Abstract: This paper considers four approaches to viewing and reception in relation to recent studies of Roman sculpture: historical reception as represented by Hans Robert Jauss, reception aesthetics as formulated by Wolfgang Iser, social historical studies of art, and approaches that focus on the power of images and viewers’ responses to that power. One goal is to show how different research questions involve different methods, focus on different evidence, and produce different results. Another goal is to argue that, although the historical/contextual study of Roman art has dominated the field since the 1970s and 80s, productive alternatives have also emerged.
Reception theory and Roman sculpture
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How did people in the Roman world see, understand, and respond to sculpture? And how can we know these things? This paper considers four approaches to viewing and reception and the ways in which they relate to recent studies of Roman sculpture: historical reception as represented by Hans Robert Jauss, reception aesthetics as formulated by Wolfgang Iser, social historical studies, and approaches that concentrate on the power of images and viewers’ responses to that power. In organizing the material in this way, I have three goals. First, the study of Roman sculpture is rarely explicit about its theoretical underpinnings, so it is useful to discuss some of the available approaches. Below, I stress the ways in which they entail different research questions, forms of evidence explored, methods used and results obtained. Second, a pragmatic focus on methods helps show how these abstract theories can be applied. In many cases cited below, studies of Roman sculpture do not draw explicitly on reception theory, but there are productive echoes and analogies in the ways they think about the material. Third, this paper is in part a response to R.R.R. Smith’s formulation of the contributions made by the historical and contextual turn in Roman art in the 1970s and 80s (Smith 2002). That approach continues to dominate the field, but productive alternatives have also emerged. In this paper I try to show where these various approaches come from, how they interact, and where we are now.

1. What did viewers expect to see?

It is useful to begin with two fundamental theorists of reception, Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, perhaps the best-known members of the “Constance School” (Holub 1984; Holly 2002). Scholars of literature, they shifted the interpretive focus from the text itself to how it was read and received. This idea is powerfully applicable to visual art, and to Roman sculpture: the work and the viewer together constitute what is seen. Jauss and Iser theorized reception in different ways, Jauss paying more attention to the empirical and actual conditions of reading, and Iser primarily interested in the role of the work in structuring its own reading. In this key difference, they became leading figures for, respectively, historical reception and reception aesthetics.

Jauss was committed to returning a dynamic historical dimension to the study of literature, avoiding nationalistic or essentialist approaches and anachronistic modern judgments. For Jauss, art could be transformative, having “the characteristic that it can lead men beyond the stabilized images and prejudices of their historical situation toward a new perception of the world or an anticipated reality.” (Jauss 1982: 14). In these starting premises, his work resonates strongly with the contextual and historical turn that transformed Roman art and archaeology in the 1970s and 80s (Smith 2002). Scholars now sought to understand works of Roman art not through the lens of modern aesthetic preferences, anachronistic classifications, or evolutionary schemes of art, but in relation to the world in which they were made, and to the people who made and saw them.

A key concept for Jauss was the Erwartungshorizont, the audience’s “horizon of expectations.” He defined it like this:
the objectifiable system of expectations that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance, from a pre-understanding of the genre, from the form and themes of already familiar works, and from the opposition between poetical and practical language” (Jauss 1982: 22).

Analysis could accordingly focus on the existing literary landscape and how any new work related to readers’ expectations at the time. For visual art, the key question becomes: what were viewers’ expectations in relation to a work of Roman sculpture in that historical moment? How did the new work confirm, confound or otherwise play with those expectations? Drawing on Jauss’ three-part definition, we might consider how a given work related to viewers’ “pre-understanding of the genre,” to “the form and themes of already familiar works,” and to “the opposition between poetic and practical language.” As this horizon of expectations shifted over time, so would viewers’ reception of that work.

