



# The Artists of the Ara Pacis: The Process of Hellenization in Roman Relief Sculpture (Studies in the History of Greece and Rome)

By Diane Atnally Conlin

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The Ara Pacis Augustae, or Altar of Augustan Peace, was built to commemorate the return to Rome of the emperor Augustus and his general Agrippa, who had been away for many years on military campaigns. Dedicated in 9 B.C., the monument consists of an altar and surrounding wall, both decorated with a series of processional friezes. Art historians and archaeologists have made the Ara Pacis one of the best-known, most-studied monuments of Augustan Rome, but Diane Conlin's reassessment of the artistic traditions in which its sculptors worked makes a groundbreaking contribution to this scholarship. Illustrated with over 250 photographs, Conlin's innovative analysis demonstrates that the carvers of the monument's large processional friezes were not Greek masters, as previously assumed, but Italian-trained sculptors influenced by both native and Hellenic stonecarving practices. Her systematic examination of the physical evidence left by the sculptors themselves--the traces of tool marks, the carving of specific details, the compositional formulas of the friezes--also incorporates an informed understanding of the historical context in which these artists worked.

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## **Editorial Review**

From Library Journal

Some books are works of love, some are paeans to minutiae. Conlin, a fellow of the American Academy in Rome, gives us both in a very detailed analysis of the long procession friezes of the Ara Pacis and its sculptors, traditions, and style. The altar was commissioned by the Roman Senate to commemorate Augustus Caesar's return from three years of campaigning in Spain and Gaul that established the Pax Augustus. Modern scholarship generally concludes that the artists must have been unknown Greek masters. Conlin documents minute tool marks and aesthetic preferences, and she believes that urban Roman artisans created the altar. The 250 black-and-white photographs provide the opportunity to study the friezes in a detail rarely available to anyone who is not actually crawling over the piece with a magnifying glass. This unique source, detailed and exhaustive, is recommended for large collections on archaeology or classical art. Mary Morgan Smith, Northland P.L., Pittsburgh

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Review

The quality of Conlin's observations is outstanding, and much will be of great assistance to students of [Roman] stone-carving. "Times Literary Supplement"

Review

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This lavishly illustrated study represents an important contribution to our understanding of the production of Roman sculpture. "American Journal of Archaeology"

[This book] will inspire others to take a second look at other Hellenizing sculptures, and actually demonstrates what has only before been assumed.--*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*

[Conlin] provides an historiographic context for the Ara Pacis and allows us to see what kinds of artists were responsible for carving it. Nothing like this has been attempted before, and the book constitutes a major advance in the study of ancient sculpture. The photographic documentation is invaluable: most of the shots have never been published before, and the reader feels as if he/she is seeing a familiar monument for the first time.--C. Brian Rose, University of Cincinnati

A meticulous analysis of the sculpting of Rome's Ara Pacis Augustae. . . . Essential reading for students of Roman art and sculpture of any period.--*History: Reviews of New Books*

Conlin repeatedly demonstrates how a fresh approach can tease new meanings from even an exhaustively studied monument. . . . An advocate of 'close looking,' Conlin will inspire students to mine the surviving visual evidence for a deeper understanding of antiquity.--*Classical World*

An important and intelligent contribution to our knowledge about the Ara Pacis and the practice of Roman sculptors in general. . . . [Conlin] has taken a much needed closer look at an artistic hallmark of the Augustan age and initiated us into one of its basic characteristics.--*Classical Journal*

Conlin's exceptionally observant eye looks at the hardest of facts, the material traces of sculptural facture, in order to infer the artistic pedigree and aims of the sculptors who helped found the significant Imperial genres of monumental architectural relief. Even if their names are permanently irrecoverable, in Conlin's work those gifted makers gain for the first time a solidly reconstructed cultural identity: Italians, who consciously strove to fuse inherited Republican design traditions with artisanal practices selected from the Greek East.--Ann Kuttner, University of Pennsylvania

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