

About the Lecture Series

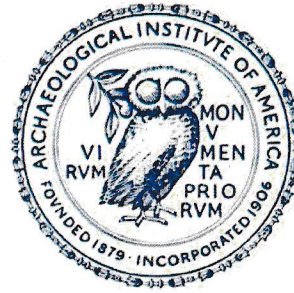


The Thomas J. and Anne W. Sienkewicz Lecture on Roman Archaeology was established by an anonymous donor in 2017 in order to support the annual archaeological lecture series sponsored by the Monmouth College Department of Classics and the Western Illinois Society of the Archaeological Institute of America. Tom Sienkewicz was Minnie Billings Capron Chair of Classics at Monmouth College from 1985 until 2017. During his career he taught a wide range of Classics courses, many with strong archaeological features, including Classical Mythology, the

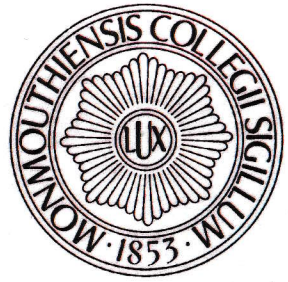
Ancient Family, and Africa in the Ancient World. In 1984 he founded the Western Illinois Society of the Archaeological Institute of America, which, since its inception, has hosted hundreds of archaeological lectures at Monmouth. Anne has been a loyal supporter of archaeology and over the years has hosted countless speakers.



Nerva. AD 96-98



The Monmouth College
Department of Classics
and the
Western Illinois Society
of the
Archaeological Institute of
America



present

the Second Annual
Thomas J. and Anne W. Sienkewicz Lecture
on Roman Archaeology

The Significance of Images in the Reign of Nerva

by

Nathan Elkins

Associate Professor of Art History
Baylor University

Thursday, November 1, 2018

7:30 P.M.

Pattee Auditorium, Center for Science and Business 100

Monmouth College

Monmouth, Illinois

About the Lecturer



Dr. Nathan T. Elkins is an Associate Professor of Art History at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He is also a specialist in Greek and Roman Art and Archaeology. He holds a B.A., *magna cum laude*, in Archaeology and Classical Studies from the University of Evansville; an M.A., *with distinction*, in the City of Rome from the University of Reading, England; and a Ph.D. in Greek and Roman Art and Archaeology from the University of Missouri.

Between 2008 and 2011, Dr. Elkins held teaching and research posts at the Institute for Archaeological Sciences of the Goethe Universität Frankfurt, and the Yale University Art Gallery. In 2011, he began his career at Baylor University and was tenured in 2017. Along with coinage and coin iconography, Dr. Elkins's research areas and expertise include topography and architecture, sport and spectacle, and the illicit antiquities trade. Dr. Elkins has also participated in archaeological excavations in Texas, Italy, Israel, and Jordan. He is currently the staff numismatist at the excavations of the late Roman/Byzantine synagogue at Huqoq in Isreal's Galilee region, and at the excavations of the late Roman fort at Ayn-Gharandal in southern Jordan.

The author of two books, Dr. Elkins has written *The Image of Political Power in the Reign of Nerva, A.D. 96-98*, and *Monuments in Miniature: Architecture on Roman Coinage*. He is currently writing a third book entitled *A Monument to Dynasty and Death: The Story of Rome's Colosseum and the Emperors Who Built It*. Along with his books, numerous articles and contributions have been published by Dr. Elkins in national and international journals and periodicals.

Dr. Elkins has received several honors and awards, including "Extraordinary Merit" in the "Numismatic Literary Guild's Annual Writer's Awards" in 2016. In the 2016/2017 year, he was the William E. Metcalf Lecturer in Numismatics of the Archaeological Institute of America as well as the Albert H. Clayburgh Lecturer in Archaeology of the Archaeological Institute of America. Dr. Elkins is also a Fellow of the American Numismatic Society, New York, and a Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society, London.

About the Lecture

History remembers Nerva, who ruled from September AD 96 to January AD 98, as the Roman emperor who adopted the popular general Trajan as his heir. Nerva's adoption of Trajan added stability to his own principate, as he was unpopular with the army, which had great affection for Domitian. Unlike the Flavians and Trajan, Nerva's principate left little in the way of public building and monumental art in view of his short reign and thus there is little to assess the "self-representation" of Nerva's regime. The most complete record of state-sanctioned art from Nerva's reign is, however, the imperial coinage. But the coinage has been primarily studied with the biases of later historical sources in mind and is thus commonly characterized as "hopeful" or "apologetic." State-sanctioned art did not operate this way; it always presented the emperor in a positive light. A reinterpretation of Nerva's imperial coinage is thus in order and informs our understanding political ideals and messages disseminated during the emperor's reign.

My work on Nerva contextualizes the imagery on Nerva's coinage within the political culture and rhetoric of the day. For example, many of the same qualities for which the emperor is praised by contemporaries such as Martial, Pliny, Tacitus, and Frontinus, also appears on Nerva's coinage: e.g., *Aequitas*, *Iustitia*, and *Libertas*. In Nerva's day, personifications of imperial ideals comprised the majority of images on the coinage. Although often ignored or dismissed as repetitive or boring by modern scholars, the generic quality of the imagery communicated broad ideals that allowed the viewer to find whatever relevance he wished in the images. This made personifications some of the potent visual communicators. For example, *Libertas* on the coinage might have denoted freedom from Domitian's tyranny to a senator who had feared accusations of *maiestas* or evasion of the *fiscus Iudaicus*, but to a commoner in the Italian countryside she might have connoted freedom from any of the various tax burdens reformed by Nerva.

Close study of the imagery on Nerva's coinage suggests that those who formulated the iconography in the mint walked in the same social circles as prominent senators and equestrians who associated with the emperor and who participated in the culture of adulation. The study thus illuminates issues surrounding the selection and formulation of Roman coin iconography and its relationship to political rhetoric.

Previous Lecturers

2017 **Victor M. Martinez** "The Decline and Falls of the Roman Material Economy or How to Trash Talk Rome"