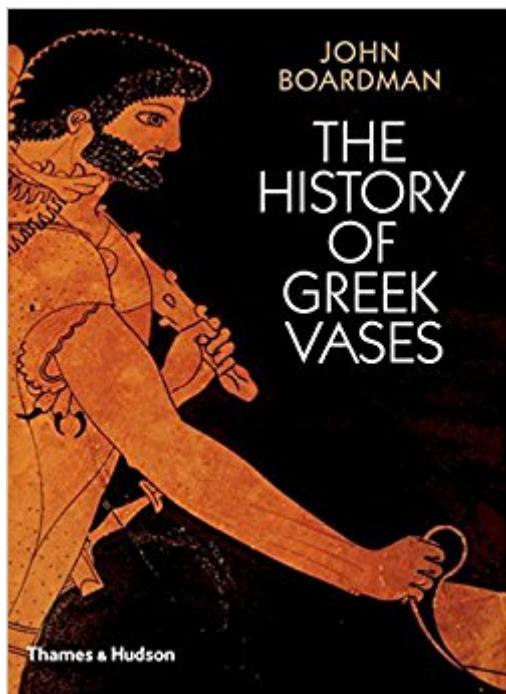


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# The History Of Greek Vases



## Synopsis

"Boardman gets down to the nitty-gritty of how and why potters created and decorated the vases, how their artistic quality developed and their influence spread." *Publishers Weekly* Greek pottery has long fascinated scholars and historians of art. It provides a continuous commentary on all other Greek arts, even sculpture, and the scenes figured on the vases can prove to be as subtle and informative as the great works of Greek literature. In no other art of antiquity do we come closer to the visual experience of the ancient Greeks, or are we able to observe so clearly their views on life, myth, and even politics. John Boardman has demonstrated the stylistic history of Greek vases in other Thames & Hudson titles; as he writes, the subject "is a central one to classical archaeology and art, and dare not be ignored by students of any other ancient medium, or indeed of any other classical discipline." Here Boardman sketches that history but goes on to explore many other matters that make the study so fruitful. He describes the processes of identifying artists, the methods of making and decorating the vases, the life of the potters' quarter in Greek towns, and the way in which the wares were traded far beyond the borders of the Greek world. Boardman shows how Greek artists exercised a style of narrative in art that was long influential in the West, and how their pictures reflected not simply on storytelling but also on the politics and social order of the day.

358 illustrations

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## Customer Reviews

Sir John Boardman author of Greek Art, Athenian Black Figure Vases and Early Greek Vase Painting is Mr. Greek Vases, and his masterful and classy explications of what might in other hands

seem dry and dusty archeological material are a joy to read. Here Boardman gets down to the nitty-gritty of how and why potters created and decorated the vases, how their artistic quality developed and their influence spread. "The raw material could not be commoner or cheaper," he points out, yet Greek vases still astonish with their ornate elegance. Perhaps most illuminating here, along with the 358 clear and well-placed b&w photo illustrations, are short chapters devoted to aspects of painting and to techniques used to create the vases throwing different pieces on the potter's wheel and then joining them later, as opposed to trying to create them all of a piece. Tricks for studying vases are also included: one amusing example takes note of a vase that can be roughly dated because the names of its young lad models, some of whom grew up to be well-known citizens, are listed on it. ("They were only of interest to their aged fondlers while they were still boys," notes Boardman.) A wise scholar, Boardman concludes with remarks on common sense, itself everywhere evident in this book: "It remains essential in the formulation and execution of any academic exercise and is itself largely the product of experience, though we should take nothing for granted." No one even vaguely interested in ancient art will take this distillation of more than 50 years of study and scholarship for granted. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

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The study of Greek vases is ubiquitous, with new volumes published every year. Lissarrague (l'Ecole des Haute Etudes en Sciences Sociales), who specializes in Attic imagery, here focuses on the meaning behind the images depicted on vases, explaining his work as "a miscellany, an anthology, a bouquet of images." The excellent full-color photographs are crisp in detail and are the main reason to purchase this title. Lissarrague has published "many collective works" and authored *The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet*. Boardman (emeritus, Oxford), on the other hand, has a virtual lock on the record for most books published on Greek vases, having written four of the five titles on "painted pottery" in the Thames & Hudson "World of Art" series. One of the top scholars in his field, he is also blessed with a talent for writing cogently. He tackles the large view of the subject "to provide a history of the craft that goes beyond the physical appearance of the vessels," explaining what might "be taken for granted or ignored." His illustrations are nowhere near as detailed or flashy as those in Lissarrague's book, but they sufficiently illustrate his comments. Lissarrague's book is recommended where scholars need topnotch illustrations of Greek vases; Boardman's is necessary for any library hoping to maintain a high-quality classical studies or art collection. Mary Morgan Smith, Northland P.L., Pittsburgh Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I wish I had known this book had all the pictures in black and white. What would you say of a book on the old masters of painting in black and white? Do I need to say more? or color doesn't matter in greek vases? I read a few pages and closed the book.... for ever!

