

# Fresh Perspectives on Graeco-Roman Visual Culture.

International Undergraduate and Postgraduate Conference

Panel 1: Modes of  
Representation

## Henriette Engel (Berlin)

Concepts of Enemies in Hellenism. Investigations into the Sculptures of the Small

Dedication by the Attalids of Pergamon

**I**N the scholarship of Graeco-Roman art, one is often confronted with images of wounded, dying or dead figures. Under modern approaches there is a tendency to feel sorry for the depicted, to glorify them and to highlight them as heroes or martyrs. However, considering the monuments in their ancient context can lead to very different conclusions. That is, they show the hostile party which demonstrates the power and triumphalism of the rulers.

Engel's paper demonstrates the origin of a new image of an enemy created in the Hellenistic period, the so-called Small Dedication of the Attalids of Pergamum. On this example the modes of action of such concepts are investigated especially to show how they were implemented artistically. By comparison with other depictions both from earlier and later periods a continuity of motifs can be shown that works independently of a specific enemy. Thus, it appears that the visual medium for the presentation of such concepts of enemies as a form of political propaganda was handed down schematically through the entirety of Graeco-Roman antiquity, and consolidated to a greater and greater extent.

## Arne Reinhardt (Berlin)

Who Cares about Alterations? The Case of the Piraeus-Reliefs

**I**N winter 1930 construction works in Athens' ancient harbour of Piraeus led to the discovery of an ancient ship's freight consisting predominantly of large marble relief slabs. Soon after their discovery, some better preserved pieces were published, while the main part of the findings remained unknown until the works of Strocka (1967)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>V. M. Strocka, Piräusreliefs und Parthenosschild. Versuch einer Wiederherstellung der Amazonomachie des Phidias, Bochum 1967.

and, in more detail, Stephanidou-Tiveriou (1979)<sup>2</sup>. In his paper, Reinhardt takes a closer look at three of these slabs – all bearing a characteristic depiction of a fighting couple (Greek and Amazon of the so-called ‘Bogenshützen-Gruppe’). The fact that all these show the same depiction seems to testify – at first glance – that the reliefs represent a clear case of Roman copies of a Greek original (as scholars have argued).

But on closer examination, elements of the three reliefs are not elaborated equally: they differ – but why? Firstly, Reinhardt describes the alterations between the three slabs; secondly, he interprets them (both as a formal phenomenon and one regarding the depiction’s content) and then asks what reasons might be responsible for this paradoxical relation of ‘equal’ and ‘unequal’ and what we are dealing here with – mere copies or copies ruled by the principles of serial production?

## William Leveritt (Nottingham)

*Nuanced Meaning in Apparently Stable Motifs: Hercules on some Dionysian Sarcophagi*

**S**ARCOPHAGI featuring Dionysus’s triumphal return from India form a readily recognisable corpus. It is Leveritt’s intention to show that variance in motifs achieves wider meaning within the pieces, and that in following the tradition of transmission or digesting the iconography for its cultic meaning scholarship has overlooked these shifts in focus or aim.

These internal motif developments together provide insights into variant messages on sarcophagus bodies which otherwise demonstrate extremely close kinship. To typify the problem Leveritt demonstrates, through appeal to the misunderstanding of a common simple animal motif, how the tenor of a scene can be wholly changed by slight amendments. Then he follows a more complex motif – that of the drunken Hercules – and observes that the deviations that arise from the familiar version of the motif are designed to produce a novel effect. By unifying the observations (concerning the more simple motif in particular and the sarcophagus as a whole in general) Leveritt concludes that the changes in the motifs are consonant with each other and contribute individually to differing thematic imports.

## Nicole Neuenfeld (Berlin/Athens)

*The Colouring of Ancient Sculptures as the Driving Force of Expression(?)*

**O**VER the last few centuries, modern perceptions of colour in antiquity have undergone extensive changes. Within the framework of modern archaeological approaches and visual arts, Neuenfeld’s paper deals with the question of whether the application to colour on sculptures adds or changes meaning of the object, or if it changes meaning at all.

