

Ancient Art of the Mediterranean

OCTOBER 25 & 26, 2019
EATON THEATRE



Ancient Art of the Mediterranean

Keynote Presentation

OCTOBER 25, 2019
6:00 PM
EATON THEATRE



How Vivid is the Joy in Strangeness: The Power of Cypriot Art

William A. Childs
Professor Emeritus, Princeton University

The second half of the 19th century became entranced with the civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City was founded with the acquisition of Cypriot antiquities from Luigi Cesnola, the American Consul from 1865 to 1877. The primary aim of the other various

archaeological expeditions by the British Museum and the Louvre was also to collect as much loot as possible, but the reception of Cypriot art was in general poor, chiefly because the public (and many scholars) were blinded by the Greco-Roman tradition of naturalistic art. This lecture will showcase that Cypriot art is powerful and richly expressive.

Program Partner: University of Toronto
Generously supported by the A.G. Leventis Foundation
Free with RSVP

Ancient Art of the Mediterranean

Symposium

OCTOBER 26, 2019
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
EATON THEATRE

Program Partner: University of Toronto
Generously supported by the A.G. Leventis Foundation & The Hellenic Republic
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8:45 AM - OPENING REMARKS

9:00 AM

Greek Styles in a Mediterranean World

Nathan Arrington - Associate Professor, Princeton University

Art historians often talk about style. As a descriptive and analytical tool, style can serve several functions. It might offer chronological and geographical indicators, reflect social and cultural values, or suggest how ancient peoples used art as a form of visual communication. The Classical style associated with 5th century Athens has received the most attention, considered by many observers to be the pinnacle of taste. Yet this focus on the 5th century makes many assumptions and has distorted our views of Greek art. So this talk will look instead at the neglected and puzzling style of 7th century Greek art, produced in a time when the Mediterranean world was expanding and Greece experienced rapid social change. This early style of Greek art differs fundamentally from the Classical traditions we tend to associate with Greece and challenges our views of how style changes and what it might mean.

9:45 AM - COFFEE BREAK

10:15 AM

**Women of Mars:
The Rise of Amazon Iconography in Ancient Greece**

SeungJung Kim - Assistant Professor, University of Toronto

The archetypal female warriors known as Amazons, the daughters of Ares, are undoubtedly one of the most popular representations of mythical women in ancient Greek imagery. Herodotus considered them formidable warriors who were “equal to men,” but their double otherness—as both women and foreign outsiders—eventually solidified their stories as negative exemplum of female behavior and cautionary tale against the established social structure. By the High Classical Period, their “eastern” origins provided a quintessential visual metaphor for the barbaric Persians, looming large in Greek consciousness in the wake of the Persian Wars. The iconography of Amazons, however, reaches further back into the Archaic Period of Greek vase painting, as they first become popular in Athens as opponents of Herakles in the mid sixth-century BCE and exclusively featured on export ware to Etruria. This lecture unpacks the many layers of meaning surrounding the identity of these unlikely warriors in ancient Greece, hailed variously as heroes, enemies, and Others. We will also investigate the potential impact of considering Athenian Amazon iconography as a marketing tool for Etruscan consumers, before they gained global, widespread popularity.

11:00 AM

The Gorgon’s Gaze in Ancient Greek Art

Kate Cooper - Research Associate, Royal Ontario Museum

The gorgon Medusa, whose glare had the power to turn men to stone even after she was beheaded by the hero Perseus, has held an enduring fascination through the ages as one of the deadliest monsters of Greek mythology. Representations of a monstrous head with huge eyes and fangs first appeared in Greek art at the very beginning of the Archaic period in the 8th century BC. However, these only gradually became used to depict the gorgons of the Perseus and Medusa myth. This lecture examines the earliest examples of the terrifying disembodied ‘gorgoneion’ head and their original function in Greece before tracing their development as they were incorporated into the myth of Perseus and Medusa. It considers the way in which myth and imagery developed in early Greece in order to understand how, where, and when this protective symbol was adopted as the image of a monster in a well-known story, and how the image was itself transformed.

