The Spectacle of Everyday Life: Sport and Spectacula in Roman Social Practice and Material Culture
Symposium Campanum in Cuma, Italy
October 22-24, 2020

The construction, design, and patronage of buildings for mass entertainment in the Roman Empire rightfully remain a major focus of modern scholarship, especially as new structures continue to be discovered and attest to the centrality of spectacles in public life across the full extent of the empire. This symposium seeks to shift focus from the structures to the ways in which the embodied experience of these events insinuated themselves into the everyday social practices of Romans, especially as seen through visual, material, and epigraphic culture. Inspired by Michel de Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life (1984), this symposium will look at the diverse social strategies or “ways of operating” by which Romans individualized mass culture within the framework of their own lives. This might include inscribing graffiti, purchasing objects such as lamps or figurines, or commissioning curse tablets or works of art for one’s household, among other activities.

On account of the extraordinarily richly-preserved remains from around the Bay of Naples and the location of the symposium there, the organizers encourage papers that treat evidence from that area. However, since we seek to offer broad coverage of this phenomenon as it manifests itself across the empire, studies of particular regions or categories of evidence (e.g., inscriptions, objects) are welcome as well. For instance, contributions might look at the numbers, kinds, and contexts of references to spectacles in inscriptions, visual and material culture (e.g., coins, statuettes, funerary memorials, household decoration), and literary testimonies from around the Bay of Naples and/or beyond. In addition, they might also consider the strategies adopted by the “consumer” (e.g., partisanship, magic ritual, propaganda, etc.).

Keynote speaker:
Katherine Dunbabin, McMaster University

Confirmed Speakers:
Anne Bajard, University Bordeaux-Montaigne
Eleanor Betts, The Open University
Boris Burandt, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt
Maria Letizia Caldelli, Università di Roma “La Sapienza”
Michael Carter, Brock University
Kimberly Cassibry, Wellesley College
Veronique Dasen, Université de Fribourg
Manuel Flecker, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel
Frederik Grosser, Antikensammlung–Altes Museum Berlin
Christian Mann, Universität Mannheim
Harry Morgan, Harvard University
Jocelyne Nelis-Clement, Institut Ausonius (Bordeaux)
Maggie Popkin, Case Western Reserve University
Charlotte Rouché, King’s College, London
Claire Rowan, University of Warwick
Jerry Toner, Cambridge University
Steven L. Tuck, Miami University

Co-organizers:
Sinclair Bell, Northern Illinois University
Nathan T. Elkins, Baylor University