[INSERT FIG. 1 HERE]

Generic expectations included, for example, the visual conventions of Roman portrait statuary. Viewers expected an individualized head to be combined with a generic body. That body—e.g. togate, cuirassed, nude, clothed as a respectable matron—was not expected to represent the person’s actual body but instead expressed collective social and symbolic values. The famous “Tivoli General” from the sanctuary of Hercules Victor at Tivoli (fig. 1) jars modern expectations of unity between head and body, but it worked very well in relation to ancient visual expectations. This statue and similar ones made in the Late Republican period attest to the appropriation of Greek heroic nudity for Roman representations of important men (Hallett 2005: 1-4, 102-58). Viewers also had expectations about physical setting and viewing conditions. Certain kinds of sculpture (e.g. honorific portrait statues, state monuments) were expected in public and sacred spaces and were viewed accordingly; others belonged to the funerary realm (sarcophagi) or domestic religion (statuettes of the Lares).

For Roman sculpture, “the forms and themes of already familiar works” included their iconography. Viewers must have easily recognized Hercules’ lion skin and club, Athena’s aegis, the male citizen marker of the toga, the ruling emperor’s portrait features. This familiarity extended to visual conventions of gesture, movement, and the arrangement of figures in space. Sculptures depicted high-status people gesturing and moving in restrained ways (fig. 1); vigorous efforts of the body were reserved for battling soldiers, laborers and other low-status figures (fig 4). On the Column of Trajan, viewers were probably able to recognize the emperor as the figure always slightly taller than the men around him. Repetition and formulaic imagery were crucial parts of this familiar visual landscape.

Jauss’ “opposition between poetic and practical language” is the more difficult term, but productive analogies for Roman sculpture include any special effects, as in the use of colossal or miniature size, unusual stones, or gilding. Immediately relevant to viewers’ expectations was the style chosen for the work. The classicizing arrangement of figures on the processional reliefs of the Ara Pacis Augustae attested high state ceremonial; scenes of battle or work employed other styles with consistent semantic meanings (Hölscher 1987/2004). Roman sculpture does not have to correspond in every respect with Jauss’ definition of the Erwartungshorizont for this concept to be useful; the key point is that ancient audiences viewed Roman sculpture in relation to their existing expectations, and that reception can productively be analyzed from this perspective.

Equally important is that this horizon of expectations changed over time. The same object could be perceived quite differently in a changed visual landscape. For example, veristic
portraiture was seen in one way in the late Republic; Augustus’ portraiture famously broke with those expectations (Zanker 1988: 98-100). By the late first century AD, viewers’ expectations had shifted again and were now shaped by the conventions of Julio-Claudian portraiture. In this climate, the verism employed for Vespasian’s portraits helped signal the new ruler’s distance from his notorious predecessor, Nero.

This approach tells us about what viewers knew and expected in looking at Roman sculptures. It situates analysis firmly within the visual circumstances of the time; it also provides a way to substantiate any claims we make about ancient viewing and reception. At the same time, working with viewers’ expectations depends on the existence of well-established patterns in ancient art; it will be less helpful for the study of an unusual image for which good comparanda do not exist, and may not allow for nuances specific to a single work. Another issue is that there is no real difference between ancient and modern viewers: the modern scholar can reconstruct and even participate in the visual expectations of a given time. This is very difficult to do (Jauss 1982: xi-xii) and risks erasing historical differences. A related problem is the model of a widely shared and largely uniform visual literacy, the presumption that all or most viewers’ expectations were largely similar at any given time. To some extent, this must be true. People living in cities were surrounded by images and participated in collective rituals and other mechanisms that fostered a widely shared knowledge of visual culture. But not all viewers had the same level or knowledge or responded to a given sculpture in the same way; Jauss does not help us with differentiated receptions.

2. How did Roman sculpture prestructure its own viewing?

By contrast to Jauss’ emphasis on actual audiences and their expectations, Wolfgang Iser focused much more on the work itself and the way it prestructured its own reception (Iser 1974, 1978). A crucial concept for Iser was the implied reader: “this term incorporates both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader’s actualization of this potential through the reading process” (Iser 1974: xii; see also Iser 1978: 27-38). Any work is structured in relation to an imagined reader, but the reader brings his or her own predispositions and decisions to this encounter. Reading is an active process, and so the reception of the text changes from one person to the next, as well as over time. Methodologically, the crucial question is: what part of reception does the work itself prestructure, and what part is left open for the audience’s imagination?

