

Approach, Audience, and Interaction at Hellenistic Didyma

It has long been the consensus that supplicants did not enter the Greek temples of antiquity, but rather that the non-priestly classes performed all ritual that pertained to them out of doors. This widely accepted belief has prevented scholars from considering alternate interactions between ancient worshipers and sacred temple architecture. In particular, it has limited critical analysis of the direct effect of architecture on the viewer. The Hellenistic temple of Apollo at Didyma is a site that would especially benefit from such analysis. Previous scholarship has focused on the individual components of its architectural space, but failed to interpret the temple's effect as a whole. This paper examines the relationship between the Hellenistic architecture at Didyma and the reception and use of the temple's space during this period, arguing that people who wished to consult the oracle did indeed enter the *cella* of this particular temple. I support this claim using theories of reception posited by Ernst Gombrich in his seminal work *Art and Illusion* and David Freedberg in *The Power of Images*, as well as by a systematic examination of the temple's architecture and each stage of pilgrimage undertaken by ancient visitors to the site. I argue that at Didyma, the temple as well as the surrounding architectural and sculptural elements create a spectacle which establish a defined process of approach, and engage the individual worshiper, priming them for a religious experience upon arriving at the shrine. While previous scholars have dealt with these subjects only in terms of archaeology or architectural style, no one has analyzed the combined effect of the performative elements of the process of approach. When conceived in this way, they suggest an alternate agency for temple architecture; my analysis suggests that temple architecture during this period may in fact be active and immersive, not merely visually impressive and inaccessible. Although

the temple at Didyma provides a singular example, evaluation of Hellenistic temple architecture based on theories of reception opens a dialogue for reinterpretations of the use of sacred space during this period of antiquity, and this research establishes a foundation for future inquiry into the precise function and use of Greek sanctuaries.