
The aim of this work is to follow the influence of the classical Greco-Roman world on western civilization and on other cultural traditions. This is a timely publication, the authors believe, because there is no longer the pervasive knowledge of Greek and Latin language, history, and art which once enabled nonspecialists to identify easily the many traces of antiquity found in the post-classical world. One goal of the publication is to be a source of this information for the general reader. The other is to present students and researchers with the latest scholarship on these topics, at a time when professional study of the ancient world and the reception of classical tradition are on the rise.

This single volume is in an encyclopedia format with 563 entries by 339 scholars. Each article is followed by bibliographical references. A list of the topics included directly precedes the articles themselves. The list of contributors and the index are placed at the end. There are 165 colored images grouped in three sections within the text. Each image has a title and extended label discussing its importance and influence. Image credits are placed at the end of each section. Printed on glossy paper, the quality of the photographs is very good. The book is excellent in both design and production. It is easy to use and sturdily bound.

The scope is broad, covering art, architecture, history, politics, religion, science, and public and private life. There is no attempt to be comprehensive; that would not be possible. Instead the authors have chosen to include a “large but limited number of paradigmatic topics.” Articles range from a single column to ten pages in length. Topics are discussed from their earliest appearance in antiquity to their occurrence and influence in the present day. The editors, themselves first-rate scholars and teachers, have enlisted scholars who are at the top of their fields to write the articles.

Coverage of topics related to art is excellent and includes individual works, materials, ancient cities and archaeological sites, art movements, and artists. A few examples are: “Apollo Belvedere,” “porphyry,” “Baalbek,” “Neoclassicism,” and “Karl Friedrich Schinkel.” In addition there are entries on broader topics such as “aesthetics” and “reception of ancient portraits,” and on individuals including Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Aby Warburg.

Another reference work, Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Classical Tradition may be mentioned in comparison (Series ISBN: 9789004142213). Published in five volumes plus supplements from 2006, it is truly an encyclopedic work, without the ease of use and manageable content of The Classical Tradition. At an average cost of $322 per volume it is also vastly more expensive. Although similarly titled, A Companion to the
Classical Tradition in the Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World series (ISBN: 9781444334166) is not comparable to the work reviewed here. First published in 2007, this is a series of essays studying the impact of classical antiquity on selected fields of study. The topics are limited and the focus is on how they can be viewed through the lens of reception theory.

The Classical Tradition is a valuable and effectively unique work. The level of its scholarship is very high, as is the quality of its production. It would be an excellent addition to the reference collections of academic, museum, and specialist art libraries. The depth of its research, clarity of the writing, and ease of use make it appropriate for undergraduates and graduate students, faculty, curators, and non specialists alike.

Alison Dickey, alison.dickey@gmail.com