

The Silent Rhetoric of the Body: A History of Monumental Sculpture and Commemorative Art in England, 1720-1770/ Matthew Craske.--New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, March 2008.--256 p.: ill.—ISBN: 978-0-300-13541 (cl., alk. paper): \$75.00.



Matthew Craske has written extensively on eighteenth-century British sculpture, and in this book he examines the stylistic and cultural shifts in commissions of funereal monuments over a fifty-year span. He illuminates three aspects on this subject: the shift in the representation of death in portraits from the Stuart period into the eighteenth century; the economic and social environment and the work of the predominant sculptors; and the patrons' intentions behind these commissions.

He devotes most of the book, the last seven chapters, to the patronage of these works in an effort to correct what he sees is a neglected viewpoint in art history, that of the demand aspect of art. Rather, he concentrates on these works and their "function, meaning and significance," instead of the recent tendency to locate eighteenth-century art as instantiations of the beginning of modernism. This approach provokes thought on a genre of art not frequently written about, and Craske, who points out other significant texts on the methodology of eighteenth-century art history and more specifically, Bindman and Baker's *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth-Century Monument: Sculpture as Theatre*

(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1995), admits that it is a period dominated by William Hogarth. In opposition to criticism that addresses the public comment of and participation in this century's art, he very adequately brings out the private expressions of these monuments. But, wanting to play down the supply element, he shies away from longer expositions on the sculptors Roubiliac, Michael Rysbrack, Henry Cheere, and others. However, he makes very good use, as witness to the patronage of these monuments, the specifications in wills and other documents to explain the intentions of legitimacy of lineage and the sentiments toward the deceased.

This scholarly study provides the reader with numerous black-and-white images of the monuments that largely reveal the aesthetics that compel such interest in them. Craske leaves his many comments as endnotes and does not allow them to distract from his argument. He also includes a long bibliography.

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