

Save Ancient Studies Alliance

January 2023 Reading Group

**True Colors: Reading the Ancient Mediterranean Through Color
(The Antichi Coloristi or Amici Colori)**

Links to the readings:

Majority of Greek or Latin sources are small and will be provided on powerpoints during the class.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/29/the-myth-of-whiteness-in-classical-sculpture>

Will provide PDFs of the following readings:

Abbe, Mark B. "Polychromy of Roman Marble Sculpture." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/prmis/hd_prms.htm

Bradley, Mark. "The Rainbow," in *Colour and Meaning in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009: 36-55.

—. "The Importance of Colour on Ancient Marble Sculpture," *Art History* 32 (2009): 427-457.

Culham, P. "Again, What Meaning lies in Colour?" *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* (1986): 235-245.

Fine, Steven. "The Arch of Titus in Color: Polychromy and the Spoils of Jerusalem." *Biblical Archaeology* May/June 2017. <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/the-arch-of-titus-in-color/>

Goldman, R.B. "Color Physiognomy," in *Color Terms in Social and Cultural Context in Ancient Rome*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013: 99-134.

Ostergaard, Jan Stubbe. "Polychromy, sculptural, Greek and Roman," *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2018.

<https://oxfordre.com/classics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-8118?print=pdf>

Richter, Gisela M.A. "Polychromy in Greek Sculpture with Special Reference to the Archaic Attic Gravestones in the Metropolitan Museum," *AJA* (1944): 321-333.

Sebesta, J. L. (2001). "Tunica Ralla, Tunica Spissa: The Colors and Textiles of Roman Costume." In *The World of Roman costume* (pp. 65–76). University of Wisconsin Press.

Small, Zachary. "That Painted Greek Maiden at the Met: Just Whose Vision is She?" *The New York Times*, Aug. 19, 2022.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/17/arts/design/reproductions-museums-sculpture-met-brinkmann-antiquity-polychromy.html>

Stager, Jennifer M.S. "The Materiality of Color in Ancient Mediterranean Art. In *Essays in Global Color History: Interpreting the Ancient Spectrum*, ed. R.B. Goldman (pp. 99-119). Gorgias Press.

Week 1 Introduction: Different Hues, Different Views

In this week's discussion we will consider how color was written about in ancient literature, as well as, how ancient writers defined color and color-terms in their own period. We will consider how color was part of politics and even written about in sumptuary laws as part of a candidate's agenda to curtail spending. Since study the color and polychromacy developed in stages, we will also consider how to examine these appearances. We will begin our discussion with which authors use color-terms and where they frequent. We will also consider how this study even came into being.

Other questions:

Where was the first instance of a Color-Term?

How did the ancients regard the appearance of color?

Ov. *Ars Amatoria* 3.169-184

Plautus, *Aulularia*, 505-522

Many examples of material culture will be discussed in this class

Week 2 You Are What You Look Like:

Social Class and the Wearer of Color Rulers, The Freedman, Barbarian and the Other

This class will consider the appearance of color specifically on people and how they presented themselves. We will also examine inscriptions that feature the inscriptions with color-terms. The question about purple and its many varieties will be discussed in this class.

We will read through many sources including the following:

Cic. *Brutus*, 18.70

Pliny, *HN*, 35.32.50

Aulus Gellius, *N.A.* 2.26

Lex Oppia PDF will be provided

Fronto, *Imp. Vet* (II, 48-49)

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*

Petronius, The Satyricon
Pliny the Elder H.N. 28- 37
Suetonius, The Caesars

Week 3 Color Wars: Production Methods and the User of the Color with Fun and Games

This week will consider how the production of color yielded an entire industry. The industry of color dye and stone relied on a complex network to import colors all across the Mediterranean to feed the unending need for color. This industry expanded into the chariot factions, as each team had its own color. The class also consider the extant materials of mosaics and paintings

Pliny the Elder H.N. 19, 33

Lucretius 4. 75-83

Martial, Selections

Horace, Selections

Group Leader: Rachael B. Goldman, Ph.D.

Dr. Goldman holds degrees from Rutgers University and City of University of New York-Graduate Center. Simultaneously, while earning her graduate degrees, Dr. Goldman earned certificates in connoisseurship and appraisal studies from Sotheby's Institute of Art and New York University. Dr. Goldman has worked in higher education and the commercial art market; teaching the fields of History, Art History and the Art Market.

Dr. Goldman was a generalist appraiser at the beginning of her career, and branched out into Judaica, Ancient Art and Post-War, Contemporary and Emerging Art. She completed appraisals in different fields including Soviet Non-Conformist Art, Contemporary Indian Art, Hungarian Art and Archives. She has taught at The College of New Jersey (Visiting Assistant Professor, 2011-2016) teaching Ancient Greek and a survey of ancient and world history courses, Kean University (Lecturer, 2019-2020). Currently, she works in administration at Monmouth University, West Long Branch, New Jersey in the Education and Humanities Divisions. She is a full certified appraiser in the Appraisers Association of America.

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Examples of this theme

1. Ancient Color was all encompassing and was not limited to one category of people throughout the Ancient Mediterranean
2. By understanding ancient color, there is the capability of understanding socio-political relations, law, economics, ecology, religion, and social status
3. The production and consumption of ancient color affected the whole social strata from slave to senator
4. Understanding color ancient palettes can be restrictive as there were limited sources of color made from technology

5. By examining ancient color reconstructions from the Ancient Mediterranean perhaps we can connect with the past more closely

Connection of the theme between ancient times and today:

There is an exhibit Chroma: Ancient Sculpture in Color

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2022/chroma>

In recent years there has been a strong attempt to show through mainstream angles that ancient sculpture was not white. By accomplishing this color, ancient historians, archaeologists and museum curators can show the accurate examples from the past. With the current political situation that has pushed a strong agenda against diversity, these ancient sculptures have fallen into a debate about "white-washing."

What we'll study in this reading group:

As a group we will consider the many different opinions about ancient colors from text and archaeological evidence; this is important as many courses will only consider one angle. We will read texts from the 1st century through the 3rd century. We will consider all the different types of items that were colors from clothing to wax tablets (or ancient paper!), types of dyes, chariot teams, food, makeup, medicine, what people looked like, natural historical items and even the velarium (the canopy over the amphitheater). Together we can puzzle through these difficult philosophical passages about ancient color. We can create a dialogue about color, more than a superficial and misunderstood characterization.