

Roman objects at the Ashmolean

- Most of the Roman objects are on display in Gallery 13: Rome and Gallery 21: Greek and Roman Sculpture.
- The Ashmolean's collections include objects from Roman Britain as well as other objects traded and discovered across the Roman Empire.
- Gallery displays cover the following themes; moving around the Roman Empire; Roman Religion; gods and goddesses; decorating a Roman home; drinking and dining; Roman Oxfordshire ; countryside, farming; the Roman army; Roman sculpture; Italy before Rome and Roman coins.
- The objects on display show a wide range of materials and designs and include examples of sculpture, pottery, metalwork, glass, jewellery, building materials and inscriptions.

Other galleries containing Roman objects

Gallery 21: Greek and Roman sculpture, including many Roman inscriptions

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

Gallery 7: Money

Gallery 6: Reading and Writing containing Roman Inscriptions

Gallery 15: Italy before Rome

Gallery 13: Rome

1. Statue of Hercules, AD100-200



Hercules has just killed the Erymanthian boar, which terrorised the people of Arcadia in southern Greece. This was the fourth of his twelve labours. The hero stands in triumph over his quarry, carrying a bow, arms and a club.

AN1928.529

Gallery 13: Rome

2. The Felix Gem, AD1-50



Probably made in Rome with the engraver's name Felix (*Fortunate*) inscribed in Greek on the altar in the scene. Also in Greek is the Roman owner's name Calpurnis Severus, who used the gem as a seal. It illustrates the Greek sack of Troy from Homer's *Odyssey* and shows Odysseus rebuking Diomedes.

AN1966.1808

Gallery 13: Rome

3. Glass barrel shaped bottles, AD200-400



Glass barrel-shaped bottles made by Frontinus and found in Amiens northern France.

AN1948.36-37

Gallery 13: Rome

4. Inscribed flue tile



Flue tile to carry hot air up the wall of a hot room in a military bath-house. The tile is stamped 'Legion 22 Primigenia Pia Fidelis'. The legion was stationed on the Rhine near Mainz, Germany.

AN1939.120

Gallery 13: Rome

5. Fresco, House of Meleager, Pompeii, AD65-75



In this image, Cupid reveals the contents of a gilded box to a seated woman. Fresco is a technique of mural painting executed upon freshly-laid or wet lime plaster and becomes an integral part of the wall. There are further examples of frescoes on display in the gallery.

AN1990.80

Gallery 13: Rome

6. Red-gloss bowl, 25-1BC



Red-gloss bowl, fine table ware used for serving and dining at the table. The bowl shows musicians and dancers entertaining while servants bring food to a banquet. Workshop of Marcus Tigranus, Arezzo, Italy.

AN1984.881

Gallery 13: Rome

7. Marble tombstone, AD100



The doctor Agathemerus and his wife Myrtale from Rome. This doctor wears a Roman toga, his wife a fashionable wig but the poetic text and their names reveal their Greek origin. The Romans admired Greek culture and Greek doctors were highly respected in Rome.

AN MICHAELIS 155

Gallery 13: Rome

8. Bronze muzzle for a horse



Bronze horse muzzle, with engraved serpents and added bronze snakes. Horses were high status animals used for riding not haulage. They were also used for sport in chariot racing.

AN1971.833

Gallery 13: Rome

9. Gold earrings, AD 50-120



One of several pairs of gold earrings on display including gold and semi precious stone necklaces and other jewellery which would have belonged to wealthy Roman women.

AN1896.1908 R339

Gallery 13: Rome

10. Bronze and gold bulla AD1-80



Gold bulla, an amulet worn by a free born Roman male child on a cord around the neck to protect against evil spirits and forces. This example is from Rome.

AN1953.131

Lines of enquiry: Classics

- Social life in the Roman empire.
- Family relationships including the roles of men, women and children.
- Home and domestic life; eating and drinking, recreation and leisure.
- God and goddesses; sanctuaries, temples, sacrifice and worship in the home.
- Evidence for different religions across the Roman empire.
- The archaeology of Roman Britain.
- Evidence of buildings and the range of materials used.
- Roman countryside and farming.
- Military life in the Roman Empire; life in the army, forts and legions.
- The continuing influence of Roman Britain: similarities and differences between Roman Britain and Britain today.

Working with objects: key questions

- Who made it?
- Where and when was it made?
- What materials is it made from?
- How was it made?
- What was it used for? How was it used?
- Who used / owned it?
- How might it be interpreted by different people? at different times?



Roman oil lamp of Italian design AD1-100, Kertch, Ukraine AN1910.98

Lines of enquiry: Art & Design

- Explore different styles of domestic ware; glass, pewter, silver and pottery. Compare and contrast with today's designs and materials and design your own piece of Roman table ware reflecting these designs.
- Graphic Design: explore typography, signs and symbols, graffiti, inscriptions, and maker's stamps and marks on clay objects.
- Learn about fresco techniques, find examples and try painting directly onto a wet surface.
- Explore the range jewellery on display and design your own pieces.

Further resources

The Ashmolean Latin Inscriptions Project:
latininscriptions.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/

Blog with stories based on objects in the collection: www.ashmolean.org/ashwpress/latininscriptions/

Cross curricular links

- History: the rise and expansion of the Roman empire and reasons for its decline
- English: Roman literature, key authors, their works and their legacy today
- Citizenship: freedmen and slaves; compare and contrast with British society today.

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