THE BODY IN CONFLICT
IN THE ROMAN IMPERIAL PERIOD

Workshop | July 19, 2024

VENUE
Freie Universität Berlin
Fabeckstraße 23-25
14195 Berlin
Holzlaube: Room 0.2051

Organised by Anke Walter (Newcastle University / BAK Fellow 2024) and Burkhard Emme (Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Klassische Archäologie)

www.berliner-antike-kolleg.org/link/body-in-conflict
The conference is part of the the BAK annual theme 2023/24 “Conflicts [and how to] deal with them”
Conflict is an eminently physical phenomenon, one that often leads to the violent confrontation of bodies, to destruction, and death. According to its original meaning, the word „conflict“ emphasises the physical aspect of an altercation between two opponents (Latin confligere: to strike, bring together). The central meaning of the (human) body is therefore inherent to the concept of conflict. Nevertheless, the use and significance of the body in conflict situations can vary. The spectrum ranges from threatening gestures and physical attacks to the physical destruction of an opponent. Conflicts also bring with them an intense interplay between invisible psychological and visible physical phenomena. In both ancient literature and art, the portrayal of the development, the breaking out, and the aftermath of conflicts, and of bodies in conflict in particular, remains popular throughout antiquity. The two media, though, find different ways of representing conflict, while being in dialogue with each other at the same time. While literature, for instance, can more easily depict the invisible, psychological side of conflicts, a sense of the physical existence of those involved in a conflict fully comes to the fore once bodies are torn apart, injured, or killed.

In our workshop, we want to discuss what role the human body played in the conceptualisation and representation of conflict in the Roman imperial period as well as the interplay between literary and artistic approaches to representing the human body in conflict. To what extent do conflicts stem from physical contacts or invisible, emotional processes, and how do these find physical expression in literature and art once a conflict has broken out? How were different conflicts (of interest) in imperial literature and visual art specifically expressed in images of the body? How do literature and visual art of the imperial period depict bodies in conflict and what similarities and differences do we find between different media? How do the depictions of mythical and real conflicts relate to each other?

Our aim is to bring together colleagues from the fields of archaeology and classical philology and, on the basis of these and similar questions, to jointly achieve a better understanding of corporeality and its representation in the aforementioned context.