Boardman presents an excellent overview of current thinking on the development and significance of ancient Greek pottery. While the black and white photography seems to have bothered other reviewers, in a work of this kind the quantity and quality (= resolution) of the illustrations is more important than the color. Greek black- and red-figure vase painting is primarily the art of line drawing. With the exception of vases executed with special techniques such as added red or white (for which readers are directed to the excellent book— *The Colors of Clay: Special Techniques in Athenian Vases*), including full color illustrations would have meant little more than changing the pictures from black-and-white to black-and-orange. Readers can rest assured that Boardman's reputation as a leader in the field is well-deserved. If you are looking for a good, up-to-date introduction to the scholarship of Greek vase painting, this is the book to buy.

This book is a nicely done scholarly work by Sir Boardman. It discusses the chronological development of the painting designs on Greek pottery with many examples pictured from each of the several delineated earliest time periods. There are numerous photographs (over 500) of various pottery items from museums around the world. They show the evolution from simple concentric circular and zigzag designs to very simplistic animal and human shapes to more realistic detail of humans and animals. The photographs show fine details, but are in black and white. The main emphasis in the book is on the painted designs and their time evolution. Thus, I did not find the lack of color in the photos that disturbing. The book is about far more than just vases and includes many plates, bowls, tankards, jugs, etc. I am not a student of Greek history or art, but found the book to be very readable and was interested in the history and many of the examples shown. Many years ago while touring in Greece I bought a copy of an early Greek lidded bowl, which I have always admired, and thus became interested in learning more about it. This book was definitely helpful.

I was disappointed with this book. I read it, because I thought it would better help me understand the development of Greek pottery. What I found instead, was a torrent of non-essential information presented in an incoherent manner. The book is divided into 10 chapters, the first chapter is devoted to a history of Greek vases and is more than one third of the book! There are no sections or

headings to better organize the material, only one huge chapter full of names and illustrations. While some information is given to allow the reader to understand the progress from one style and period to another, this generally fails to be addressed in depth or in a satisfactory manner. There is very little information on the actual aesthetics of Greek vases. Boardman chooses to focus on other things instead. Furthermore, I feel that the author's ideas about Greek pottery, its development, themes and technique are a bit superficial. Somehow, Boardman, despite his scholarship, fails to see the bigger picture. While I appreciate the tons of information and research that went into this book, I needed something more, something that would address the essentials of Greek pottery (its logic, philosophy, aesthetic development.) Unfortunately, I didn't find it in this book, which is geared more towards archaeologists, than historians of art, artists or the general public.

Though this adds to a field which has been dealt with before, the book presents a fresh and insightful viewpoint. It will be valuable to all students of Greek history and chronology, and modern "pot throwers" everywhere.

Its a very good book, well documented. The only issue that is was important to improve, is to change at least some photos from Black and White to Color. Art documentation demands many times to see directly the pieces colors

The reviews of Greek Vases on complain justifiably of the lack of color photographs, which are understandably needed for aesthetic evaluation, a critique also made of the more recent and better balanced book Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty by Andrew Lear and Eva Cantarella, which also neglected to discuss metal ware. The reviewers to date of Greek Vases miss the main point, however, that despite the title, Boardman, the doyen of Greek vase studies now over 80, discussed only ceramics, which were actually upstaged after 480 B.C. by silverware at symposia as I have shown, though his arch critic Vickers, the curator of antiquities at the Ashmolean, who Boardman is said to have treated shabbily, falsely asserted that the Greek elite had always used precious metals at symposia. Carried away by his homosexual mentor, Sir. John Beazley, inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, Boardman, now also Sir John, equates the vase painters with Michaelangelo and Raphael, although not a single one of them is ever even mentioned in any surviving Greek or Latin document. Furthermore, against all evidence, he asserts that these "pots," as Vickers dubs them, constituted an important economic export for Athens, helping to balance the payments for Athenian imports inspite of Vickers' proof that they cost very little indeed.

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