



EUROPEAN
FESTIVAL
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GREECE

High Educational Cultural Experience

MELANKOMAS IN NAPLES

“The beauty of the athlete between body and virtue”

09–13 November 2026

NAPLES | POMPEII | HERCULANEUM | VESUVIUS

An initiative conceived, promoted and developed by “ETS European Festival of Ancient Greece APS” in collaboration with the University of Rome “Foro Italico”

ETS European Festival of Ancient Greece APS - International non profit organization
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ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK



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Project Title

"Melankomas in Naples: The Beauty of the Athlete between Body and Virtue"

Scientific and Academic Coordination

The project is coordinated by:

Professor Emanuele Isidori - University of Rome "Foro Italico"

Full Professor of General and Social Pedagogy, with extensive research in sport pedagogy, ethics, and human development, and institutional roles at national and international level in sport sciences and ethical studies.

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Professor Maristella Trombetta - University of Bari "Aldo Moro"

Department of Humanities Research and Innovation. Teaching History of Aesthetics and History of Art Criticism. Researcher and lecturer in Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art, with expertise in the history of art criticism and extensive experience in international cultural and academic projects.

With the contribution of:

Professor Teresa Vespucci - Former Professor of Philosophy and History at Lyceum Archimede Acireale (CT). Specialist in gender equality education and scholar of ancient thought and myth through philosophical and gender studies perspectives.

Artistic Direction

Emmanouil Kannavos - Artistic Director

Actor and artistic director with solid experience in theatre/performative production and cultural projects.

Project Management

Valentino Berton - Cultural Entrepreneur

The project is coordinated by Valentino Berton, a professional experienced in the design and management of international cultural and educational initiatives.

Project Team

The operational team brings together multidisciplinary expertise:

Francesca Di Sevo – Psychologist and Event Organizer

Clara Tacinelli – Visual Artist

Rocco Girardi – Video and Digital Content Producer

Maria Rita Talento – Archaeologist

Marco Cuomo – Hospitality Expert

Institutional Collaboration, Patronage and Support

The project is developed in **collaboration** with the **University of Rome "Foro Italico"**, with the support of the **University of Bari "Aldo Moro"**, of **A.S. Polymachos (promoting and practicing Pankration)**, and other public and private institutions, cultural organizations, and local authorities committed to education, sport culture, and cultural heritage enhancement.

With the Distinguished Participation of a Member of the Board of the **International Olympic Academy (IOA)**, Olympia, Greece.

The project is enriched by the participation of prominent scholars, university professors and athletes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS



EUROPEAN
FESTIVAL
ANCIENT
GREECE

High Educational Cultural Experience

- Abstract
- Pathway Overview
- Aims and Objectives
- Initiative Programme
- Permanent Event Activities
- Certifications - Internship Credits



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FESTIVAL
ANCIENT
GREECE

High Educational Cultural Experience



“Melankomas in Naples: the beauty of the athlete between body and virtue”

- EVENT ABSTRACT -

The event “*Melankomas in Naples: the beauty of the athlete between body and virtue*” is conceived as a scientific and cultural experience that combines theoretical reflection, philological interpretation, and the performative dimension of the classical text, drawing upon the volume *Melankomas: On the Beauty of the Athlete*, dedicated to Discourses 28 and 29 of Dio Chrysostom.

The project aims to bring the text back to the very place in which it is set—Naples—in order to restore its historical, educational, and anthropological depth, highlighting the significance of Melankomas as a pedagogical and aesthetic paradigm capable of illuminating the relationship between body, virtue, and human development, both in the ancient world and in contemporary society.

Through an interdisciplinary methodology that integrates the philosophy of sport, general pedagogy, aesthetics and classical studies, the event offers a reinterpretation of the boxer Melankomas not merely as a competitive athlete, but as an educational model grounded in “*enkrateia*” (self-mastery), moderation, and the harmonious balance between physical and moral dimensions. The athlete is thus freed from a narrowly spectacular interpretation and restored to his formative role as an exemplar of discipline, self-control, and ethical beauty.

A central feature of the initiative is the presentation of the volume, accompanied by a public and staged reading of selected passages from the text. This approach is conceived as a form of hermeneutic and educational reactivation of the ancient word. The performative dimension restores the text’s original oral and dialogical vocation, transforming listening into an educational and reflective experience. In this way, the audience is engaged in a process of embodied understanding, in which the beauty of the athlete emerges not as a merely aesthetic quality, but as an expression of inner discipline and self-governance.

The event therefore becomes a space for dialogue between antiquity and modernity, where the figure of Melankomas is examined in light of contemporary sporting practices and the educational challenges involved in the education and formation of athletes. In a context increasingly shaped by the spectacle and commercialization of sport, the image of a boxer who triumphs without striking his opponent offers a powerful counter-narrative, capable of renewing a conception of sport founded upon responsibility, moderation, and the cultivation of the self.

Set within the cultural landscape of Naples, Pompeii and Herculaneum—places where classical culture continues to survive as both a tangible and intangible heritage—the event also assumes the value of cultural and territorial restitution.

The initiative is aimed at scholars and researchers in the fields of sport, philosophy, history, archaeology, educational sciences, and the humanities, as well as high school and university students, teachers, coaches, and all those with an interest in classical culture.

