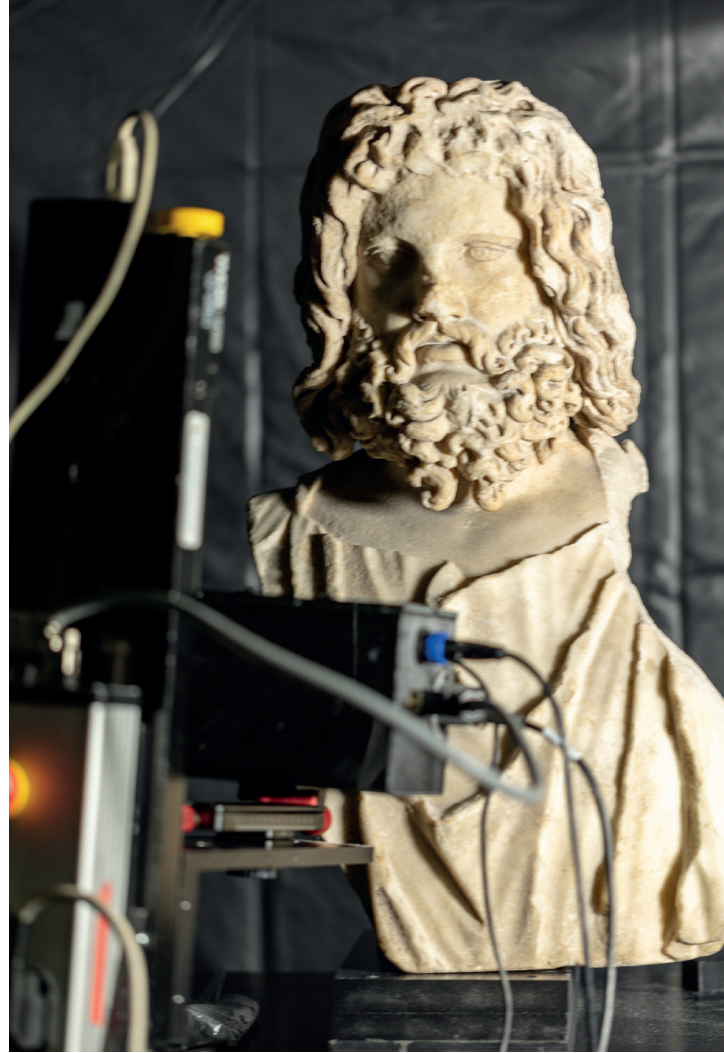


CALL FOR PAPERS
CAHIERS DE MARIEMONT - VOL. 47



THE LOST COLOURS OF ANCIENT SCULPTURES

Identifying, studying, interpreting, and
promoting ancient polychromy in Museums



Despite significant discoveries made in the 19th century, the understanding of the colourful nature of Antiquity has taken a long time to gain acceptance in academic circles. Over the last twenty years, thanks to close collaboration between museums, universities, and laboratories, numerous research projects in Europe and the United States have set out to rediscover the lost colours of ancient statues and several temporary exhibitions have showcased their findings to a wider audience, using life-size colour replicas and an array of digital tools to unveil the colourful complexity of ancient sculpture. However, there have been very few efforts to exhibit the colours in the permanent collections of museums¹, with the whiteness of the marble often prevailing. This raises the question of how scientific research on ancient colours can be passed on to the public and promoted in a more permanent way. The lack of a substantive discussion of polychromy in a museum context could inadvertently perpetuate the idea of ancient statuary being entirely white, a notion that has long pervaded 'Western imagination'.

Since 2021 the Royal Museum of Mariemont (Belgium) has been involved in the interdisciplinary 'PolyChroma' project². The project aims to explore the social significance of colours used in Roman sculpture. This is based on the analysis of a group of artworks to uncover traces of lost colours. Ongoing scientific studies reveal a variety of techniques, including imitation of other materials, illusionist effects, naturalistic rendering, and the communication of messages (religious, social, etc.) through two- or three-colour processes. In its permanent exhibit, the Museum displays an exceptional Ptolemaic queen's portrait that shows traces of painting, gilding, ancient repairs, and beeswax treatment. Classified as a 'Treasure of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation', this significant work has been the focus of a research project that has allowed for the reconstruction of its complex history and the ancient alterations that characterize it³. These case studies are expanding our understanding of the colouration of marble statues from antiquity and prompting questions about how to share and present the results in Museums' permanent exhibits.