We often have little evidence for the actual viewers of Roman sculpture, so the possibility of understanding reception by analyzing the artworks themselves is very appealing. Wolfgang Kemp has explored most fully what Iser’s ideas mean for visual art (Kemp 1992, 1998). For any artwork, the implied viewer should refer both to the way the work prestructures its own viewing and to the viewer’s active looking, which actualizes the work’s potential even as it differs from one person to the next. Viewing thus becomes an active process of recognizing, decoding, and interpreting. An artwork can attempt to channel, structure, or otherwise try to shape how it is seen, but it cannot fully predetermine what its viewers see.

Iser describes several ways in which a work of art can prestructure its own reception. He begins from the work’s historical context and purposes, and its intended audience (Iser 1974: ; cf. Kemp 1998: 185-186). For Roman sculpture, a large and eclectic body of material, it is crucial to ask: what kind of sculpture was this, and for what purpose and audience was it made? These questions have been enormously productive for Roman art independently of Iser’s writings, illuminating, for example, Late Republican portraiture as an expression of aristocratic ideology
(Giuliani 1986), or the way that considerations of audience shaped the iconography on the coins Antony minted to pay his troops (Hölscher 1984). Sculpture in a public setting (e.g. Boschung 2002) was received very differently from sculpture seen inside a tomb in connection with a family’s grief and commemoration rituals (Zanker and Ewald 2012; Bielfeldt 2003).

An important next question for Iser is then: what does the work demand of its audience? He was particularly interested in how texts engaged their readers through direct address, shifts of perspective, narrative structure, and so on. Similarly, a work of visual art can involve the viewer through its spatial arrangement, shifts of perspective, narrative structure, or through a figure’s gestures or gaze at the viewer (Kemp 1998: 187; Riegl 1902 is an important antecedent). On the Circus Relief in the Vatican (fig. 2), perhaps from Ostia and almost certainly a funerary monument, a togate man is the largest figure in the scene and the only one to look directly out at the viewer; this suggests that he is the most important figure, the deceased and commemorated subject. We can also consider what moment in a story is depicted, and what knowledge the viewer is expected to bring (Brilliant 1984). Several Pompeian wall paintings depict two children playing and a woman standing by holding a sword; viewers had to know the story of Medea in order to see, in these calm scenes, her imminent murder of her children.

[INSERT FIG. 2 HERE]

A key contributions was Iser’s concept of “gaps”, the distances between the audience’s expectations and what actually happens in the work; these are the spaces left open that a reader must fill in from his own imagination (Iser 1974: 40; Iser 1978: 166-70). For example, a text’s ironic tone signals that the literal meaning of the words is not meant, but it does not say what the meaning should be instead; that part is left up to the reader. In this way, the text depends in crucial ways on imaginative contributions from the reader. Drawing on these ideas for Roman sculpture, we might look for “gaps” in a work’s particular emphases or duplications, what expected figures are absent or unexpected figures are present, or other discontinuities that require the reader to fill in the blank. For example, in the Circus Relief in the Vatican (fig. 2), the togate male figure and the woman next to him clasp hands in a *dextrarum iunctio*, indicating that they were married. But the woman is shown standing on a pedestal, statue-like; this discontinuity, or “gap”, suggests that she had previously died and was depicted here as a figure of commemoration.

A more difficult Iserian gap lies between this couple and the chariot-racing scene that fills the remainder of the relief. Here, the figures and perspective abruptly change. The two parts of the relief are clearly interrelated, as signaled by their careful compression into the same sculptural panel, but the image does not tell us how they are related; that is left to the viewer’s imagination. (Additional images or inscriptions may originally have provided clues, but none survive.) Iser’s concept of gaps is helpful here in two ways. First, it suggests that, by definition, there can be no single or “correct” interpretation of this relief (or any work of Roman sculpture), since reception differed to some degree from viewer to viewer. Second, it makes clear that modern scholarly viewers have to fill in the same gaps. In this case, scholars have suggested that the togate man was himself a successful charioteer, or perhaps a circus official in charge of the races. For ancient and modern receptions alike, Iser helps us see what part of viewing the relief prestructures and what portion its viewers must supply.