From this perspective, the initiative also serves as a high-impact scientific outreach project, capable of combining academic rigor with public engagement, and proposing a replicable model for bringing together research, public reading, and cultural heritage.

By Prof. Emanuele Isidori – University of Rome “Foro Italico”



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*"Acquiring the memory of the past to orient yourself in the present and plan for the future".
Retracing in the footsteps of those who preceded us is essential.*

PATHWAY OVERVIEW

The programme **"Melankomas in Naples: The Beauty of the Athlete Between Body and Virtue"** is conceived as a cultural and educational journey dedicated to exploring the educational value of sport in the ancient world and its relevance in contemporary society. Through the figure of Melankomas, the celebrated boxer praised by Dio Chrysostom for his discipline, self-control, and moral excellence, the initiative encourages reflection on the relationship between the body, virtue, and the holistic development of the individual.

On the occasion of Naples European Capital of Sport 2026, the project is developed within the framework of a broader programme aimed at promoting sport as a tool for education, personal development, and social cohesion. It seeks to foster reflection on the classical roots of sport and its formative significance in contemporary society.

Conferences, book presentations, public readings, sports workshops, and visits to the major archaeological sites of Campania will guide participants through an itinerary that combines scholarly research, cultural heritage, and educational experience. Naples, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Mount Vesuvius thus become places of dialogue between the ancient and the modern, offering opportunities to explore themes such as paideia, enkrateia, sports ethics, and the role of sport in fostering active citizenship.

The programme is designed to encourage interaction among scholars, students, teachers, coaches, educators, instructors, and citizens, promoting a broader understanding of classical culture and its contribution to the holistic development of the individual.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The project aims to promote an interdisciplinary educational pathway that brings together classical culture, education, and sport. ***In particular, it seeks to:***

- deepen knowledge of the ancient world and the Greco-Roman athletic tradition, with particular reference to the figure of Melankomas and the concept of paideia;
- highlight the educational value of sport as a tool rooted in discipline, self-control (enkrateia), and human development;
- develop transversal skills such as body awareness, and psychophysical well-being, critical thinking, and collaborative abilities;
- encourage reflection on the relationship between the body, ethics, and human development;
- enhance the archaeological and cultural heritage of Campania as a space for active learning;
- foster dialogue between ancient knowledge and contemporary educational challenges.



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High Educational Cultural Experience



GENERAL PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Naples | Melankomas and the Ideal of the Athlete

- Opening session and institutional greetings
- Presentation of the volume Melankomas. *"On the Beauty of the Athlete"*
- Meeting with the athlete
- Inaugural lecture: *"Body, Virtue and Beauty in the Greek Educational Ideal"*

Day 2 – Naples | The City of Melankomas

- Guided tour of ancient Naples: Greek Neapolis, the Decumani, the area of the ancient agora, and sites of culture and education in the ancient world
- Lecture: *"Enkrateia and the Pedagogy of Self-Control"*
- Sports and educational workshop: *"Enkrateia: discipline, self-control and body awareness"*
The boxer who does not strike | Breath, concentration and presence | Measure and limits

Day 3 – Naples | Education, Sport and Formation

- Guided tour of the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, with a focus on athletes, competitions, and daily life in the Greek and Roman world
- Presentation of the volume *"The Value of AGON: Sport, Law and Paideia in Ancient Greece"* and presentation of the volume *"Anacharsis: About Sport"*
- Lecture: *"Sport as a Tool for Education, Inclusion and Intercultural Dialogue. The Concept of Areté and the Ethics of Competition"*
- Evening podcast

Day 4 – Pompeii | The Landscape of the Athlete

- Guided tour of the Archaeological Park of Pompeii | Itinerary dedicated to spaces of sport, education, and public life
- Sports workshops: Fighting techniques in antiquity | Introduction to Olympic boxing and comparison with Greek boxing | Coordination and athletic training exercises inspired by ancient training methods
- Evening podcast

Day 5 – Herculaneum and Mount Vesuvius | Resilience, Nature and Heritage

- Guided tour of the Archaeological Park of Herculaneum
- Mount Vesuvius itinerary: resilience, discipline and physical preparation
- Reading of selected texts from Melankomas
- Closing and greetings

The programme outlined above is intended as a general guide and is not exhaustive. It may be subject to changes, adjustments, and additions according to organizational requirements and specific circumstances.



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High Educational Cultural Experience



PERMANENT ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

- **Podcast Sessions:** Live recordings with scholars, athletes, and educators on the key themes of the project.
- **Visual Storytelling Vernissage:** An interdisciplinary exhibition combining photography and painting to reinterpret the athlete's body between antiquity and contemporary perspectives.

CERTIFICATIONS AND INTERNSHIP CREDITS

*The project is recognised as a professional development programme for teachers and allows the accreditation of training hours for the purposes of professional updating and development.

*At the end of the programme, a certificate of participation will be issued.

*The practical/theoretical internship recognises 32 hours of FSL ("School-Work Training"), leading to the profile of "Digital Heritage Communicator".

"The European Festival of Ancient Greece offers a unique educational and cultural experience where history, art, philosophy, archaeology, sport, and intercultural dialogue come together. Through experiential learning, artistic expression, and meaningful human encounters, participants are encouraged to deepen their understanding of the roots of European civilization while developing the skills, values, and awareness needed to become active and responsible citizens of the future".

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