

Ancient Greek and Roman Galleries, September 22, 2010-

Roman marble portraits and sarcophagi, wall paintings from the vicinity of Pompeii, floor mosaics from the Roman province of Syria, as well as Etruscan and Italic ceramics and bronzes are on view in the Weiss Ancient Art Gallery. A gallery of ancient Greek art is organized around the themes of early Greece, gods and goddesses, religion, funerary customs, everyday life, and the symposium. A third gallery, devoted to materials and technology, elucidates various creative processes and explains the effects of time on materials including marble, ceramics, metals, and glass.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Roman

Male figure in the guise of Hermes, early 100s CE

Marble

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 03.008

This piece is likely an example of an honorary portrait statue. During Roman imperial times, artists and patrons began to insert portrait heads into statues based on well-known body types identified with certain deities. The distinctive front twist of the mantle (chlamys) draped over the figure's shoulder has been found on representations of the god Hermes (the Roman Mercury). Hermes was the patron god of men involved in trade, and the particular body type of this male figure was often used for portrait statues of wealthy men of business.



Greek

Portrait of a Boy as Eros, late 1st/2nd century CE

Marble

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 03.009



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Etruscan

Lidded box (cista), late 4th - mid 3rd century BCE

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 06.014

Scenes on Praenestine cistae are not always easy to decipher. The veiled woman at the center of the composition could be variously interpreted as a bride preparing for her wedding, as a woman about to be initiated into the cult of the god Dionysos (suggested by the woman to her right, who carries a staff topped by a pine cone), and finally as a deceased woman about to embark on the journey to the underworld. The presence of the messenger god Hermes, seen from behind wearing a winged hat and holding the herald's staff, supports the last interpretation. Hermes is waiting to escort the veiled woman to her groom, the god Hades, who stands beneath the columns on the left. Hermes is depicted in his role of guide of the dead to the underworld (psychopompos). It is therefore likely that this elaborately carved cosmetic box was a funerary gift for a deceased woman.



Etruscan; Etruscan

Three-pronged clasp and buckle, 600s BCE

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 06.016

As a result of the abundance of metals in their region of Italy, the Etruscans became master bronzesmiths whose skills were well-known throughout the Mediterranean world. This intricate buckle is a wonderful example of Etruscan bronze workmanship. The three hooks, designed to slide through the holes and lock the buckle into place, are fashioned into the heads of serpents, a common motif in the Orientalizing period, when the fashions of the Near East were popular in Etruria.



Egyptian; Near Eastern

Small Perfume Bottle (Amphoriskos), 500s BCE-300s BCE

Glass, sandcore

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 06.026

This tiny Greek cosmetic bottle (*unguentarium*) was likely made in Egypt or Palestine using the core-forming technique. First, a core was molded into the basic shape using sand, dung, and clay. Then, this core was dipped into molten glass and rolled on a flat surface to smooth and slowly cool the surface, a process called marvering. Next, threads of yellow and lighter blue glass were trailed onto this vessel, marvered on, and pulled to create the zigzag decoration. The bottle was allowed to cool, and finally, the core was scraped away.



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Roman

Medusa Head Medallion, 1st century CE-2nd century CE

Glass, cast

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 06.037

Believed to have magical protective properties in ancient times, medallions were carried or worn as pendants to ward off evil. This medallion bears the head of the Gorgon Medusa, a mythical monster whose gaze turned men to stone. However, the Gorgon was considered by many, especially women, to be a guardian. This piece was cast by pushing molten glass into a hollow, carved mold.



Asia Minor; Greek; Smyrna

Aphrodite, 300-200 BCE

Terracotta; gilding

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 06.331

This terracotta figure of a standing nude female gazing into a mirror represents Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty. In ancient Greece, terracotta figurines like this one were used within the domestic context as decorations and as cult images for shrines. Some were believed to be apotropaic, or able to ward off evil; others were used within a funerary context, perhaps as gifts for the gods or as protective devices to aid the deceased on their journey into the afterlife.



Roman

Spoon, 100s-400s

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 07.146

In ancient Rome bronze was a prized material for both utilitarian and decorative objects. This spoon may have been used during the evening meal (*cena*) to eat soups, jellies, or other liquids. It was solid-cast, most likely by the lost-wax method and then polished to a lustrous finish. The blackish-green patina of its surface today is the result of oxidation, or exposure to natural elements over a prolonged period of time.



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Greco-Roman

Intaglio, 1st century BCE

Olivine

Gift of Henry A. Greene 08.006



Roman-Egyptian

Vase and lid in the form of the head of a Nubian boy, late 200s BCE

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 11.035

The Hellenistic world featured a wide range of communities and trading partners. Many Greeks, or Hellenized members of colonies like Egypt, came into contact with representatives from nations as far away as Sudan and India. Egyptians held a keen interest in their southern neighbors on the African continent, coupled with a desire to accurately depict Africans in art. This perfume vessel is just one of many examples of this trend, showing the head of an African boy in carefully modeled bronze. The exoticism of the external representation echoed the exotic contents within, as many perfume ingredients were imported from afar.



Roman

Patella Cup, 1st century BCE-1st century CE

Glass, mold-pressed

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 11.768

Most likely used as a small bowl or drinking cup, a patella typically features a convex bowl and a larger convex rim. This example was formed by a method known as mold-pressing, in which a sheet of molten glass is slumped into the hollow half of a mold and pressed into shape using the mold's other half. The deep blue color of the cup was a common choice for glass in ancient times.



