



Looking Divinity in the Eye: Approaching Ancient Greek and Roman Art with Material Agency and Psychoanalysis

Lecture by Mrs. Sunniva Mundal Haug (MA Student in Art History, UiB)



([Antinous as Dionysus-Osiris in the Vatican Museum](#); by author Ajwm8103 on Wikimedia Commons)

The lecture will take place on **Thursday, 14 November 2024, at 7:00 p.m. (EST)** at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, Tsami Karatasou 5, 11742 (the lecture will also be streamed online via Zoom)

Registration is required for both in-person and virtual attendance.

To attend **in-person**, please register at norwinst@uib.no

To attend **via Zoom**, please register via the following link:

https://uib.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5YpdOusqD8tEtCVp1xw_dcp-sV_fJ8smus



Abstract

In my master's project, I aim to apply material agency theory and psychoanalysis to the study of ancient Greek and Roman art. Although these approaches are quite different in nature, I believe there are points of intersection that can provide a deeper and more intimate understanding of Greco-Roman art. I argue that the concept of the gaze serves as such an intersection, as both theoretical frameworks assign agency and power to the act of looking and being looked at.

I will engage with the work of anthropologist and sociologist Bruno Latour, anthropologist Alfred Gell, and philosopher and political theorist Jane Bennett, all of whom have been pivotal in shaping the idea that objects possess agency, much like humans, and play a significant role in social networks. Additionally, I will explore the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, specifically his concept of the Gaze, which examines the relationship between the artist, viewer, and artwork, and how art "looks back" at the viewer. This, I argue, is where psychoanalysis and material agency converge.

Although these theories are relatively modern, I will demonstrate their relevance to antiquity by discussing Greco-Roman philosophers and the tactile function of sight. Through the combined lenses of gaze, material agency, and psychoanalysis, I will examine divine images such as the Braschi Antinous and other posthumous depictions of the deified and immortalized Antinous, the lover of Emperor Hadrian.

Biographical Information

Sunniva Mundal Haug is a second-year master's student in Art History at the University of Bergen, Norway. She completed a bachelor's degree in Film Production at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in June 2021, followed by a bachelor's degree in Art History at the University of Bergen in June 2023. In the spring of 2024, she served as a teaching assistant for new art history students and bachelor's students and has been actively involved in the Art History Student Committee throughout her education. She was awarded the Ella and Øystein Scholarship from The Norwegian Institute in Rome, as well as a scholarship from *Athenæum Venneforeningen* for the Norwegian Institute in Athens, which enabled her to conduct research for her thesis in Rome and Athens during the autumn of 2024.

Sunniva's academic interests include religious art in Greco-Roman antiquity, perception theory, material agency, psychoanalysis, the senses, the gaze, and sexuality. Her ambition is to continue research in the field of art history after completing her master's thesis.