

CALL FOR PAPERS

Senses of the Empire: multisensory approaches to Roman culture

A conference to be held at The Open University, Hawley Crescent, Camden, London, 30th November 2013

Organised by: Dr Eleanor Betts and Dr Emma-Jayne Graham

By collecting the senses together in the interdisciplinary and multi-period volume *Empire of the Senses* David Howes led 'a revolution in the representation and analysis of culture' (2005, p.14). This one-day conference aims to bring that revolution on apace, by exploring the application of a multisensory approach to current research on the archaeological spaces and places of the Roman world. Some aspects of this thriving field of research have already been tied directly into a sensory agenda, whilst others are linked to broader debates, particularly those concerned with the body as the locus of identity, experience and memory, and the meaning of space and place, including movement.

This conference aims to bring these perspectives together in order to explore the value of applying a sensory approach to the archaeology of the ancient world. It will ask how we should use sensory perception and experience to increase our understanding of how people identified and interacted with distinctive Roman environments such as the sounds of the arena, the aromas and tastes of the markets, or the physical sensations of a visit to the baths. In so doing it will bring together scholars working on a wide range of aspects of ancient Rome and its associated territories. In particular, the conference will ask how we might develop and apply methodologies for recreating experiences of Roman urban and rural landscapes, as well as the activities, behaviours and meanings associated with them, with a focus on how empirical sensory data may combine, or at times conflict, with that of ancient sources. The underlying theme of the day will therefore be an exploration of the perceptions and experiences of those who lived in the Roman world and how an attempt to reconstruct these sensory experiences extends, creates, or alters our perceptions of the past and the lives and identities of its inhabitants.

We invite papers which address these issues from the standpoint of archaeology and ancient history and welcome contributions focused upon any area and time period of the Roman world. Interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged and preference will be given to papers which draw upon innovative theoretical approaches and methodologies. Contributors are encouraged to consider at least one sense beyond sight, but there is no compulsion to include all senses.

Topics may include but are not limited to:

- * What is sensory archaeology? What is the value of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of past senses? Developing methodologies for reconstructing sensory experience of space and place; issues of approaching the past from a multisensory perspective, methodological problems, and their solutions.
- * How might new, or existing, sensory approaches be applied to discrete monuments, buildings, locales and landscapes in the Roman world?
- * The extent to which the senses played a central role within distinctive socio-cultural activities or locales, such as the domestic, public, political, religious, funerary or leisure spheres of the ancient world. Were sensory experiences instrumental in reinforcing the meaning of particular cultural activities or might they even serve to undermine traditional expectations?
- * The senses and the self: the role of sensory perception in the construction or maintenance of personal or communal identities, or in processes connected with memory and the perpetuation of cultural ideologies.
- * Senses and the life-course: the dynamic body as a location for sensory experience and the translation of its meaning; the importance of sensory experiences for age or gender.

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS:

Prof Ray Laurence (University of Kent)

Dr Valerie Hope (The Open University)

Dr Jane Draycott (University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, Lampeter)

Papers should be of 20 minutes' length, and should not have been previously published or delivered at a major conference. Abstracts of approximately 250 words should be submitted by Monday 16th September 2013.

Successful contributions may be considered for publication in a peer-reviewed conference volume.

For further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

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We would be grateful if you could forward this message to those of your colleagues who might be interested in joining us at the conference.