

28th Annual Ancient History Day

Saturday 18 March 2023

Abel Smith Lecture Theatre

ART AND POLITICS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Program

9.00—9.10am	Welcome by Dr Janette McWilliam , Classics and Ancient History Discipline Convenor, who will introduce the Head of the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry, Professor Lisa Featherstone , and invite her to open the event. Chair, Associate Professor Dorothy Watts AM will outline the day's proceedings, as well as housekeeping including emergency exits.
9.10—10am	<i>Overcoming and Erasure: Responses to Crisis in Egyptian Royal Art</i> Dr Rebecca Clifton
10—10.50am	<i>Athens, Empire and Art</i> Professor Alastair Blanshard
10.50—11.20am	MORNING TEA (30 mins)
11.20am—12.10pm	<i>The Enigmatic Emperor? A Quantitative Reassessment of Hadrian's Imperial Coinage</i> Dr Charlotte Mann
12.10—1.00pm	<i>The Power of Women and Children in the Political Imagery of Imperial Rome</i> Dr Janette McWilliam
1.00—2.15pm	LUNCH (1 hr 15 mins) The RD Milns Antiquities Museum will be open during the lunch period.
2.15—3.05pm	<i>Sculpture and Politics in the Transformation of the Roman Republic</i> Associate Professor Tom Stevenson
3.05—3.55pm	<i>From Governors and Gods to Icons and Doorsteps: Politics and Religion in Portrait Art of Late Antiquity</i> Dr Amelia Brown
3.55—4pm	Vote of thanks to all speakers and participants Dr Paul Eliadis AM, President of the Friends of Antiquity
4pm	Close

Overcoming and Erasure: Responses to Crisis in Egyptian Royal Art

Dr Rebecca Clifton (University of Melbourne)

To its predominantly illiterate audience, as to observers today, Egyptian royal art communicated the absolute power of the pharaoh and the stability of the land she governed. This served both propagandistic and apotropaic purposes. Yet Egyptian history is riddled with moments of remarkable crisis, both personal and political, which needed to be addressed in a culturally safe manner. This paper examines responses to crisis in Egyptian royal art, predominantly of the New Kingdom, including both consistent strategies used to ameliorate crisis and unusual divergences from these patterns.

Athens, Empire and Art

Professor Alastair Blanshard

Athens was a city of images. It was impossible to escape them. Its public buildings were decorated with paintings and sculptures (many of them highly coloured). Inside their homes, Athenians ate off dishes and drank out of pottery vessels that were covered with scenes from myth and daily life. In this talk, I look at the role of images in the political life of the city. I examine how this great mass of imagery was used to convey important ideological messages both about the Athenian empire (its history and aspirations), and also about how to be a good democratic citizen.

The Enigmatic Emperor? A Quantitative Reassessment of Hadrian's Imperial Coinage

Dr Charlotte Mann (The British School at Rome)

Hadrian has bewildered modern historians and their ancient counterparts. The *Epitome de Caesaribus* (14.6) describes him as a man of contradictory impulses. More recently, Thorsten Opper (2008, 22) declared that a romanticized image of Hadrian clouds public perception, and that the real "Roman Hadrian" remains undiscovered. A new approach to imperial coinage offers a different perspective, and reconstructs his public image to "see" him as he appeared to ordinary Romans. This study shows that Hadrian's public image was not a mixed array of messages, but instead focused on his image as the benevolent emperor of a stable Empire.

The Power of Women and Children in the Political Imagery of Imperial Rome

Dr Janette McWilliam

Today, many people are familiar with depictions of women and children in Rome on the Augustan altar of peace, the Ara Pacis. However, symbolically powerful depictions of women and children were used in public spaces in cities throughout the Roman Empire, particularly in the second century CE. This talk introduces the different media through which women and children were depicted such as in and on public buildings and victory monuments, and on coins. It considers the location and context of these images and explores the political, social and cultural messages they might have conveyed to different viewers.

Sculpture and Politics in the Transformation of the Roman Republic

Associate Professor Tom Stevenson

The style of Roman sculpture of the Late Republic and Augustan Age was once interpreted in terms of propaganda or publicity. It seems, however, that this approach misinterprets the relationship between art and politics in a period of transformation. Style was determined by various factors, such as the background and training of the sculptor, the purpose of a commission, and the identity and wealth of the patron. Politics plays a part in this, but ideas were debated and were the subject of discourse. No Roman leader controlled cultural output like, for example, Joseph Goebbels.

From Governors and Gods to Icons and Doorsteps: Politics and Religion in Portrait Art of Late Antiquity

Dr Amelia Brown

Late Antiquity was a time of dramatic change in the Roman Empire, not least in the attitude to statues. Many old statues of gods or mortals were pulled down, but new statues were also erected in traditional places like town squares. The increasingly Christian-dominated hierarchy preached an end to all depictions in the round of men and women as potential idols, but they had to contend with old traditions in Greek cities, and also with the mechanisms of power of the Roman emperors. Thus conflict was both political and religious, and led to the end of the "statue habit" across most of the Mediterranean world until the Renaissance.