11:45 AM - 1:15 PM - LUNCH ON OWN

1:15 PM

**Portraits of a Forgotten Kingdom: The Tayinat Sculptures
as Royal Self Representation and Legitimation**

Timothy Harrison - Professor, University of Toronto

The remains of a series of majestic sculptures have been uncovered during the University of Toronto’s ongoing excavations at Tell Tayinat (ancient Kunulua), royal city of the Neo-Hittite Kingdom of Palastin/Walastin/Patin, located in the North Orontes Valley, southeastern Turkey. The sculptures, found carefully deposited in the vicinity of a monumental gate leading to the site’s upper mound, or citadel, include the head and torsos of male and female figures, the latter intentionally—possibly ritually—defaced in antiquity, a winged bull and sphinx, and a magnificently carved lion figure. The sculptures date to the early 9th century BCE, and they are identified in accompanying autobiographical Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions as the representations of important royal figures in the ruling Neo-Hittite dynasty at Tayinat, contemporary rivals of the Phoenicians and biblical Israelites to the south. The discovery of the Tayinat sculptures accentuates the remarkable sculptural tradition of the Iron Age communities of Syro-Anatolia and highlights the innovative role these communities played in the broader cultural and political ferment witnessed in the eastern Mediterranean world during the early centuries of the first millennium BCE. This paper will present the results of the ongoing Tayinat Archaeological Project (TAP) excavations and contextualize these sculptural discoveries within the broader cultural milieu of Neo-Hittite tradition.

2:00 PM

**Disembodied Heads and Frightful Faces:
The Power of the Grotesque in Ancient Cyprus**

Erin Walcek Averett - Assistant Professor, Creighton University

Images of grotesque faces and disembodied heads abound in the art of ancient Cyprus. The iconography attracts the viewer’s gaze, emphasizing the grotesque and uncanny through frontal disembodied heads with distorted features, gaping mouths with extended tongues and prominent teeth, and zoomorphic traits. These striking images adorn vessels, jewelry, seals, and statues; they have been found in funerary, religious, and industrial spaces. Although commonly identified as depictions of the Egyptian god Bes, the Greek gorgons or satyrs, or the Mesopotamian demon Humbaba, the identification of these faces and their meaning is more complicated. As a crossroads of the Mediterranean, the art of Cyprus has been traditionally understood through external iconographic and stylistic influences. Yet, close analysis of these monstrous images reveals a more complex local use and meaning for these uncanny heads in Cypriot religion, ritual, and society from the Late Bronze Age through the Iron Age. Rather than focus on the problematic issue of assigning foreign theonyms, this talk considers the function of these faces as apotropaic devices with a wide range of uses in Cypriot society, from the palaces to workshops.

2:45 PM – COFFEE BREAK

3:15 PM
**“....a joy forever to the people of Canada”:
The ROM's Aphrodite in the so-called Venus Genetrix type**
Björn Ewald – Associate Professor, University of Toronto

In 1925, the Royal Ontario Museum purchased an exquisite under life-size marble statue of the so-called Venus Genetrix type from the collection of Sir George Donaldson in Brighton/Hove. The statue was soon hailed as “a priceless treasure”, and as “the most beautiful piece of Greek sculpture in Canada”. The talk sheds light on the acquisition and possible provenance of the piece, and discusses the meaning of the statue type in the broader context of Greek and Roman art.

4:00 PM
**Bodies, Bases and Borders:
Framing the Divine in Greco-Roman Antiquity**
Verity Platt – Professor, Cornell University

Traditionally, to visualize the Greco-Roman gods has been to focus primarily upon their bodies: their degree of anthropomorphism, the beguiling power of naturalism, and the subtle means of iconographic differentiation by which individual deities might be defined and recognized. But to ‘imagine the divine’ in antiquity was to engage with a far broader and more complex set of visual strategies. Examining ancient evidence for Pheidias’ chryselephantine statue of Athena Parthenos, this paper considers the vital role that ‘decorative’ or framing elements played in shaping ancient experience of divinity. Together, Greco-Roman bodies and frames worked to construct a notion of interiority that served to make the gods present for their worshippers – to give their images agency. Yet this concentric system of frames also extended to the surfaces of cult statues themselves – to the colours, materials, attributes and clothing that defined the gods’ external appearances. To view sacred images in this way not only decentres the role of the body in the Greco-Roman religious imagination, but also recognizes the inherent flexibility and improvisatory nature of a visual system which would have abiding influence over the religions that superseded it.

4:45 PM – CLOSING REMARKS

5:00 PM – EVENT ENDS

