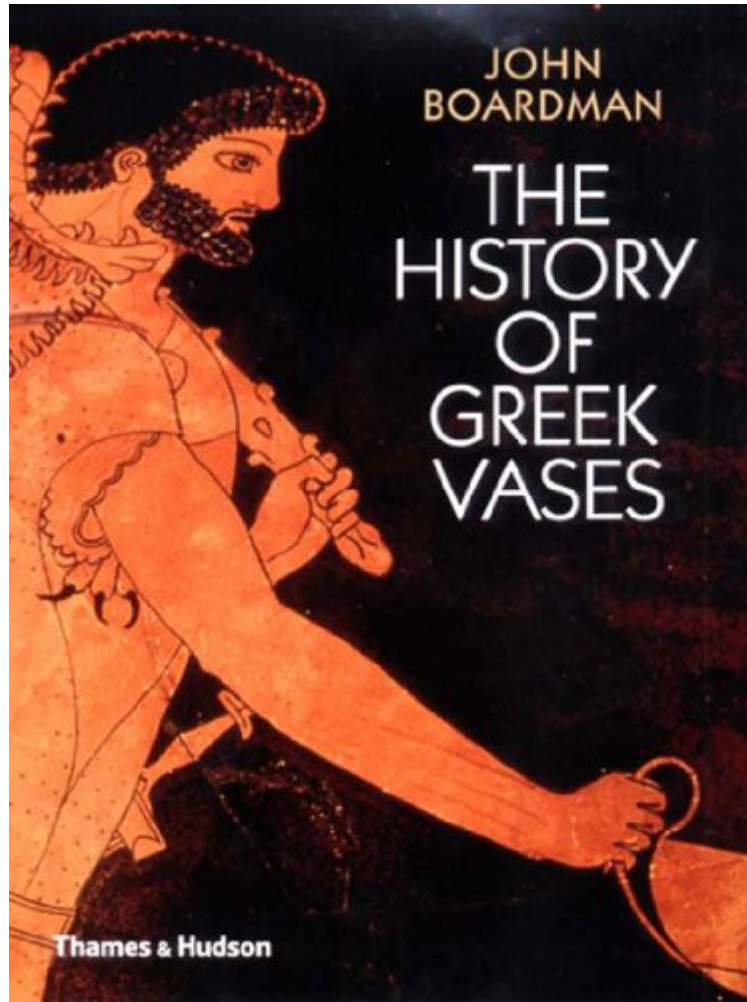


## The History of Greek Vases

*John Boardman*

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**John Boardman : The History of Greek Vases** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The History of Greek Vases:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. From a student of classical archaeology By Rachel McCleery 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. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Nice scholarly work By ehale@mst.edu 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. 9 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Dry information presented in an incoherent manner By Amadeus 888I 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.

In this volume, Boardman examines the functions of vases in ancient Greek life and culture, and as messengers of style and subject. He relates the processes of identifying the artists themselves, their methods of manufacture and decoration, the artists' life and conduct in the potters' quarter in Greek towns, and the ways in which their wares were traded beyond the borders of the Greek world, from Morocco to Persia, from Russia to the Sudan. Boardman demonstrates that the scenes figured on the vases reflected not simply on story-telling, but on the politics and social order of the day; moreover, they exercised a style of narrative in art that was to resonate throughout Western culture for centuries to come.

From Publishers Weekly 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 bw 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. From *Library Journal* 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. About the Author Sir John Boardman is known and respected the world over as an outstanding authority on classical archaeology and art. His prodigious output of books includes some thirty titles, ranging from *The Cretan Collection* in Oxford (1961) to studies of Greek pottery and sculpture. He has received numerous honours, including a knighthood in 1989 and honorary doctorates from the University of Athens and the Sorbonne.