Roman

Intaglio, 1st century BCE

Red carnelian

Gift of Henry A. Greene 12.010



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Roman

Statuette of a Young Girl (Artemis?), late 1st century BCE

Pentelic marble

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 13.1478

Artemis was goddess of the hunt, the moon, and virginity, and twin sister to Apollo. Usually accompanied by a retinue of nymphs, Artemis amused herself by hunting in the mountains. She is often represented with a quiver of arrows slung over one shoulder. Although the quiver is absent in this piece, the diagonal strap suggests that the female figure is indeed the goddess. Further, the folds and draping of her garment (peplos) are reminiscent of similar statuettes of Artemis. The scale discrepancy between head and body and the visible crack around the neck suggest that the head may be a later restoration.



Greek

Storage Jar (Amphora), 550-540 BCE

Terracotta, black-figure

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 13.1479

In Athenian culture it was customary for older men to seek out male youths for companionship, mentoring, and love. Many Greek vases, including this amphora, were painted with scenes depicting the initial courtship of a protégé. On one side of the vessel, an older man (signified by his beard) gives a leashed dog to a youth, who is holding two roosters in his arms. Both men are nude, and their lively stances suggest an active conversation. The second side, which is not visible, depicts a similar scene, with the older man presenting a stag while attempting to touch the younger one's face. From a conservation standpoint, this vessel provides an interesting example of Greek vase-mending practices: the visible rivet holes indicate ancient repairs.



Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), 460-340 BCE

Silver

Gift of Mr. Edward Perry Warren 13.1493

The 6th-century Athenian ruler Peisistratus established the Panathenaea, a festival honoring the region's patron goddess, Athena. At that time, Peisistratus minted what is thought to be the first two-sided coin in the world. Whereas earlier coins had one side in relief and the other "incuse," or indented, these new coins had two uniquely engraved reliefs. Each featured imagery reflecting the Athenian pride in their city-state, from Athena's Attic helmet to the



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sprigs of olive next to the region's revered bird, with an inscription meaning "of the Athenians." Variations of this coin type were used for centuries in Athens, and visitors to Greece today will recognize the reverse of this coin as the reverse of the Greek euro.

Greek

Bowl, 200s BCE

Terracotta

Gift of Edward P. Warren 13.1495

This bowl was made to flaunt the natural beauty of the clay. The vessel is unglazed; however, the mica particles in the extremely fine clay give it a sheen. The delicate decorations were created using a pre-made mold, likely from clay, which was carved with incised designs. The bowl itself was made by placing a slab of clay in the mold and shaping the clay to fit while turning it on a potter's wheel. The bowl was then removed from the mold and fired, revealing the unusual five-petal blossoms and other raised decorations.



Roman

Finger ring with lion, 1st century CE-3rd century CE

gold, semi-precious stone

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.1565



Romanian

Cosmetic Jar (Unguentarium), 1st century BCE

Glass, free-blown

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 13.1568

This cosmetic jar was likely used to store scented oil. It was made with a sturdy base to allow it to stand on its own.



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Roman

Jug handle in the form of a panther devouring prey, 1st century CE-
2nd century CE

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 14.021

In classical antiquity the technique most commonly used to create bronze objects was solid lost-wax casting. As this method results in heavy objects, it was reserved for small-scale elements such as this jug handle. To cast an object using the solid lost-wax method, first a wax model is shaped and then covered in clay. Next, this assemblage is baked; as the wax melts it flows from the model, creating a hollow mold that is then filled with molten bronze and allowed to cool. After several days, the clay mold is broken away to reveal the bronze object, which is then polished. Although the surface of this handle was polished in antiquity to reveal the warm glow traditionally associated with bronze, today it is left with a reddish to dark brown surface, which may be the result of exposure to moist air or soil conditions.



Roman

Intaglio with bust of Hercules, 1st century BCE-1st century CE

Red carnelian

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 14.022



Roman

Lion's-head waterspout, ca. CE 200

Marble

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 14.039

This marble disk, carved in the form of a lion's head, would have functioned as an ornate waterspout in a fountain or nymphaeum (fountain with architectural settings for statuary) of a Roman House. The lion's features are now worn from centuries of weathering, and the calcium deposits around the mouth indicate a long period of use in antiquity. The back of the carved waterspout has been hollowed out into a funnel shape, which would have allowed a lead pipe (now lost) to stream water through the lion's open mouth. Embellishments such as this were popular in domestic gardens during the Roman era.



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In antiquity water displays were common in domestic settings — the sound of flowing water and the backdrop of a garden would have created a luxurious setting for entertaining guests.

Roman

Double Cosmetic Jar (Unguentarium) and Applicator, 300s

Glass, free-blown with thread decoration

Gift of Manton B. Metcalf 14.452

This double unguentarium held eye makeup. The bronze rod would have been used to apply pigment to a woman's eyelids. The vessel is asymmetrical, indicating that it was made in haste or by a less-practiced hand. The raised ribbon decoration was trailed on while the glass was hot.



Roman

Flask with Handles, 100s-300s

Glass, free-blown

Gift of Manton B. Metcalf 14.461

This flask is an adaptation of a lens-shaped vessel form developed in ancient Egypt. The body, neck, and lip of this vessel were blown from a single gather (large glob) of molten glass. The handles were formed by applying small globs of molten glass to the flask's body, pulling them upwards, and attaching them to the neck.



