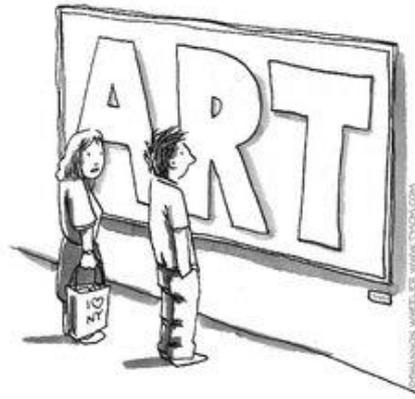


## Week one: What is ancient art & how can we study it?



“Yes but is it art?”

You will not have long to prepare for our first seminar so I have set a small task which I hope will stimulate some useful discussion. Please can you all pick an example of ancient ‘art’, which you will present to the rest of the group. It can be anything you like from a favourite sculpture, to a terracotta figurine, to an elaborate wall painting. The only two essential criteria are that it is ancient (Classical world) and that you believe it can be described as art. Presentations will not be formal, just a couple of minutes explaining why you have chosen your object and why you believe it fulfils these criteria. We will then discuss as a group.

In preparation for this exercise, and when thinking about your object choice, I would like you to consider the following points:

- How do we define the ancient world?
- How can we decide if an ancient piece of material culture is art?
- Did the ancient world share our conceptions of art and are modern criteria/definitions of art appropriate when judging material culture in the past?
- Is an object of more value if we decide it is ‘art’?
- Can an object both have a utilitarian function and be considered art?
- Artist or craftsman: which is the more relevant/appropriate title for the maker of the piece you have chosen?
- Patron or maker: who was more important in the ancient world?
- When studying the ancient world is it more important to think about material culture in terms of stylistic or historical criteria?

Here is a short bibliography to get you thinking about the above themes:

B. Mieke (2003), ‘Visual essentialism and the object of visual culture’. In *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol.2. issue 1. You should read this alongside responses in the same journal.

C. Colburn (2016), ‘Whose global art (history)? Ancient art as global art’. In *Journal of Art Historiography*, vol. 15

J. Elkins (2007), *Is Art History Global?*

P. Stewart (2008) *The Social History of Roman Art*, (Cambridge University Press).