"Greek Vases: Wine and Humor in the Age of Tragedy"

This lecture will discuss the fine ware pottery produced in ancient Athens during the 400s BCE—the age of Pericles and the Parthenon, Socrates and Sophocles. The figured decoration on these vessels gives a unique window into the daily lives of the Greeks. Specifically, Attic pottery was produced for use at drinking parties known as symposia. Conducted under the auspices of Dionysus, the god of wine, these parties were often rambunctious. The focus of this talk will be on the ways in which the drunken, disorderly world of the drinking party is reflected in the images on Athenian pottery.

Richard T. Neer (AB Harvard, PhD Berkeley) is David B. and Clara E. Stern Professor of Humanities, Art History and the College at the University of Chicago, where he is also an affiliate of the departments of Classics and Cinema & Media Studies. He has been called “one of the leading new voices in the field of Greek visual art” (Amazon.com); reviewers have termed his work “brilliant” (Times Literary Supplement) and “excellent and challenging” (Art History).

A noted specialist on ancient pottery, Neer began his career at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California and has excavated at the site of Sardis in Turkey. More recently his work has moved from questions of style to the broader social and cultural context of ancient ceramics.

He is the author of Athenian Red-Figure Closed Vessels from the Collection of Molly and Walter Bareiss (Malibu: Getty Museum 1998); Style and Politics in Athenian Vase-Painting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002); The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); and a textbook, The Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Greek World (London: Thames and Hudson, forthcoming in 2011). He has also published widely on Greek art and architecture, the theory of style, historiography, seventeenth-century French painting, and contemporary cinema. He is Executive Editor of Critical Inquiry, which has been called “the journal of record for the Humanities.”