

**The Image Of The Strigil-Bearer In Greek And Roman Antiquity,
530 BCE—350 CE**

ABSTRACT

Images of youths with metal scrapers in ancient Greece and Rome celebrated the ideal male. The subject was popular and survives in more than 1,600 works dating from the sixth century BCE to the fourth century CE. Scholarship has focused on mainland Greek objects depicting the imagery and its association with Greek athletics, misinterpreting the imagery's function and meaning in antiquity. My dissertation is the first comprehensive study of the surviving corpus of objects depicting strigil-bearers contextualizing the subject within broader artistic and social traditions. I argue that the origin of strigil-bearer imagery lies in the celebration of the physical struggle and pain endured in Greek athletic competition and grew to represent both the masculine ideal of the warrior-hero and the practice of hygienic self-care.

In the first chapter I review scholarship on strigil-bearer imagery to achieve two goals. The first is to identify the limitations of written, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence that has led scholars to associate the statues' prototypes with named artists in Pliny. The second is to offer alternative approaches to the study of strigil-bearer imagery, which so far has been limited to few objects and associations with the Greek gymnasium. I highlight the surviving corpus of artistic objects from antiquity that remain understudied as an opportunity to place the subject within a broader artistic tradition.

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In the second chapter I review the catalogue of surviving objects depicting strigil-bearers from its first iteration in ca. 530 BCE to the last one in the mid-fourth century CE. I organize data by artistic medium, workshops, and provenance, to identify its production and distribution in antiquity. In the following chapter, I create a typology for strigil-bearers according to their pose, how they hold the scraper, and who is holding the tool to highlight the diversity of the imagery. Lastly, in the fourth chapter, I focus on the narrative scenes in which artists depicted strigil-bearers, showing its prominence in gymnasium, conversation, courtship, and funerary scenes. Analysis of the corpus suggests the imagery reflects changing perceptions of masculinity from Classical Greece to Imperial Rome, which led to its continued production in antiquity.