Graeco-Syrian

Plate, 200s-300s

Glass, blown

Gift of Manton B. Metcalf 14.462

The Romans made glass objects in a variety of shapes and sizes, as evinced by the contrast between this large platter and the diminutive vessels on the shelf below. This piece can easily be imagined sitting on the table in the dining room (triclinium), holding a variety of fruit or other goods. Its form, which mimics fine ceramics of the period, was created by free-blowing molten glass and then attaching a folded foot.



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Roman

Jug, 200s

Glass, free-blown

Gift of Manton B. Metcalf 14.472

The form of this small jug reflects the malleability of molten glass. The body was free-blown, while the rim was shaped by using a pincher tool to constrict the neck. This same tool was then likely used to pull the spout from the rim. Finally, a glob of molten glass was attached to the vessel's body and pulled upwards to the lip, forming the handle.



Greek

Funerary Lion, ca. 390-380 BCE

Pentelic marble

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 15.003

This crouching lion once functioned as the symbolic guardian of a grave in Athens or in the surrounding countryside. With its head turned and mouth open, it was poised to pounce on any intruder. Guarding family burial plots situated along the roads leading out of Athens, lions such as this fulfilled a two-fold purpose: to protect the tomb and to highlight the wealth and prestige of the family. The unrealistic rendering of the lion's face, mane, and body reflects the fact that Greek artists at this time, having never seen lions, based their depictions of them on large dogs and domestic cats.



Providence Painter, Greek

Storage Jar (Amphora), ca. 500-475 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 15.005

On one side of this storage jar stands an image of the god Apollo, marked by his flowing hair and the kithara (a deeper-toned lyre) he carries. On the other side, heavily damaged, is a female figure, possibly Artemis, Apollo's sister. Although situated on opposite sides of the vessel, the two figures interact: the female brings a jug to pour wine into the libation bowl in Apollo's outstretched hand. Apollo, god of the sun, music and poetry, and medicine, was one of the most important deities of ancient Greece. One of the Pan-Hellenic festivals, the Pythian Games, were held in his honor. The Greeks considered his sanctuary at Delphi, home of the widely known Oracle, to be the center of the universe.



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This jar became known as the name vase (signature piece) of the Providence Painter, to whom almost 150 other red-figure works are attributed, because it most clearly showcases his style. He preferred simple scenes in which single figures appear on a plain black background.

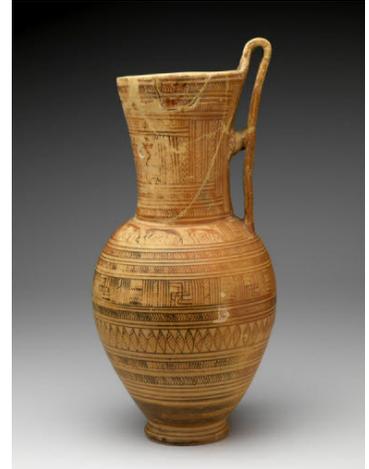
Greek

Pitcher (Olpe), ca. 720-700 BCE

Terracotta

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 15.006

In the 8th century BCE, human and animal figures began to appear along with the usual bands of geometric patterns on Athenian pots. The preparation for burial was a favorite subject, as shown in the panel on the neck of this pitcher, in which six women take part in a funerary procession. At the vessel's shoulder is a frieze of six horses grazing while a bird watches. Large ceramic vases such as this, some as high as five feet and often decorated with funerary representations, functioned as grave markers during the Geometric period. By the 6th century BCE, stone sculptures increasingly replaced large ceramic vessels as funerary monuments.



Roman

Pair of earrings of the Baretta type, 100s-200s

Gold, coral, and garnet

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 15.066



Roman

Strigil, 1st century CE-3rd century CE

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 15.142

To cleanse the skin, ancient Romans applied perfumed oil and then scraped it away using a small, curved metal tool known as a strigil. This bronze strigil was most likely cast by the solid lost-wax method and hammered. In order to form the rounded blade, the cast piece would have been carefully flattened using various techniques. As this strigil was hammered it would have been annealed, or heated evenly and then cooled in order to reshape and restore the metal and



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prevent it from becoming too brittle. Although the surface was once a warm brown color, prolonged exposure to oxygen and mineral-rich environments has caused extensive yellowish corrosion and a dark, mottled-green patina.

Roman

Fragments of Mosaic Glass Vessels, 1st century BCE - 1st century CE

Glass, cast; mosaic glass

Bequest of Lyra Brown Nickerson 16.508



Roman

Pair of crescent-shaped earrings, 1st century BCE-2nd century CE

Gold

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby

19.023



Pair of earrings with female head pendants, late 2nd century BCE-2nd century CE

Gold; garnet

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby

19.025



Pair of earrings with lynx head terminals, late 2nd century BCE-1st century BCE

Gold; glass

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby

19.096



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Etruscan

Hand Holding a Dove, 3rd century BCE

Terracotta

Gift of Dr. Armand Versaci 1986.165

Many ancient societies, including the Etruscans, attempted to divine the future from earthly omens. Etruscan religion was based on three books of prescribed religious practices, each concerning predictions. It is believed that these books inspired the famous Roman Sibylline Books. Etruscan diviners came in two kinds: augurs, who interpreted the movements of birds, and haruspices, who interpreted the entrails of sacrificed animals. This object relates to the practice of augury, evoking the hand of an augur holding a dove at the moment before its release into the sky. The temporal nature of this piece is twofold. It concerns divination, a system of ascertaining what will occur in the future, and it represents a pivotal moment in the process itself, the instant right before the answers will become known.



