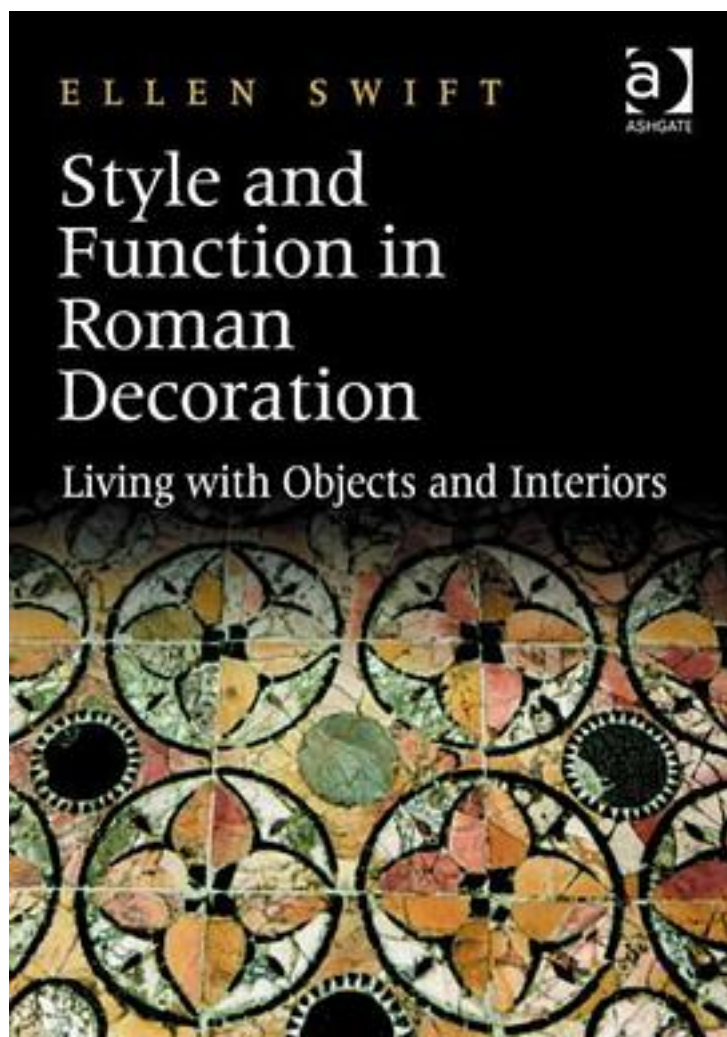


Style and Function in Roman Decoration



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This important book puts forward a new interpretation of Roman decorative art,

focusing on the function of decoration in the social context. It examines the three principal areas of social display and conspicuous consumption in the Roman world: social space, entertainment, and dress, and discusses the significance of the decoration of objects and interiors within these contexts, drawing examples from both Rome and its environs, and the Western provinces, from the early Imperial period to Late Antiquity. Focusing on specific examples, including mosaics and other interior decor, silver plate, glass and pottery vessels, and jewellery and other dress accessories, Swift demonstrates the importance of decoration in creating and maintaining social networks and identities and fostering appropriate social behaviour, and its role in perpetuating social convention and social norms. It is argued that our understanding of stylistic change and the relationship between this and the wider social context in the art of the Roman period is greatly enhanced by an initial focus on the particular social relationships fostered by decorated objects and spaces. The book demonstrates that an examination of so-called 'minor art' is fundamental in any understanding of the relationship between art and its social context, and aims to reinvigorate debate on the value of decoration and ornament in the Roman period and beyond.

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