

CONFERENCE REPORT

Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies

The conference 'Writing the Embodied Experience in Imperial Ecphrasis' was organised by Anna Athanasopoulou, Albert Bates, and Benedek Kruchió, and generously funded by the Faculty of Classics, the School of Arts and Humanities, Gates Cambridge, the Classical Association, and the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies. The conference took place at the Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge between 4th-5th September 2019.

The aim of this conference was to provide a platform to discuss the ways in which the full range of the senses, agency, materiality and mediality, as well as the less explored concepts of embodiment, presence and affect are employed in Imperial ecphrases (both Greek and Latin). By bridging ancient aesthetics and scholarship on ecphrasis, this conference sought to challenge the idea that the Imperial era exclusively fostered a 'rationalist' culture of viewing focused purely on 'de-coding' images. Instead, we explored how Imperial descriptions framed a more sensual, embodied encounter with the ecphrastic object. Invited speakers were encouraged to take stock of the recent theoretical approaches to aesthetic experience and to present innovative ways of looking at Imperial ecphrasis.

The conference brought together an international cast of classicists and art historians working on ecphrasis, imperial literature, ancient aesthetics and material culture. It was surprisingly well-attended (over 60 registrations) and the conference format (pre-circulated papers: 10 speakers & 10 respondents) was very well received by both speakers/respondents and attendants.

Thanks to the generous support of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies the organisers were able to secure £180 towards postgraduate bursaries for students attending the conference. The organisers are immensely grateful to the SPHS for their substantial contribution.

For more information and a detailed programme please see the conference website: <https://embodiedecphrasis.weebly.com> and Twitter @EmbodEcphrasis.