



The Language of the Muses: The Dialogue between Roman and Greek Sculpture

Miranda Marvin

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Since the Renaissance, it has been a generally accepted thesis that almost all Roman sculptures depicting ideal figures, such as gods, personifications, and figures from myth, were copies of Greek originals. This book traces the origin of that thesis to the academic belief in the mythical perfection of now-lost Greek art, which contrasted with the reality of the “imperfection” of Roman works.

In a new take on long-held beliefs, Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s role is found to be less important than those of Giorgio Vasari and Ennio Quirino Visconti. The author argues that, contrary to the accepted wisdom of the last three hundred years, Roman sculpture had very much its own style and ideals. This synthesis of the history of the study of Roman sculpture does away with the idea that the genre of ideal works consists of mechanical copies and argues that they are, rather, creative adaptations.

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