

MONMOUTH COLLEGE  
SIENKEWICZ LECTURE  
ON ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY



FOURTH ANNUAL  
**SIENKEWICZ LECTURE**  
**ON ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY**

**DR. MONT ALLEN**

SCHOOL OF ART & DESIGN – SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

# **DICING WITH DEATH**

**GAMES, CONTESTS, AND THE WORLD  
OF PLAY ON ROMAN SARCOPHAGI**

**NOV 12, 2020**

**7:30 PM**

**MONMOUTH COLLEGE  
DELIVERED VIA ZOOM**



1853



MONT ALLEN is is Assistant Professor of Classics & Art History at Southern Illinois University, where he teaches courses in Greek Mythology and various aspects of Greco-Roman Art, and where he has won Outstanding Teacher of the Year and Faculty Mentor of the Year Awards. He earned his Ph.D. in Art History from the University of California at Berkeley. Allen’s research focuses on ancient funerary art, above all, Roman sarcophagi, and the rich assortment of Greek myths that decorated them—myths through which Romans wanted to imagine and celebrate their own lives, and thus chose to have carved on their coffins. His book on the topic, *The*

*Death of Myth on Roman Sarcophagi: Allegory and Visual Narrative in Late Antiquity*, is set to be published in July 2021 by Cambridge University Press.

### DICING WITH DEATH: GAMES, COMNTTESTS, AND THE WORLD OF PLAY ON ROMAN SARCOPHAGI

THE PUBLIC FACE OF ROMAN ART is painfully sober. In the privacy of their tombs however, free to cast off their stern public personae, Romans surrounded themselves with art of a different nature. Here, on the elaborately carved sarcophagi that dominated the Roman visual imagination of the second and third centuries, the imagery does something entirely different: it plays. Diminutive Pans wrestle with wee goat kids, Sirens face off against Muses in singing competitions, and Cupids role-play as charioteers, giddily racing their carts around the Circus Maximus. Scenes of games, contests, and play appear with astonishing frequency here—on the sides of coffins, in the face of death—as nowhere else in Roman art.

What forms did this play take on Roman coffins? Why did Romans ground play so deeply in the domain of death? And what would happen with the coming of Christianity?

THE MONMOUTH COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND THE  
WESTERN ILLINOIS SOCIETY OF THE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

PRESENT THE  
FOURTH ANNUAL

### SIENKEWICZ LECTURE ON ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY

7:30 P.M. TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2020  
DELIVERED VIRTUALLY, VIA ZOOM

- Community Welcome . . . . . Dr. Robert Holschuh Simmons  
Associate Professor and Co-Chair  
Department of Classics
- Introduction of Speaker . . . . . Mr. Nathan Williams '21  
Classics and Computer Science Major  
President, Classics Club  
President, Eta Sigma Phi
- Sienkewicz Lecture on Roman Archaeology. . . . . Dr. Mont Allen  
Assistant Professor of Classics  
and Art History  
Southern Illinois University

## PAST SIENKEWICZ LECTURES

- 2017 **Victor M. Martinez** . . . . . “The Decline and Falls of the Roman Material Economy or How to Trash Talk Rome”
- 2018 **Nathan Elkins** . . . . . “The Significance of Images in the Reign of Nerva”
- 2019 **Steven L. Tuck** . . . . . “Where Did the Pompeians Go?”



THE THOMAS J. AND ANNE W. SIENKEWICZ Lecture on Roman Archaeology was established by an anonymous donor in 2017 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. His wife, Anne, has been a loyal supporter of archaeology and over the years has hosted countless speakers.



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