Etruscan

Relief Fragment of a lion's head, 5th - 3rd century BCE

Terracotta

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 1988.003

Though in fragmentary condition, this lion's head with a flame-like mane, furrowed forehead, and blazing eyes retains its original striking presence. Lions were considered guardians in the ancient world, and similar lion's heads were commonly used as water spouts or ornamental rooftop decorations (antefixes). However, the use of this piece is rather enigmatic; the mouth lacks a hole, ruling out its function as a water spout. The border of the relief indicates that roof adornment was not its function. Parallel lions' heads may have decorated Etruscan sarcophagi or funeral couches, though no intact examples of these have survived.



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Roman

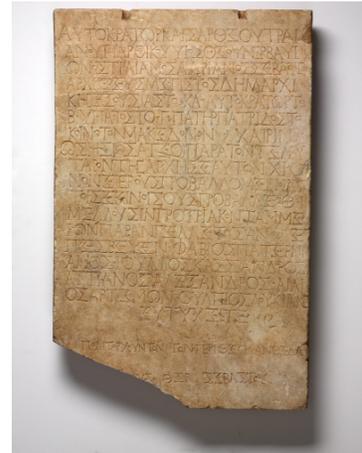
Tablet with Greek transcription of Letter from Emperor Hadrian to Common Assembly of Macedonians, 136 - 137 CE

Marble

Mary B. Jackson Fund 1988.060

This inscription, a carving of a letter from Hadrian to an assembly of Macedonians, offers a glimpse into the state of Macedonian politics in the 2nd century CE. Remains of pigment indicate that the text was originally painted red to make it more visible; it would have been mounted on a wall in a central location for everyone to read.

In the letter, Hadrian states that in accordance with the request of a delegation from Macedon, all Macedonian politicians must inform their chosen successors thirty days in advance when leaving office. The first six lines of the inscription give the full titles for the emperor, the seventh line addresses the assembly, the next six lines make up the substance of the official decree, and the remaining lines list the five members of the delegation and state the year. The decree itself takes up less than a third of the text.



Greek

Dancing Dwarf, late 3rd century BCE

Terracotta

Anonymous gift in honor of Celia Robinson Stillwell 1991.028

Hellenistic party hosts in the 3rd century BCE occasionally employed dwarfs as entertainers, hiring them to dance and amuse the guests. This terracotta figurine of a dwarf dancing and shaking a rattle depicts the practice. Scholars cite the shape of the skull and facial characteristics as evidence of a particular type of dwarfism displayed in many other Greek artistic works. Figurines like this would have been mass-produced by pressing clay into a mold and then painting it after it hardened. The well-preserved state of this figurine indicates that it was probably created for a tomb, where it may have been placed to scare away evil spirits.



Mycenaean

Stirrup Jar, ca. 1100 BCE

Terracotta

Gift of Andrea Toon and Joel H. Cohen in honor of Franklin W. Robinson 1991.181

This ceramic vessel, known as a false-necked amphora or stirrup jar, takes its name from the stirrup shape formed by the two handles bridging the false spout. After the 14th century BCE, these jars were the most common form of storage and transport vessel in the



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Mycenaean world. Their unique configuration made them particularly well suited for liquids such as wine and oil. The false spout and handles were ideal for holding, while the narrow neck of the true spout, located on the shoulder, controlled the liquid's flow. Although the stirrup jar was characteristically a Minoan form, it was adopted by the Mycenaeans after their conquest of Minoan Crete. The triangular forms and wavy lines on this vessel also echo the decorative elements of its Minoan predecessors.

Italo-Greek

Wine cup (kantharos), 400-300 BCE

Terracotta, black-gloss

Jesse Metcalf Fund 1992.007

This elegant black wine cup was in fact an inexpensive substitute for the expensive tableware of the time. The cup was covered in a slip (a fine, liquid clay) that turned a lustrous black in the kiln, making it resemble more costly silver versions. Known as a rattling kantharos, this cup has a hollow rim that contains a pebble. When the cup was empty, the drinker shook it, and the rattling would summon a server to replenish his drink. The superb condition of this cup suggests it was a burial gift.



Greek

Vessel Attachment in the Form of a Sea Bull, 4th century BCE-3rd century BCE

Bronze; silver

Mary B. Jackson Fund 1992.040

This fantastic creature, known as a sea bull, would have decorated a large bronze vessel. Most likely one of four identical sea bulls, it would probably have been placed at the terminal point of an arching handle. The sea bull is intricately cast, its eyes and horns overlaid with silver foil. The presence of silver indicates that the vessel to which this ornament was attached was not meant for everyday use, and was probably either a votive offering or a grave gift. The Greeks, and later Romans, believed that sea bulls would lead the dead to a blessed afterlife.