Taking into account ancient literary sources, Neuenfeld discusses the visual effect and the meaning of coloured sculptures in antiquity. Introducing several examples of sculp-

<sup>2</sup>Th. Stephanidou-Tiveriou, *Neoattika. Hoi anaglyphoi pinakes apo to limani tu Peiraiia*, Athens 1979.

ture with preserved and well analysed traces of colour, multiple perspectives on colouring sculptures in antiquity are presented on the basis of the chosen case studies.

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Panel 2: Methods

## Christoph Klose (Berlin)

A Farewell to Methods? Imperial ‘adventus-scenes’ and Interpretations of Roman

Historical Reliefs

**K**LOSE’s contribution is focussed on Roman Imperial coins of the High Roman Empire bearing the legend of Imperial ADVENTVS. Looking at both the use of an allegedly stereotyped numismatic design and the combination of various motifs labelled ADVENTVS by inscription, special emphasis is put to the following questions: which categorizations of these scenes have been developed and which methodological approaches have therefore been followed up in modern research, and to what extent can these be regarded as appropriate means of interpreting the representations on the coins – in particular if one considers these numismatic depictions as elementary for the understanding of Roman state art (especially Roman historical reliefs)? Various issues that might possibly be obstructing a general understanding of the so-called *adventus*-scenes are addressed to stimulate reflection on a detail of great influence in Roman state art.

## Jessica Bartz (Berlin)

The Language of an Image – the Image of Language. A Necessity of Considering the

Relationship between Ancient Images and Texts?

**D**URING the long history of analysing ancient images and texts, their inter-medial relationship has been estimated differently. At the beginning the interpretation of images was dominated by the texts. By recognising, that ancient texts are media which were also influenced by different conditions, and that images have their own manners of transmission, many archaeologists tried to analyse the images as separate media. Of course there exist ‘medial inherent regularities’, but how can we understand the identity of a person in an image, without knowing e.g. the description of Cicero?

The questions are: should we use the texts to understand the images, or the other way around? To what extent does a text influence the interpretation of an image? By analysing images should we distinguish between the images on their own and texts as separate media? What else is influencing the outcome of an image? Dealing with the example of the portrait of Pompeius Magnus Bartz considers which positive and negative aspects the different methods have, in order to discuss whether it is only necessary to consider the relationship between ancient images and texts.

## Victoria Kubale (Berlin)

### Laocoön and His Sons. The Myth about the Myth

**I**N her paper, Kubale discusses the myth of Laocoön and which version of it was used as model for the famous statue group ‘Laocoön and His Sons’ now in the Vatican Museums in Rome. There are fundamentally two possibilities: the version of Bacchylides and the more popular one of Vergil’s *Aeneid*. After this, Kubale examines whether the various arguments and methodological approaches of research concerning this matter. How do they differ, what kind of basis or strategy do the researchers use and which intention do they have? Apart from that, we will ascertain whether it is possible to find a plausible solution or if it is simply not important on which version the statue was modelled after all.

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### Panel 3: Contexts

## Lydia Schallenberg (Berlin)

### The Sculptures of the Grotta Azzurra at Capri

**T**HE Grotta Azzurra is a well-known sea cave located on the north west side of the island. Between 27 and 37 AD Capri became Tiberius’s permanent residence and it was the capital of the Roman World. The Grotta Azzurra is famous for the bright blue tones and the mysterious silver appearance of the objects immersed in the water. This effect is caused by the sunlight, which passes through an underwater cavity that shines through the seawater and illuminates the cavern. But for a long time the magical attraction was forgotten.

It was not until 1826 that two German scholars discovered the cave which then became one of Capri’s most popular sites. In 1964 two statues were found on the sea bottom and ten years later archaeologists recovered even more statues and fragments. The statues are now depicted as a marine *thiasos*, one Neptune and three Tritones. But is an identification that clear?

## Craig Goodere (Nottingham)

### Julio-Claudian Portraiture. Issues of Realism, Idealism and Practicality

**I**N his paper, Goodere focusses upon several examples of early imperial portraiture, encompassing various members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty ranging from Caesar Augustus to the Emperor Nero. The discussion itself consists of two halves. The first introduces what has traditionally been perceived as the artistic transition from republican realism, most famously embodied by the so-called style of verism, towards a new imperial ideology based upon classical idealism.

