

A distinctive feature of many ancient, and especially Roman, furnishings, such as vessels, tables, couches, lamps, heaters, braziers or candelabra, is their formal idiosyncrasy, the sometimes charming, sometimes bizarre mixture of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and floral forms employed for legs, handles, stems, and bodies.

In scholarship on these 'monstrous' furnishings, their hybrid composition was first appreciated as delightful, and later, under the verdict of 20th century aesthetics, dismissed as superfluous ornamentation ("kitsch"), but never studied for what it can tell us about the notions associated with banquet accessories, corporeality, skillfulness, movement and, not least, the physical energy, among them heat and light, produced by them.

The seminar will devote special attention to anthropo- and theriomorphism in Roman furniture, and from there, investigate its aesthetic and conceptual relations to comparable phenomena in other ancient cultures, the Ancient Near East, Egypt, the Central European Bronze Age, Persia, Greece, and Etruria. It hopes to establish a new theoretical framework and more fundamentally, a common language that enables us to talk about these artifacts and their often sundered aspects of matter, functionality, design and ambience.

Venue:

Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study,
at Harvard University

Idea:

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(Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich)

Francesco de Angelis
(Columbia University, New York)

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*front: Lamp stand, with seated Silenus,
1st century CE,
Museo Nazionale Archeologico,
Naples*

MORE THAN A THING: Figural hybridity in ancient furnishings

Radcliffe Exploratory Seminar

March 30 and 31, 2017 at:



**RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE
FOR ADVANCED STUDY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY**



Thursday, March 30

9:15-9:30 am
Welcome and introduction
(Ruth Bielfeldt & Francesco de Angelis)

9:30-10:20 am
Jutta Kneisel
(Kiel University):
"From hidden eyes to human torsos.
Anthropomorphic vessels in the Late
Bronze and Early Iron Age Europe"

10:20-10:40 am
Coffee break

10:40-11:30 am
Nassos Papalexandrou
(University of Texas at Austin):
"The monsters of objects in the
preclassical Mediterranean"

11:30-12:20 am
Deborah Steiner
(Columbia University):
"The many lives of the Greek column.
Choral song and dance, temple
architecture and the place of columns
in the archaic and early classical Greek
imaginary"

12:20-2:00 pm
Lunch break

2:00-2:50 pm
Susanne Ebbinghaus
(Harvard Art Museums):
"Enlivened or alive? A comparative
look at zoomorphic vessels"

2:50-3:40 pm
Annetta Alexandridis
(Cornell University):
"Hard-shelled assistants:
'crustacean' supports and
containers"

3:40-4:00 pm
Coffee break

4:00-4:50 pm
Francesco de Angelis
(Columbia University):
"Tripod riders and other peculiar
bodies on Etruscan incense
burners"

4:50-5:40 pm
Bissera Pentcheva
(Stanford University):
"Floral forms: Imagining the
resurrected body in Medieval
enamel reliquary boxes"

Friday, March 31

9:00-9:50 am
Andreas Grüner
(Erlangen University):
"Wittgenstein on the Palatine:
The Protean principle in Roman
interiors"

9:50-10:40 am
Ruth Bielfeldt
(Ludwig Maximilian University):
"The emancipated Candelabrus.
Embodied histories of Roman lamp
stands"

10:40-11:00 am
Coffee break

11:00-11:50 am
Jennifer Trimble
(Stanford University):
"Ontological mash-ups on Roman
braziers"

11:50-12:40 pm
Benjamin Alberti
(Framingham State University):
"An ontological approach to
anthropomorphic ceramics from
first millennium CE northwest
Argentina"

12:40-2:00 pm
Lunch break

2:00-3:00 pm
Visit to the Harvard Art Museums