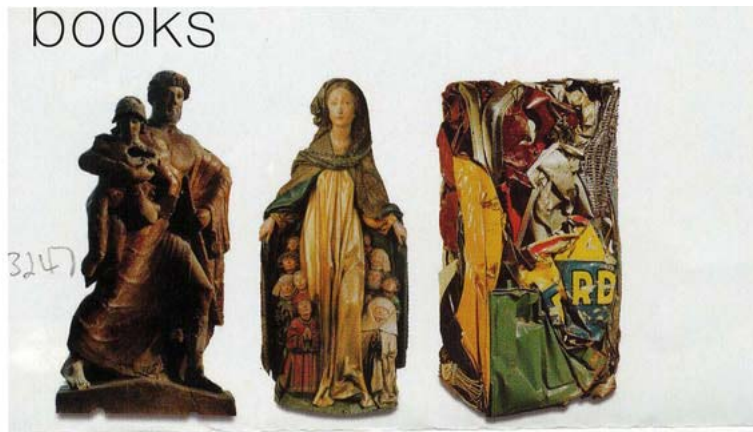


## BOOKS



**SCULPTURE: FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT DAY** (eds Georges Duby and Jean-Luc Daval; Taschen, rrp £14.99) Where art publishing is concerned, sculpture is a second-class citizen. With full-colour reproduction now being the norm rather than the exception, publishers believe that readers prefer glossy books on painting or photography rather than on sculpture, much of which is monochrome. It is also far more costly to acquire a good photograph of a sculpture, because of the greater complexity of shooting three-dimensional artworks successfully. That said, there's no doubting the popularity of 'live' encounters with sculpture. The British Museum receives more visitors than the National Gallery, and contemporary sculpture (such as the 'fourth plinth' project in Trafalgar Square) is rarely out of the news.

The dearth of books on the subject makes the publication of *Sculpture* all the more welcome. It would be well worth having for the images alone, being the only book I know which offers an extensive anthology of images of all periods of Western sculpture – and at a budget price. Not only famous masterpieces are illustrated. There are plenty of surprises too, be it a Greek terracotta sculpture, a Baroque garden sculpture – or a Roman bust of an emperor photographed from behind. Sections are based on regions (i.e. 'The Art of the Etruscans'), periods ('The Adventure of Modern Sculpture') or styles ('Rococo'), and each one features a substantial text usually written by a specialist.

There is, however, a price to pay for the budget cost. This is a repackaged edition of a four-volume book first published in 1986 in French by Skira, and only the text on contemporary art has been updated – and then only up to the early 1990s. In many cases this does not matter much, as the emphasis is very much on being accessible and informative. But some sections, like those on the Renaissance and Baroque, where there has been a great deal of recent research, have a mid-20th-century, 'period' feel.

The book has not been fine-tuned either. Comprehension is not helped by the fact that illustrations are neither numbered nor keyed into the text, so we often search in vain for an image of something that is discussed. On many occasions, recent exhibitions and the opinions of other art historians are referred to, but there are no endnotes or bibliography, so it is impossible to follow anything up. Indeed, there is not even any indication of who the authors are, despite many of them being very eminent. Still, like a headless and limbless Greek torso, this book more than makes up for its imperfections ■ JAMES HALL is the author of 'Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body' (Pimlico) ▷

To order *Sculpture* for £13.50 (plus £4.50 UK p&p), ring the World of Interiors Bookshop on 0870 727 4147