



BRIDGES



SWEDISH INSTITUTES AT ATHENS AND ROME JOINT LECTURE SERIES

Cecilia Olovdotter

(Swedish Institute in Rome)

The eternal cycle of Roman victory

Victoria and the conquest of the world in the visual culture of the Roman Empire (and beyond)

Victory was the most central and wide-ranging component in the historical and theological construction of Roman military expansion and power, closely interwoven with beliefs and ideas about the workings of the divine in human affairs, about liminality, good fortune, peace, and regeneration. In the art of the Roman Empire, the victory-goddess Victoria appeared as an active agent and co-creator of Roman history, protecting and guiding the emperor in his military endeavours, rewarding him with her gift of victory, sharing in his triumphs, and rejoicing in the earthly prosperity and cosmic renewal resulting from Roman dominion and peace; she was the numinous quality of *victoria* inherent in the imperial person, her presence by his side reflecting and confirming his suprahuman status, and when he passed from this life she followed him into apotheosis. In late antiquity, when the Roman empire shrunk and disintegrated and the emperor's vows for victory were offered to the Christian god, Victoria's image became more widespread than ever before, evolving into a transcending figure of universal relevance. In this lecture Victoria's place and agency in the visual epic of Roman conquest will be traced through all its stages, and through works from the *Urbs* and around the empire, from Hispania in the West to Greece in the East and beyond, concluding with some reflections on how physical and metaphysical notions of Roman victory shaped the visual embodiment(s) of Victoria.

Cecilia Olovdotter received her doctorate in classical archaeology and her MA in art history from the University of Gothenburg. She has been a Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Fellow and a Senior Research Fellow funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation/Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, and a Visiting Fellow at the Department of Classics, University of Texas at Austin, and is currently affiliated as a Senior Research Fellow to the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies Rome. Her area of research is Roman and Early Byzantine art and architecture in context, with special focuses on the triumphal traditions of commemorative and religious art (polytheistic and Christian), continuities in the Roman visual language of power, status, and immortality (transcendence), and symbolic aspects of image construction and imaged architecture. Olovdotter has just finished a monograph on Victoria and cosmic conceptions of victory in the visual culture of the Late-Roman Empire. Visit her profile at academia <https://isvroma.academia.edu/CeciliaOlovdotter>

At the Swedish Institute in Rome and on zoom

Tuesday 30 May 2023 18.00 (Rome) 19.00 (Athens)

zoom link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87906175602?pwd=dklvOXRNY1R1K1dsWSluaFhSOWgvQT09>