuity present an aspect of Imperial propaganda discreetly absent from official public works within Rome. The chronological *termini* established by the British campaigns and the execution of Messalina serve to date this gem within narrow limits: Claudius' celebration of the 800th anniversary of Rome's founding in A.D. 47 may have been an appropriate date for the commissioning of this work.

THE SEBASTEION AT APHRODISIAS: THE EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE: *Joyce M. Reynolds*, Cambridge University

Building inscriptions from the Sebasteion, including elements from both its porticoes, both faces of its propylon and perhaps of its temple itself, as well as statue bases and sculptural reliefs, offer crucial evidence for the date and purpose of the building complex. The two local families so far known to have been involved in the construction of the Sebasteion and the strictly technical matter of the development of letter forms visible in the texts are significant elements in the dating and the evaluation of the building. They also provide opportunities to consider some aspects of the history of the building and the intention of its decorative scheme.

**Colloquium:** Recent Discoveries at Aphrodisias: The Sebasteion; see *Erim, Hueber, Outschar, Rockwell*.

EXCAVATIONS AT KHIRBET ISKANDER, 1982: *Suzanne Richard*, Drew University

The site of Khirbet Iskander, Jordan, lies on the N bank of the Wadi Wala, several km. NE of Dhiban. The excavation, sponsored by The American Schools of Oriental Research and Drew University, aimed at clarifying the archaeological picture in Palestine-Transjordan at the end of the Early Bronze Age. The results of the preliminary season of 1981 indicated that the site had the potential for provid-

ing the much-needed stratified sequence spanning the critical EB III-EB IV cultural transition. This season, work was carried out in the NW, SW and SE sectors of the mound, and a regional survey was initiated. In the SW, an expanded area of excavation revealed a continuation of the major E-W wall uncovered last year along with an associated "tower," as well as further evidence for domestic rooms on either side of this enigmatic wall. Extremely significant remains for the period in question appeared at the NW corner of the mound, where excavation revealed a 2.00 m. wide defensive wall and apparent corner tower room dating to the EB IV period. Although only further work will determine whether these structures originated in the EB III or EB IV period, they nevertheless represent the first fortifications known from the latter period. In addition, soundings in the SE uncovered the right half of a gateway along with a 2.00 m. wide perimeter wall. Pottery dates all features uncovered in 1982 to the EB IV period.

HELLENISTIC ART AND HELLENISTIC STYLE: A PROBLEM OF DEFINITION: *Brunilde S. Ridgway*, Bryn Mawr College

In recent years it has become increasingly clear that not all sculptures in Hellenistic style were necessarily created during the Hellenistic period: some might have been made under Roman patronage to supplement pre-existing monuments or to "quote" and recall earlier works. A case in point is that of the Niobids which, planned around a truly Hellenistic core (the Niobe and her daughter), were produced perhaps during the 1st c. B.C./A.C. to obtain a multi-figured group not available in Hellenistic prototypes. The Laokoon in its Flavian version, the Odyssey episodes at Sperlonga and the Farnese Bull from the Baths of Caracalla represent comparable instances. Yet the distinctions between real and pseudo-Hellenistic works are difficult to make, and the Romans (or the artists working for them) are seldom credited with the inventiveness necessary to produce such epic compositions.

The Dying Trumpeter in the Capitoline and the Ludovisi Suicidal Gaul in the Terme have long been considered faithful replicas of the bronze monument set up in Pergamon by Attalos I in commemoration of his Galatian victories. The Trumpeter may indeed reproduce the famous statue by Epigonos, but the possibility should be considered that the Ludovisi sculpture was made to match it in its Roman setting, at a much later date. The question is of particular interest at present, in view of Coarelli's recent suggestion that the two marble monuments are copies of Caesarean date whose bases were originally joined. A review of the problems inherent in such a reconstruction may help shed light on both compositions, and could allow a greater understanding of what we consider Hellenistic sculpture.

**Colloquium:** New Perspectives on Hellenistic Art; see *Bertman, Brown, Havelock, Onians, Stewart* ("Lysippos. . ."), *Thompson*.