The second concentrates upon why this transition was absolutely essential for helping the senate and the people to recognise, accept, and ultimately engage with the figure of the princeps, his role within Rome and the Empire, and especially the troublesome concept of imperial succession.

## Jodie Martyndale-Howard (Nottingham)

Augustus in Egypt. The Varying Images of the first Roman Emperor

**A**UGUSTUS, the first Roman Emperor, holds a specific place within any discussion of Roman portraiture. Martyndale-Howard holds prime place in discussions concerning imperial portraiture that can be found throughout the province of Egypt. These images vary from temple reliefs to free standing sculpture and encompass an array of artistic styles spanning centuries of traditions. Originating from Alexandria in the North to Meroë in the South the spectrum of images covers all the province and its peoples. Through looking into these different contexts, it is possible to see how the people of Egypt viewed their new leader; as Pharaoh, Basileus or Emperor.

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Panel 4: Contents

## Rolf F. Sporleder (Berlin)

The Bassae-Frieze. 200 Years of Guesswork

**A**RCHITECTURAL sculpture and especially pediments or friezes showing mythological scenes have been dealt with by scholars for centuries. Aspects of interest were naming the different people depicted, referring the scene to a myth or the context of the building the sculpture comes from. Due to inscriptions, some scenes can be identified easily, whereas others offer a great variety of possible interpretations. One of these examples is the Bassae-Frieze that was found in 1812. As yet, there is still no satisfying interpretation of its content although many scholars have suggested various readings of this well-known piece of classical Greek art.

In his paper, Sporleder points out some problematic aspects concerning the frieze's content, and by comparing it with other examples of architectural sculpture, he comes to conclusions relevant for wider questions regarding architectural sculpture.

## Lukas C. Bossert (Berlin)

Theseus and the Thread of the Minotaur

**T**HE so-called Cretan adventure of Theseus with its basal setting and components is known from written sources since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC: killing the Minotaur, getting helped by Ariadne, and her ball of thread. The iconic sources however show from the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century BC onward a diachronic focus on Theseus killing the Minotaur, without the presence of youths and maiden, or Ariadne and her ball of thread in the same picture. Klitias is the first who changed the iconographic pattern and departed from the convention of the so-called Cretan adventure: He showed not only a non-violent combat, he actually was the first who literally showed Theseus on an Attic wine bowl and introduced the hero to an Athenian society.

Bossert demonstrates that Klitias remodeled the mythological meeting of Theseus, Ariadne, and the Minotaur in a multivalent way: First Theseus is the leader of the Athenian youth and therefore representing his Athenian Polis, and second he is confronted with

Ariadne in a known iconographic formula for a couple. Taking care of the details precisely, one sees the incorporation of the Minotaur on the fingertips of Ariadne: In her ball of thread as the threat of the Minotaur.

## Robyn Sullivan (Nottingham)

### *Zenobia. An Iconographic Comparison of Female Portraiture*

**S**ULLIVAN focuses in her paper on the visual representations of Zenobia, the queen of the Palmyrene Empire in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

By comparing Zenobia's portraiture to that of numerous other females in the ancient world, it is possible to comprehend what messages Zenobia wished to communicate to the people via visual means. As an enemy of Rome, Sullivan wishes to discover whether Zenobia used her portraiture to link herself with other enemies, such as Cleopatra VII.

In order to decipher what looks non-Roman one must explore what it means to look Roman. It is also necessary to understand whether Zenobia expressed her Syrian roots through her imagery. The main focus of this paper is visual evidence. Literary and historical information are also considered in order to analyse the visual evidence within its wider historical context.

## Erika Holter (Berlin)

### *Are you Surprised? Identifying (with) Atalanta*

**I**N describing an (imaginary) image of the Calydonian Boar Hunt, Philostratus expresses surprise to see Atalanta, a girl, taking part in a hunt. And yet, images of Atalanta and Meleager hunting appear repeatedly as part of the decoration of Roman domestic architecture.

Often, myth and representations of myth are ascribed an identification potential, demonstrating particular qualities that are to be identified with. What potential could the images of Atalanta negotiate for identification, and how is this to be squared with the surprise at the subject matter? Using depictions of Atalanta on Roman mosaics as an example, Holter analyses the question of the possible roles of mythological figures.