

Open Arts Journal, issue 10: Material Religion in Pompeii

Tilo Reifenstein

This themed issue of the Open Arts Journal takes a fresh look at the relationship between religion and material culture in the ancient city of Pompeii – our most comprehensively preserved archaeological site from any period of antiquity.

The time is ripe for a reassessment of Pompeian religion, and not only because of the new evidence that has been unearthed in the EU-funded excavations of Region V of the city ('The Great Pompeii Project') – things like the extraordinary collection of gems and amulets found in the House with the Garden in 2019, and the paintings and mosaics depicting mythological scenes of Leda and the Swan and the metamorphosis of Orion (Osanna, 2019).

While these new discoveries have certainly reinvigorated discussions about, for instance, the relationship between our concepts of 'religion' and 'magic', and the roles played by narrative, intimacy and violence in the construction of ancient deity, an even more urgent stimulus for this study is found in the great range of theoretical approaches and debates that have been unfolding outside of classical archaeology for the past two decades, which have the potential to add a richer texture to our understandings of Pompeii and of ancient Mediterranean religion more widely.

The central aim of this themed issue, then, is to use the case study of Pompeii to bring our work on Greco-Roman religion into conversation with some key theoretical movements in the disciplines of religious studies, anthropology and art history, and particularly the set of approaches grouped under the title of 'material religion'.

Special issue editor: Jessica Hughes

Contents

0. MATERIAL RELIGION IN POMPEII: INTRODUCTION

Jessica Hughes

1. THE DIVERSITY OF POMPEII'S DOMESTIC CULT ACTIVITY

Annette Haug and Patric-Alexander Kreuz

2. AT HOME WITH THE LARES: LIVED RELIGION REMATERIALISED AT POMPEII

Emma-Jayne Graham

3. MATERIAL AND IMMATERIAL RELIGION IN POMPEIAN PAINTING

Nathaniel B. Jones

4. SENSING HERMAPHRODITUS IN THE DIONYSIAN THEATRE GARDEN

Brittany DeMone and

Lisa A. Hughes

5. MATERIAL MUSIC IN RITUAL SOUNDSCAPES OF POMPEII

Mirco Mungari and Kamila Wyslucha

6. GUARDIANS OF THE THRESHOLD: THE IMAGE OF THE GLADIATOR AND ITS PROTECTIVE FUNCTION IN POMPEII

Joe Sheppard

7. TRACING PROCESSION ROUTES FOR THE PRINCIPAL CULTS IN POMPEII

Ivo van der Graaff and Eric Poehler

8. POMPA IN POMPEII: EXPERIENCING A FUNERAL PROCESSION IN THE ANCIENT CITY

Virginia L. Campbell

Reference:

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