Abstract: The ancient senses and Roman ritual - considering *imagines* as memory objects in an interdisciplinary context

My paper will deal with the senses engaged in the ancient Roman world - specific to ritual through the use of *imagines* - as experienced through vision and touch, and as considered within an interdisciplinary approach combining archaeological, Classical, historical, and literary elements. Fundamental to this is the relationship of a physical object to that of a mental object, the phrase ‘mental object’ evoking and substantiating *imagines*, or εἴδωλα – the filmy images posited by Lucretius (from the earlier work of the Greek philosopher Epicurus and the Atomists), or the eye rays capturing objects and engaging with the body’s pneuma to elicit understanding and knowledge through the heart and soul (from the earlier work of Democritus and the Stoics). That images of an object could then be imbued with image memories – mementos of times long past, old men long dead, intrinsic Roman values – then allows the ritualistic aspects of commemoration to be experienced on both personal and communal levels, with obvious archaeological and sociological aspects: the image of Cato the Younger can then represent Roman *mores*, *romanitas*, *pietas* and *virtus*, as much as it represents the family progenitor or a respected grandfather. It must be recognised that physical evidence and touch – the stock-in-trade of all archaeologists – is fundamental and inextricably linked to sight, although a strictly haptic link has issues for those unable to engage in touch by proximity in time or space. This also seems to negate the power of words to create and substantiate images: an issue commonly raised by archaeologists, and while an understandable need for archaeological evidence over textual evidence is clear, it is a position stated only from one aspect – ἐνὰργεια (vividness, or evocation) has a recreative potential that can engage us on an emotional level, with interdisciplinary benefits.