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Italo-Greek

Handled Dipper, 550 BC / 400 BC

Terracotta

Mary B. Jackson Fund 1993.042



Greek

Furniture attachment in the form of a lion, ca. 500 BCE

Bronze

Mary B. Jackson Fund 1994.067

Although the ancient Greeks began producing small-scale bronzes using the lost-wax process as early as the 10th century BCE, decorative bronzes were not used extensively within the domestic context until the 4th century BCE, during the Hellenistic period. This solid-cast lion most likely adorned the top of a large tripod, or perhaps the edge of some item of furniture. Although the flat, rectangular projection at its base (tenon) is visible today, it would have been hidden in its original context, where it was inserted into a slot to allow the lion to rest securely on a flat surface. Centuries of exposure to the elements, specifically oxygen, mineral and water-rich environments, has weathered the lion's once warm-brown surface. The patches of greenish-blue patina are probably copper oxide, a type of superficial oxidation that can act as a protective layer and prevent the underlying metal from further corrosion.



Italo-Greek

Oil container (askos) in the form of a boar, late 300s BCE-early 200s BCE

Terracotta

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 1996.98

Boars have been found all over the Greco-Roman world since ancient times, and boar hunting was firmly entered into Greek and Roman mythology as a way of emphasizing masculinity. Herakles's fourth labor was to capture the Erymanthian Boar, and soldiers occasionally carried depictions of boars or tusks on their helmets. This small vessel is shaped like a boar with pronounced tusks, and features a spout hole near the handle to pour out the contents. Due to their small size, oil containers (askoi) probably contained precious liquids like oil or perfume.



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Boeotian; Greek

Goat, 5th century BCE

Terracotta

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 1997.19

Technological advancements in the late 6th century BCE allowed local Boeotian sculptors to move from abstract forms to a more naturalistic style. While it is still slightly stylized, this goat figurine shows a progression toward an increasingly realistic form, with hints of red paint reflecting the use of color to give a naturalistic appearance. This goat figurine was probably left at a sanctuary as a symbolic substitute offering for a deity in place of a full animal sacrifice.



Greek

Stater coin, 390-360 BCE

Silver

Gift of Drs. Arnold-Peter C. and Yvonne S. Weiss 1997.42.5

The Lycians, who hailed from an area in southwest Asia Minor, were believed to have fought alongside the Trojans against the Greeks in the Trojan War. The concept of portraiture on coinage originated in Asia Minor. The Greek ruler Pericles, who gained control of all of Lycia in the 360s BCE, is depicted on the obverse of this coin, which exemplifies the assimilation ancient conquerors adopted. Although the Greek Pericles had conquered Lycia, he depicted himself on newly minted coins in the style that was popular in the area at that time.



Celtic

Neck ring (torque), ca. 1300-1000 BCE

Gold

Gift of Drs. Arnold-Peter C. and Yvonne S. Weiss 1999.80

This rare and perfectly preserved gold torque of fine and tightly twisted circular forms hails from the Bishopsland Phase of the European Bronze Age (1350–1000 BCE). It may have been a neck ornament, as at this time objects made of gold were usually fashioned for personal ornament or ritual use. This torque shows no signs of wear, indicating that it was likely used as ceremonial jewelry, possibly for a cult of the dead. Another theory suggests that torques may have been a form of currency based on their weight in gold. Most torques were found in Ireland, Britain, and France. Although the exact archaeological context for this Irish gold torque is unknown, it was most likely found in a hoard or buried with the deceased.



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Greek

Man in a cloak, 520 - 500 BCE

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.056

Bundled in a thick cloak against the winter cold, this bronze statuette depicting an Arcadian shepherd sports a beard, laced boots, and a conical hat called a pilos. A votive offering to a god, it was most likely left at a local sanctuary in Arcadia, a region of Greece known for its shepherds. Which god it was meant for is uncertain, since Hermes, Pan, and Apollo all had some role in protecting shepherds and their flocks. Pan, who was also known as the chief god of Arcadia, seems the most likely inspiration in this case.



Greek; Greek

Bracelet with lion's head terminals, 300s BCE-200s BCE

Gold

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.058



Greek; Sicilian

Ten-drachma coin (decadrachm), 395-390 BCE

Silver

Gift of Drs. Arnold-Peter C. and Yvonne S. Weiss 2001.81.3



European

Diadem, ca. 1100 BCE

Bronze

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2002.102

The four large, carefully crafted spirals on this bronze diadem exemplify a simple design element popularized during the European Bronze Age (1200–800 BCE). The spiral motif typically appeared as an embellishment on jewelry and other objects of personal adornment. This ornate diadem, likely the possession of a person of wealth and prominence, effectively conveyed the status of the owner. Years of



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burial have lent a rich, green patina to the original golden-brown surface of the diadem. This object was most likely found buried among similar pieces of bronze jewelry and bronze weapons in a grave at the Austrian site of Hallstatt.

Etruscan

Relief fragment with warriors and horses, 6th century BCE

Bronze

Gift of Drs. Arnold-Peter C. and Yvonne S. Weiss 2002.114.2



Rectangular bronze reliefs such as this were commonly used to decorate the flat, vertical edges of furniture such as couches, benches, and tables. They may also have adorned wooden doors or vehicles. This Etruscan relief shows mounted warriors marching to battle, spurred on by the musician blowing his horn in the center. The relief presents a unique blend of forms; the shields and helmets are from disparate areas of Greece, while the horn and the piece itself are Etruscan. The artist's incorporation of elements from such diverse forms evidences the strong influence of Greek art in Etruria.