By contrast to Jauss’s *Erwartungshorizont*, Iser’s approach focuses on implied rather than actual viewers; its major contribution is to show how a work prestructures its own reception. I have only discussed individual works here, but this approach can be extended to multiple works at a time (Zanker 1988, Boschung 2002, Bielfeldt 2003) or to works that actively impair their
own viewing (Trimble 2007). Iser’s ideas also pose challenges for Roman art. This approach implies that a work’s prestructuring is stable over time, i.e. that we will see the same gaps, emphases or visual cross-references that ancient viewers did, but that may not be the case. And, Iser presupposes an individual male reader, a construct that belongs to Western, post-Enlightenment ideas of the autonomous individual; it is anachronistic for ancient Roman viewing situations (Zanker 1997). We still have no access to differentiated viewings, either; like Jauss, Iser insists that different audiences will have responded differently, without saying much about how to discover those differences.

The differences between Jauss and Iser help explain a tension in the current scholarship on Roman art between contextual/historical approaches on the one hand and aesthetic/interpretive ways of analyzing the material. To some extent, this boils down to the difference between historical reception and reception aesthetics, that is, whether we give interpretive priority to the surrounding historical and contextual situation or to the formal makeup of the work itself, to the evidence of actual viewers and receptions, or to a wider range of implied viewings and interpretive possibilities. Very different assumptions and methods underlie these ways of engaging with the material. This is by no means a cut and dried opposition, and most current studies of Roman sculpture examine both the work and its contextual situation. For example, no current scholarship ignores the historical or contextual circumstances; however, focusing on those alone limits our ability to understand the full visual and expressive power of Roman sculpture.

In the second half of this paper, I accordingly address two further questions. First, if reception changes from viewer to viewer, how can we analyze those differences? Second, the serene, analytical approaches seen so far do not account for being awed, enraged, or otherwise powerfully affected by viewing; how can we engage with the more multifaceted power of images? I move now to two further approaches to viewing and reception, one of them interested primarily in the social historical situations of viewers and the other focused on the power of images and how viewers engaged with and responded to that power.

3. Who was the viewer?

Social historical approaches to viewing and reception have been fundamental in recent work on Roman sculpture, as in art history more broadly (Fejér 2008, Stewart 2008). Strongly shaped by analyses of power and social relations, from Foucault to feminist theory to postcolonialism, a major theme has been the analysis of subjectivity and the ways in which different subject positions interact with visual imagery. For our purposes, the fundamental idea is that people who are differently positioned in society will see and experience images very differently; who the viewer is (socially speaking) will shape viewing and reception. In the study of Roman sculpture, this has been explored in two main directions: studies of the role of the patron and studies of different subject positions among viewers. Methods and results take shape accordingly.

The patron is a crucial figure because the work itself provides direct evidence of what at least this one viewer wanted and paid for. To put it another way, once we attribute the selection and appearance of a piece of sculpture to the person who commissioned it, we can see what the patron desired, found important, and was pleased with. It follows that other viewers also understood that work as an expression of the patron’s intentions and agency. In this view, the sculptor or image-maker is much less important, his role reduced to carrying out the wishes of the patron. So, for example, the installations of sculpture in luxurious villas tell us a great deal
about the world of cultivated *otium* that the owners wished to inhabit. The emperor was the most powerful of patrons, and so a statue like the Prima Porta Augustus or the sculptural program of the Forum of Trajan can be understood to express the ideological program and symbolism important to that ruler.

