

Call for Articles (Deadline December 31st 2025)

Greek Bodies on the Move: Performing and Representing the Male Greek Body in the Western World through the Ages (eds. Filippo Carlà-Uhink / Florian Freitag / Patricia Gwozdz)

Since the 18th century, first European philhellenism and later the scholarly disciplines of Classics and Ancient History with their social and political impact have shaped the role of ancient Greece in the historical culture, cultural memory, and popular history of the West as that of a “cradle of civilization,” to which we are all somehow “indebted” (Hanink 2017). As in other cases of popular reception, the images and narratives of ancient Greece in modern European and North American culture are few, highly codified, and, consequently, highly recognizable – “the recognition of recognizability is the very moment of reception” (Carlà/Freitag 2015, 150) – and are often linked to the few aspects of ancient Greek history and culture that are taught in school (e.g. Gorbahn 2011; Carlà-Uhink 2020): the Athenian democracy as the “origin” of the democratic systems, for example, or Greek mythology with its very popular narratives (Carlà/Freitag 2015). The idea that the ancient Greeks were particularly fond of sports and physical activity is also very widespread and has been “re-activated” and functionalized at many stages in modern and contemporary history, even beyond the Western context: it is enough to think of the “new” Olympic games instituted by Pierre de Coubertin (first edition: 1896), directly inspired by philhellenic models and ideas in the context of late nineteenth-century European nationalism and militarism (see Leoussi 1998). What makes athletics and the body a particularly interesting site of classical

reception is the fact that here, the body simultaneously constitutes both the “object” and the “medium” of this process.

On the one hand, indeed, the ancient Greek (male) body has been considered an ideal, an “archetype” of the human body, as Charles Rochet wrote in 1886 (see Carlà-Uhink 2020, 35-36) – this does not exclusively apply to the male body, even if such dynamics are more visible and more directly traceable in representations of the male body than of the female one. This is again connected to European philhellenism, and in particular to Neoclassical aesthetics and ideals of beauty – famously, Johann Joachim Winckelmann recognized in the Greek art of the Classical period, and in particular its sculpture, a peak in the attainment of the beauty which is the aim of artistic production.

The phrase “Greek bodies on the move” in our title seeks to capture this double role of the human body as both object and medium of the reception of ancient Greek bodies in modern Western culture. The volume thus aims to investigate both ancient Greek bodies in their “synchronic” movement – providing insight in newest research on ancient sports, and in their “diachronic” movements, as in the reception of ancient sports and of ancient male bodies in the Western culture of the following centuries.

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The **Call for Articles** therefore addresses scholars from Classical Philology and Ancient History in the areas of Masculinity Studies, Gender Studies, Embodied Histories of Sex, Health, Strength, and Sport in Antiquity and its reception forms through the ages, as well as scholars from any other discipline relevant to the subject (Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, Modern Literature and Cultures, Media and Film Studies, Art History, Sports and Didactics of Sports, etc.), in order to generate a truly interdisciplinary dialogue. The following aspects serve as an orientation for potential contributors but do not mark the limits of our interests:

- a) “Greek Bodies on the Move” are related to the deep connection of the imagination of the Greek body with sports. How are the various practices of physical activity linked to the received ideal of the ancient Greek body?
- b) As “Greek Bodies” move through the ages, albeit with significant shifts, how do they shape contemporary discourses, practices, and identities?
- c) How does the reception of the Greek bodies lead to an idealization of the archetype excluding all other multifarious forms of bodily understanding and expression?

Since the represented body is perceived as Caucasian, and always imagined as white, also because of the marble of the Roman copies through which most Greek statues are known (see Squire 2011), how does it give rise to ageism, ableism, and racism?

- d) In the case of the LGBTIA+ community, which has since the nineteenth century functionalized ancient Greece – and ancient Greek bodies – as a legitimating instance for its emancipation (see e.g., Dowling 1994; Orrels 2011), how do Greek bodies contribute to the self-understanding of queer identity and the representations of sexual activity? How do the aesthetics of representation converge with the politics of bodies beyond the official cultural order? How do they transcend the mere function of legitimation and go beyond the Greek bodies from the past? How do they transform their legacy?

Please send us a short abstract (max. 500 words) with a working title and a short CV by December 31, 2024, to filippo.carla-uhink@uni-potsdam.de.

Contributors will be notified by January 31, 2025.

Full chapters (8,000 words) will be due September 30, 2025.