The *Cahiers de Mariemont* journal is inviting historians, art historians, archaeologists, archaeometrists, me-

¹ J. Stubbe Østergaard, "The polychromy of ancient sculpture: experimental reconstructions in permanent museum displays", dans M. Mulliez (éd.), *Restituer les couleurs/Reconstruction of Polychromy, Actes du Colloque Virtual Retrospect 2017, Archeovision 8, Éditions Ausonius, Bordeaux, 2019, p. 187-197.*

² https://www.polychroma.uliege.be/cms/c_6264927/en/polychroma

³ B. Bourgeois, « Les vies d'une reine. À propos des remaniements antiques de polychromie sur le portrait de Bérénice II à Mariemont », dans R. von den Hoff, Fr. Queyrel et E. Perrin-Saminadayar (éd.), *Eikones : Portraits en contexte. Recherches nouvelles sur les portraits grecs du V^e au I^{er} s. av. J.-C.*, Paris, 2016, p. 231-248.

diators, exhibition curators, and other professionals in the museum and university sectors to explore the methods of identifying colours, the challenges of interpreting and reconstructing ancient colours, and the issues related to museum education about the lost colours of ancient statues. The articles should focus on interdisciplinary or historical studies, synthetic essays on iconographic themes or typological categories, analyses of pigments, painting techniques, and workshops practices, as well as considerations of reconstructions and educational approaches.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of themes and avenues to explore:

- The interpretation of archaeometric data on the polychromy of objects in museum collections, often without an archaeological context.
- Analyzing the 'temporality' of ancient polychromy, including ancient and modern repairs and alterations.
- Methods of restoring colour over time.
- The reception of 'coloured' statues from the 18th century to the present day.
- The contributions and limitations of experimental archaeology.
- Chromatic discourse in temporary exhibitions and/or in permanent museum exhibits
- Presenting scientific data to the public.
- Mediation tools through case studies.

Proposals for contributions, in French or English (including an abstract of 2,000 to 3,000 characters including spaces, with a provisional title, a short bibliography on the subject, and a biography of 2 or 3 lines) should be sent to Jean-Sébastien Balzat (jean-sebastien.balzat@musee-mariemont.be) or Nicolas Amoroso (nicolas.amoroso@musee-mariemont.be) before 15 October 2024. The text of the article as well as an abstract (French and English) and 10 key words (French and English) are expected by 15 March 2025.

Dr Nicolas Amoroso, Curator of the Greek and Roman Antiquities, Royal Museum of Mariemont

Dr Jean-Sébastien Balzat, Scientific Editor of the Cahiers de Mariemont, Royal Museum of Mariemont

Fantine Lequeux, Editorial Assistant, Royal Museum of Mariemont

Dr Elisabetta Neri, Researcher at the Università degli Studi di Firenze



THE CAHIERS DE MARIEMONT

Established in 1970, the *Cahiers de Mariemont* is the annual journal of the Royal Museum of Mariemont (Belgium). The journal is peer-reviewed. It aims at promoting the study of the Museum's rich collections, and also publishes articles, mainly in French and English, about a wide range of subjects from various disciplines including Ancient Mediterranean art and archaeology, extra-European arts, Belgium's regional archaeology and history, rare books, decorative art, and museology. Its dossiers deal with current research themes in both transversal and cross-disciplinary perspectives. Issues 1 to 42 is available on the open access academic platform Persée (<https://www.persee.fr/collection/camar>).

Latest volumes:

45 (2024): *Museum Libraries*

Reflections on the current challenges facing museum libraries by professionals from the sector.



44 (2023): *The Multiple in art*

Reflections on this artistic practice that goes beyond the book medium (photography, xerography, body art or digital art)



43 (2022): *Replicating Art*

Overview of museum concepts and practices regarding the replication of heritage works



42 (2021): *Raoul Warocqué dévoilé*

History of the collections of the founder of the Mariemont Museum



Forthcoming:

46 (2025) *Ruins in the garden*