The Concentric Circle Group

Wine jug (oinochoe), 735 - 720 BCE

Terracotta

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2002.46



The ancient Greeks placed great importance upon the proper observance of rites for the dead, including regular offerings of food and drink at the gravesite. This Late Geometric wine jug (oinochoe) is one of only fifteen vessels worldwide attributed to the Concentric Circle Group, a group of vases sharing a unique style emphasizing concentric circles. The decorative elements in this example combine a circle pattern with a central figural scene. The animals in the scene suggest this vessel's funerary context: water birds were identified with both drinking vessels and the dead, who were believed to be thirsty; and horses, a symbol of status and wealth, commemorated the lifestyle and class of the deceased. A snake is painted on the handle; snakes, who moved easily between the earth and life above, were both companions of the dead and protectors of the tomb.

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Roman

Lion's-head handle, 2nd century-3rd century CE

Bronze

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2003.106

The gaping jaws and bared teeth of this bronze lion's head convey the strength and ferocity that made lions chosen guardian figures for millennia in both the Greek and Roman worlds. Representations of lions have been discovered in various contexts, appearing on gates and tombs in ancient Greece and on Roman coffins (sarcophagi), where they symbolize victory of the soul over death and evil. The four iron rivets visible in this lion's mane were the original attachments to a wooden door, chest, or perhaps a sarcophagus.



Mycenaean

Conical drinking cup (rhyton), 14th century BCE

Terracotta

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2006.72

The elegant conical shape, rounded rim, and high ring handle of this drinking cup were adopted by the Mycenaeans from a Minoan form. Given that its pierced bottom would have allowed the contents to flow out, this vessel was most likely used for pouring libations (liquid offerings) to the gods or the dead. While we do not know where this piece was originally found, it is probable that such vessels were buried with the dead after they were used in religious or funerary rituals. By the time this vessel was made, the Mycenaeans had become wealthy and powerful, wielding significant influence throughout the Aegean world.



Etruscan (strung into a necklace in modern times), 6th century BCE

Plain and granulated beads, gold

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2007.26



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Roman

Pointed Amphora, 3rd-4th century CE

Glass, free-blown with applied cobalt blue ring beneath rim

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2008.1

This large storage jar (amphora) was likely used to store wine. The glass ball at the base prevents the object from standing on its own; therefore it would have been placed in a stand, stacked, or sealed and laid on its side. Its ribbon-like handles are thick and practical but still aesthetically pleasing.



Etruscan

One-handed drinking cup (kyathos), ca. late 6th century BCE

Terracotta

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2008.59

A deep appreciation of Greek artistic traditions led the Etruscans to import contemporary Greek ceramics, many of which were created specifically to satisfy Etruscan tastes. The Etruscans also created local versions of Greek vessels. Though this kyathos, or ladle, was made in Etruria, it clearly mimics the Greek black-figure technique. The depiction of hounds chasing hares is a hunting scene, a common theme among Etruscan-made pottery. Other favorite subjects were horses, love scenes, and celebrations, all motifs that would appeal to an aristocratic lifestyle. This kyathos would have been used to serve wine from a krater, or large mixing bowl.



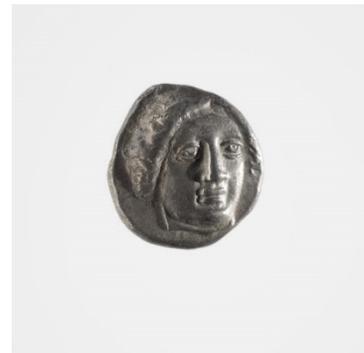
Greek; Rhodes

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), 408/407 - 404 BCE

silver

Gift of Drs. Arnold-Peter C. and Yvonne S. Weiss 2008.60.2

Helios was an eastern sun god who was assimilated into Greek culture. In this coin the unique frontal depiction allows the hair to fan out, much like the rays of the sun. Roses like the one on the reverse of the coin were so abundant on the island that it was said that sailors could smell the shore miles away. Here, it is also a pun on the name of Rhodes, which sounds very similar to the Greek word for flower, rhodon.



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Greek

One-drachma coin (drachm), 344 BCE-317 BCE

bronze

Gift of Drs. Arnold-Peter C. and Yvonne S. Weiss 2008.60.4

Bronze was a rare medium in coinage as it is more susceptible to wear than the more precious metals. This coin features an unusual depiction: that of the father god Zeus. The portrayal here of Zeus "Eleutherios," or, "the Liberator," may be connected to the political climate of Syracuse at the time. The Sicilian city had been under Carthaginian occupation until it was saved by its founding city of Corinth. A coin featuring a liberating father figure would therefore have been appropriate.



Beth Lipman, American, b. 1971

Mixed Fruit Centerpiece (III), 2008

Blown and sculpted glass, glue

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2009.18

Contemporary artist Beth Lipman works in blown glass, a technique invented in ancient Rome. Her *Mixed Fruit Centerpiece (III)* overflows with blown and sculpted glass bananas, apples, grapes, and snails, a nod to the motifs of traditional European still-life painting. Snails often symbolized decay, while fruit represented abundance and prosperity.



Lipman's work is frequently inspired by historical references. This piece was part of *After You're Gone*, a site-specific installation fabricated in response to her research into the RISD Museum's Pendleton House wing. With deft attention to history, context, and the limits of her chosen material, she addresses mortality, consumerism, materiality, and temporality.

Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), 465 BCE

Silver

Gift of Drs. Arnold-Peter C. and Yvonne S. Weiss 2010.56.1



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Greek

Stater coin, ca. 334 BCE

Gold

Gift of Drs. Arnold-Peter C. and Yvonne S. Weiss 2010.56.2



Greek

Stater coin, ca. 334 BCE

Gold

Gift of Drs. Arnold-Peter C. and Yvonne S. Weiss 2010.56.3



Grayson Perry, English, b. 1960

May My Ashes Blow away on the Winds of Change, 1986

Glazed earthenware

Richard Brown Baker Fund for Contemporary British Art 2011.37



Roman

Filigree necklace, 200s CE

Gold, glass beads

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Engelhart C. Ostby 21.005



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Roman

Sarcophagus (coffin), 2nd century CE

Marble (from Dokimeion)

Museum Appropriation Fund 21.074

(Front) This is one of only a few sarcophagi bearing scenes of the Trojan War (thought to have occurred in the 13th or 12th century BCE). On the left the Greek hero Achilles fights the bearded Trojan prince Hector. To the right is a scene that follows their battle: Achilles in his chariot drags Hector's dead body around the walls of Troy, while the goddess Athena (the backer of Achilles), Hector's father, King Priam, and Hector's wife, Andromache (seated), watch. These scenes occur in Book 22 of *The Iliad*, the epic poem about the Trojan War ascribed to the Greek poet Homer (8th century BCE).



(Back) The decorative elements of a sarcophagus were often chosen for their symbolic value, and used to communicate the personal attributes and values of the deceased. Battle and hunt scenes, like those featured on this sarcophagus, emphasize the deceased's courage and virility. On this side, three cupids are shown spearing a lion and lioness with the assistance of three dogs.

(Right Short Side) While this sarcophagus cannot be attributed to a specific artist, the structural details of its form and decoration suggest that it may have been carved by an Asiatic workshop. As the funerary art of Asia Minor often emphasized the personality of the deceased by representing him either in glorious action or with noble attributes, the short sides of this sarcophagus can be interpreted as honorific scenes of personal culture and bravery. Here, two youths face each other from either side of a rectangular pillar; the youth on the right receives a lyre with one hand. By alluding to his cultural sophistication and intellect, this scene communicates the social status of the deceased.

(Left Short Side) It was common for sarcophagi produced within a workshop to have been carved by several artists, each with their own technique and style. These variations often result in a disconnected iconography that is difficult to interpret, as in the case with the short sides of this sarcophagus. On this side a male figure is thrown to the ground by a lioness or panther while a second male figure, perhaps the deceased, hoists a large rock above his head, ready to attack the beast. As similar imagery has been found in hunt scenes, this panel could be loosely connected to the hunt depicted on the back of this sarcophagus. It is more likely, however, that this scene was created as an independent portrayal of the deceased's bravery and loyalty.

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Roman

Fragmentary sarcophagus front and lid depicting The Slaughter of the Niobids, end of the 2nd century CE

Marble

Museum Appropriation Fund 21.076



Only the fronts of this sarcophagus's lid and chest survive; together they show the slaughter of Niobe's children by the gods Apollo and Diana (the Greek Apollo and Artemis). Niobe, a mortal woman with fourteen children, demanded more honor than Leto, mother of the two deities. To punish Niobe's pride (hubris), Apollo and Diana killed all of her children.

On the lid of the sarcophagus, Apollo stands at left and Diana at right, both taking aim at the persons portrayed in the scene below. Between them are Olympian deities, including the central figure of Zeus, king of the gods. To the left of Zeus, Athena stands with Apollo and Diana, depicted as children. On either end of the relief is a bearded male head with an open mouth and wings in his hair. The heads may be personifications of the winds, but their meaning remains unclear.

On the chest, Niobe's dying children gaze up at the vengeful gods. Older figures support the fallen children, including their father, Amphion, on the left. Presumably, the missing portion on the right showed Niobe herself. The myth was popular from the classical age of Greece to the end of the Roman Empire.

Attic (ancient style)

Hinged doll, 500-400 BCE

Terracotta

Gift of Professor V. G. Simkhovitch 22.108

This terracotta figurine, an Athenian child's doll, was nude and probably painted, like other examples, and could have been dressed up in the latest fashions. It was formed using a mold, suggesting there would have been many nearly identical dolls. Its different parts are connected by string, which may have also come out of the hole in the top of its head to let children make the doll dance while they played. Dolls like this are found both in children's graves and in sanctuaries to goddesses, to whom girls customarily gave toys as dedications when they reached adulthood.



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Greek

Water Jar (Hydria-Kalpis), ca. 450 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Gift of Charles Bradley and Museum Appropriation Fund 22.114

The water jar (hydria) was one of the most common vessel shapes in classical Athens. Two horizontal handles on each side were for lifting the vessel when full, and the vertical handle at the back was for pouring or for carrying the hydria while empty. Used predominantly by women, hydriai were often decorated with scenes featuring women. The elegantly painted scene on this vessel of an Athenian woman in her normative role as manager of her household - can be interpreted in two ways. The baskets flanking her, commonly used to hold wool, could refer to her duties of spinning and making garments for her family. The image could also be prophetic: about to be married, the woman looks into the mirror, suggesting a view into her future.