Honorable portrait statues provide strong evidence about what at least two (very privileged) viewers wanted: the patron or donor of the statue, and the person being honored. A well-known example is the portrait statue of Plancia Magna, a leading citizen of Perge on the southern coast of Asia Minor (Trimble 2011: 166-70, 185-86, 401-02). The inscribed base states that the statue was given by one of her freedmen, Marcus Plancius Pius, and it lists her honors, including the title “daughter of the city,” her civic office of demiurge, and her priesthoods of Artemis and of the imperial cult. Her statue replicates an especially popular used stock body, the so-called Large Herculaneum Woman type; this gave both patron and subject the guarantee of an authoritative cliché, a configuration of pose, gesture and clothing that expressed high status and civic values. In honorific portraits like this one, the resulting statue and inscription were presumably considered complimentary and gratifying to both the donor and the person portrayed.

Textual sources play a greater role here than in the approaches seen above because they provide the information necessary to reconstruct patrons’ social positions and preoccupations. For example, legal and historical texts explain freedpeople’s legal status and rights, including legal marriage, control over their own money and commercial ventures, and the fully free status of any children born after the manumission of the mother (Mouritsen 2011). And in fact, freedmen’s funerary monuments seem to emphasize exactly these themes (Petersen 2006). On the relief of the Servili, for example, we see portrait busts of a man and a woman at right (fig. 3); they are identified in the inscriptions as freedpeople and are depicted wearing the toga and modest female drapery of respectable citizens. At left, the filiation within the son’s name shows that he was born free. Here we gain insight into freedpeople’s self-representation, and their values and priorities.

[INSERT FIG. 3 HERE]

What about the subject position of viewers other than the patron? This is a more difficult question, and less work has been done on this aspect of viewing and reception in Roman art; John Clarke has explored it most fully (Clarke 2003). The method involves reconstructing viewing based on what we know about different viewers’ historical and social situations and is necessarily somewhat speculative. So, for example, images of work, battle or imperial conquest confronted different viewers in very different ways. A relief on the Arch of Titus depicts the great menorah from the Temple in Jerusalem, carried in triumph after Roman forces suppressed the Jewish Revolt and destroyed the Temple in 70 AD (fig. 4). This image surely resonated very differently for members of Rome’s Jewish communities than it did for Roman senators or military officers. The latter group may have related most immediately to the theme of Roman victory. For Jews, this may have been a painful reminder of the destruction of the Temple and the looting of its most sacred objects. The relief’s actual viewings and receptions were no doubt complex and varied, but the acknowledgement of fundamental differences among viewers is a crucial departure point for interpretation.

[INSERT FIG. 4 HERE]

In sum, the great advantage of the social historical approaches to viewing and reception is their attention to the range of experiences that profoundly shaped visual experience in the ancient world. These approaches tell us who these viewers were and how their social positions might have shaped their viewing. Challenges arise as well. The patron-centered approach depends on
assigning the patron control over a sculpture’s appearance, but it is unlikely that he determined everything about how a work looked, or that every aspect of a sculpture expressed a particular desire of the patron. More broadly, the risk is that viewing and reception can be made to correspond too closely to social position: a woman saw one thing, a slave saw another, and so on. Viewing was surely more variegated than this; we also do not know whether our categories of meaningful social position were the ones that mattered most for ancient viewers and viewing.

Interestingly, and by contrast to Jaussian and Iserian approaches, social historical methods highlight the great differences between ancient viewers and modern commentators; by definition, we are not in the same subject position as any ancient viewer. But this raises a new question. If viewing and reception depend on subject position, and by definition we do not share the subject position of any ancient viewer, then how can we reconstruct ancient receptions, much less verify them? One way forward may be to exploit this approach’s insights into difference and multiplicity, rather than trying to describe just one possible perspective. All this continues to unsettle the possibility that there is a single or correct interpretation of a work of sculpture. An immediate question is: “correct” for whom?

4. How were Roman sculptures seen as powerful?

This final section offers a fourth group of approaches to reception and viewing; these focus on the emotional, irrational, sensory, or physical interactions between image and viewers, people’s frame of mind in the moment of viewing, and the multifaceted power of images. A shared theme is the rejection of linguistic models for art, including semiotic analysis, that flourished in the later 20th century. These have been reshaped by what W.J.T. Mitchell has characterized as a “pictorial turn” (Mitchell 1994: 16), raising new questions about the nature and power of images, as well as the interactions of image and text, seeing and experience. Those relationships are at stake here.

