



Greek Vase-Painting and the Origins of Visual Humour

By Alexandre G. Mitchell

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This book is a comprehensive study of visual humour in ancient Greece, with special emphasis on works created in Athens and Boeotia. Alexandre Mitchell brings an interdisciplinary approach to this topic, combining theories and methods of art history, archaeology, and classics with the anthropology of humour, and thereby establishing new ways of looking at art and visual humour in particular. Understanding what visual humour was to the ancients and how it functioned as a tool of social cohesion is only one facet of this study. Mitchell also focuses on the social truths that his study of humour unveils: democracy and freedom of expression, politics and religion, Greek vases and trends in fashion, market-driven production, proper and improper behaviour, popular versus elite culture, carnival in situ, and the place of women, foreigners, workers, and labourers within the Greek city. Richly illustrated with more than 140 drawings and photographs, as well as with analytical tables of comic representations according to different themes, painters, and techniques, this study amply documents the comic representations that formed an important part of ancient Greek visual language from the 6th through 4th centuries BC.

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Review

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Review of the hardback: 'Caricature, parody, overt sexual imagery, drunkenness, gender stereotyping, and the deconstruction of myths are investigated, categorized, and interpreted with exemplary thoroughness and psychological subtlety.' Columbia University: Choice Review

Review of the hardback: 'This broad survey of scenes of visual humor will serve as a valuable starting point for further research. The extensive lists and citations will make the book an aid for further work on humor and should encourage more synthesis and refinement of theoretical approaches to visual humor.' American Journal of Archaeology

About the Author

A scholar of Greek art and archaeology, Dr Alexandre Mitchell is an Honorary Research Associate at the Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford.

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