

Classical Art Research Centre

Annual Workshop, 27th-28th September 2018



Generously supported by Jean-David Cahn and Tony Michaels

Ancient Britain and Classical Art

500 BC - AD 800

Britain had a unique position on the edge of the classical world, both divided from and joined to the Continent by water, participating in the common 'Celtic' culture of Iron Age Europe, yet continuously influenced by the artistic traditions of the Graeco-Roman world over many centuries. Britain has been a focal point for some of the most exciting research on ancient visual culture in recent years, which has ranged, for example, from the role of art under Roman imperial rule to big questions about the world-view embedded in Celtic art and its confrontation with the naturalistic conventions of the classical tradition.

This workshop seeks to cast a spotlight on new questions and approaches, pooling and combining fresh insights by researchers concerned with different cultures and historical periods. The centuries during which Britain was part of the classical world, as a province of the Roman Empire, will provide a particular focus, although we will seek to move beyond the questions that normally dominate discussion of Romano-British art, considering the diversity of imagery in Roman Britain from new angles. The workshop will attempt to cast this period in a different light by looking at the *longue durée* of ancient visual culture. For the echoes of classical art can be found in Britain across more than a millennium, from the early centuries of La Tène art before the Roman Empire to Anglo-Saxon England in the eighth century, and beyond.

With its persistent but shifting relationship with the traditions of the classical Mediterranean, Britain offers a crucible for examining cultural change, historical continuities and ruptures, and the mentalities behind the art of antiquity.

Questions that may be addressed in the workshop include: how and to what extent was pre-Roman art in Britain connected to classical traditions? How closely can artistic changes in Britain be mapped onto political change in the late pre-Roman iron age and Roman imperial period? To what extent or in what ways can Celtic art be said to survive in the Roman period or revive after it? How is the history of ancient British art transformed by focusing on different media or scales of objects? What account should be taken of intangible and perishable art in ancient Britain, and what stories of art perish with it? What role did classical art have in the visual culture of Anglo-Saxon Britain? And what does Britain tell us about the fundamentally differing mindsets underlying classical and non-classical visual cultures in Europe?



Photos: Ashmolean Museum