David Freedberg’s work remains important as a provocative antithesis to the serene, analytical approaches seen so far. He set out instead to explore a far wider range of human responses to images (Freedberg 1989: xix). Equally startling was his cross-cultural perspective; he considered specific historical situations but was most interested in deep-seated, recurring patterns in human response: erotic and sexual responses to images, religious veneration of images treated as embodying the divine, magic and witchcraft, iconoclasm and censorship, and so on. Freedberg did not develop a theory or a set of methods we can employ in the study of Roman sculpture, but this approach has enormous implications for viewing and reception.

First, this way of thinking enlarges the scope of viewing and reception far beyond the decipherment of a work’s meaning to include all the things that images do, in relation to the many ways in which people respond to them. This can include erotic, devotional, bereaved, destructive, and other responses to Roman sculpture (Stewart 2003: 261-99), as in the organized attacks of damnatio memoriae (Varner 2004; Boschung 2002: 168-171). Second, this focus on response implicitly expands the range of objects that count as “Roman sculpture” well beyond the most impressive works and the standard corpora. The (lost) statue group of Aeneas carrying his father and leading his son by the hand, originally installed in a hemicycle of the Forum of Augustus, is important for thinking about viewing and reception, but so are its repetitions in other sizes and media, including the satirical version with animal heads and tails painted onto a wall at Stabiae. Finally, this kind of work offers new ways of engaging with ancient textual sources to understand viewing and reception.
For Roman art, Jaš Elsner has contributed perhaps the fullest exploration of different ways of viewing, suggesting both Freedberg’s commitment to powerful responses and Iser’s implied viewer. One way of viewing is associated with naturalist forms of depiction, the other with symbolic and sacred approaches to the image (Elsner 1995; Elsner 2007: 1-26). To develop these ideas, Elsner explores textual sources previously untapped for the study of art, for example, the *Tabula of Cebes*. Naturalism was not merely a visual style or way of depicting things; its viewing was interwoven with ideas about desire, fantasy, mimesis and visuality. By contrast, sacred viewing was associated with ritual and the experience of the divine, constructed, for example, by the frontality and direct gaze of an image of the deity, or by the progression through ritual and space that culminated in this visual encounter with the divine. And in fact, religion has been an especially productive area for recent work on Roman viewing, as politics and social relations were for the earlier approaches discussed above (Platt 2011).

But how do images have power over people? If some scholars have focused on the viewer’s frame of mind, others look at how images create these powerful effects. Alfred Gell’s *Art and Agency* has been the most influential anthropological study of this problem (Gell 1998). Gell’s theory hinges on the ways in which images can act as secondary agents (for people or other social actors, e.g. the gods), and on the ways in which viewers abduct (or infer) that agency. In this sense, ancient viewers abducted the agency of the emperor and the Roman army from the image of the menorah on the Arch of Titus (fig. 4). Gell further describes the ways in which artworks and other objects can extend and distribute social agency, as in the case of Pol Pot’s mine-laying soldiers in Cambodia. For Roman sculpture, this distributed agency is a helpful way to think, for example, about the extraordinary proliferation around the Empire of portraits of the emperor.

Gell is perhaps most useful in insisting that we be explicit about the mechanisms of agency and abduction we are inferring for an image, and in providing a clear way to articulate and diagram those (Osborne and Tanner 2007). Using a very few conceptual building blocks (prototype, artist, index, recipient), Gell is able to show that the abduction of agency can work in multiple directions and at multiple levels, depending on who or what is thought to be acting on whom or what. For example, in sorcery—as in *damnatio memoriae*—the index (or artwork) is thought to act on its own prototype. That is, attacking the representation of a person is thought to cause harm to that person. But the reverse happens as well (as do many other permutations). In the case of an emperor’s portrait statue, which can offer asylum or guarantee an oath (Boschung 2002: 168-171), it is the prototype—the emperor himself—who is treated as acting directly on the image and on viewers.

These more broadly aesthetic and anthropological approaches are still relatively new for the study of Roman sculpture, but they offer stimulating challenges to the historical/contextual approach that has dominated the field since the 1980s. The specific context and formal structure of the work remain essential, but interpretive lines open up more widely, including much more complex interactions of image and viewer, and image and text. These approaches also offer questions, methods and outcomes that are different from those of the strictly historical/contextual approach, and for this reason are probably best evaluated not by the latter criteria but by how fully the material opens up in response, and how much new insight we gain into the complex interactions of Roman sculptures and their viewers.

5. Conclusions
I began by posing a question: how did people in the Roman world see, understand, interact with, and respond to Roman sculptures? In answer, I have reviewed four different approaches to viewing and reception: Jauss’s concept of a horizon of expectations, Iser’s analysis of how a work prestructures its own reception, social historical analyses of patrons and other viewers, and, finally, a group of ideas linked by their interest in the power of images and the viewers’ frame of mind. In each case, I tried to make clear how research questions, methods, and outcomes differ, and to consider some advantages and problems. To help bridge the gap between abstract theories and pragmatic applications, I described some points of contact between these ideas and recent work on Roman sculpture. This paper has also responded to R.R.R. Smith’s essay on the contextual and historical turn in Roman art that emerged in the 1970s (Smith 2002). Smith eloquently describes its goals, methods, and enormously productive results, but he also points to what the contextual/historical approach has been less able to do: engage with a fuller range of visual and expressive aspects in ancient art and its receptions (Smith 2002: 99 and 102). I have argued here that powerful alternatives are in fact available and already in play.

This paper’s overview has necessarily been selective, both in the approaches discussed and the scholarship on Roman sculpture cited. For example, there are other forms of historical reception that differ in important ways from Jauss’s approach (Kem 1998: 181-83). The fundamental role of the body, explored in theories of perception and embodiment, has not been discussed here. And, the role of modern scholarly viewing and reception remains an open and complex issue. All theories of reception insist on the central relevance of modern receptions; modern eyes are implicated in any reconstruction of ancient viewing. A starting point is to take into account the ways in which modern receptions produce an ever-changing corpus of “Roman sculpture” in the first place, shaped and reshaped by new discoveries, revised interpretations, and shifting priorities about what is considered important, revealing, and worth talking about. The changing modern scholarly receptions of the Apollo Belvedere, for example, vividly demonstrate how a work once seen as centrally representative of classical sculpture then lost that status quite dramatically.

Emphasizing these different starting points, methods and kinds of results does not mean we can only work within a single approach to viewing and reception. There is a great deal of overlap in these various ways of thinking, including recurring themes and shared challenges. The study of viewing and reception is in part a cumulative enterprise; even in the newest approaches, iconography remains fundamental; the works themselves continue to prestructure what is seen and what can be said about it; the social, historical and physical circumstances must be taken into account. In short, the outlook is positive. The study of viewing and reception in Roman sculpture currently includes a rich mix of existing frameworks and open directions for research, rigorous methods together with new possibilities for combining and developing them.

References


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Figure 1. The “Tivoli General.” Portrait of a man in heroic nudity from the sanctuary of Hercules Victor at Tivoli. Late 2nd or early 1st century BC. Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome. (Photo to be ordered from Arachne: D-DAI-ROM-32.412)
Figure 2. Relief, probably funerary, depicting chariot racing. Perhaps from Ostia. Early 2nd century AD. Musei Vaticani: Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican City. (Photo to be ordered from Arachne: 2208-02)

Figure 3. Funerary relief of the Servilii. From Rome. Early Augustan. Musei Vaticani: Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican City. (Photo to be ordered from Arachne: FA-S5722-01)
Figure 4. Relief on the Arch of Titus depicting the spoils from the Temple at Jerusalem carried in triumph. After the death of Titus in 81 AD. Arch of Titus, Rome. (Photo to be ordered from Arachne: D-DAI-ROM-79.2494)