Ancient Greek

Pair of earrings with Eros riding a dove, 299-200 BCE

Gold

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehart Cornelius Ostby
22.176



Greek

Pair of earrings with dove pendants, 299-200 BCE

Gold; garnet

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehart Cornelius Ostby
22.177



Etruscan

Pair of earrings of the à Baulo type, 599-500 BCE

Gold

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 22.208



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Roman

Portrait of a Julio-Claudian Prince (probably Drusus Minor), 0-39 CE

Marble

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 22.211

Members of the emperor Augustus's family often had themselves portrayed bearing a striking resemblance to Augustus (reigned 27 BCE –CE 14) in order to reinforce their leading position in Roman society. In fact, most of the men in the Julio-Claudian family were portrayed so similarly that scholars today continue to have difficulty determining the identities of the male portraits, as is the case with this one.

The treatment of the base of the neck indicates that the head was meant for insertion into a stock bust or body, a common practice for honorary and funerary portraits in Roman times. The rough and unfinished appearance of the ears and top of the head and the ridge above the bottom row of curls on the back suggest that this head was once adorned with a metal wreath.



Greek

Wine Jug (Oinochoe), ca. 490 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 22.213

Although the word symposium means literally a "drinking together," symposia were not inclusive events. Women were not permitted to attend, with the exception of the hired female companions (hetairai), who entertained and served the all-male guests. This figural wine jug (oinochoe) was likely used in the symposium, where its anthropomorphic form would have enlivened the assortment of vessels used for sorting, mixing, pouring, and drinking wine. This vessel's form is particularly appropriate to its function, since wine was customarily poured by hetairai during the symposium.



Greek

Drinking cup (kylix), ca. 550-525 BCE

Terracotta, black-figure

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 22.214

This drinking cup (kylix) is an example of the elaborately painted vessels used during symposia in ancient Greece. The broad, shallow bowl with two handles atop a pedestal base permitted the drinker to maintain a recumbent pose while drinking, as was customary in a symposium. The decorative elements of this kylix demonstrate the Athenian use of imagery to inform, engage, and entertain. Between



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the large, painted eyes are a satyr and a maenad, followers of the wine god Dionysos. This mythological allusion communicates the intended function of the vessel as a wine cup. The very act of bringing the cup to the drinker's mouth transforms the cup into a mask; the painted eyes become the drinker's, the handles turn into ears, and the round base converts into an open mouth.

Greek

Oil Flask (Lekythos), ca. 500 BCE

Terracotta, black-figure

Gift of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf 22.216

The myth of Europa states that while the maiden was walking among her father's herds with some attendants, she noticed a pure white bull. After calming him, she sat on his back. The bull, actually the lustful Zeus in disguise, ran off with Europa and swam to the island of Crete, where he revealed his true form. This oil flask (lekythos) details the abduction, with Europa seated on Zeus's back, and one of her attendants behind. The messenger god Hermes stands facing the bull, wearing his characteristic winged boots and holding his winged staff (kerykeion).



Greek

Finger ring, 199 BCE-1 BCE

Gold; glass paste

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby
22.230



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Etruscan

Ring, 399 BCE-200 BCE

Gold, milk-grey stone

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby
23.006



Greek

Storage jar (amphora), 539-500 BCE

Terracotta, black-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund 23.303

Storage jars (amphorae) were used during the symposium to hold various dry goods and liquids, like oil or wine. This Athenian amphora was signed by the 6th century BCE potter and workshop owner, Nikosthenes. His signature Nikosthenes epoisen (Nikosthenes made [this]) is inscribed beneath one handle. As a potter, Nikosthenes is known for producing vessels specifically designed to suit the various foreign tastes of the export market. The thin walls and broad flat handles were modeled after an Etruscan form originally produced in metal. The body of the vessel is divided into sections by raised ridges that suggest how a metal vase would have been pieced together; here they are purely stylistic.



Greek

Storage Jar (Amphora), 480-460 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 23.323



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Greek

Male figure (Bebenburg Youth), 300-200 BCE

Marble

Museum Appropriation Fund and Special Gift Fund 23.342

Surviving traces of reddish pigment still visible in the hair of this figure reflect the fact that most ancient statues were originally vividly painted. In addition to the curls of the hair, the eyebrows, eyelashes, eyes, and mouth, and perhaps even the skin would have been painted, lending this small-scale figure a more life-like appearance. This small-scale figure could have been a tomb statue or an athletic victor's dedication to a god.



Etruscan

Mirror with tang, 375-250 BCE

Bronze

Museum Appropriation Fund 23.350

Bronze mirrors were used by Etruscan men and women for dressing and bathing. Many such mirrors have been found in graves, indicating the value their owners placed on them in their life — and afterlife. Mirror discs were frequently decorated on the reverse side with images taken from Greek mythology. This particular mirror has Etruscan inscriptions indicating that it depicts the god Achilles, flanked by his mother, Thetis, and Achuisir, an Etruscan attendant to the gods. The inscriptions identifying the figures are believed to have been added after the mirror was complete.



Greek

Pair of knucklebones, 499-400 BCE

Gold

Museum Appropriation Fund 23.358



RISD MUSEUM

Roman

Votive amphora, 500-599 CE or later

Gold

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby
24.012

In ancient Rome, gold was a valuable and highly sought after commodity. As it was prohibitively expensive to cast, craftsmen often produced gold objects by hammering thin sheets of the metal into the desired forms. This method lent itself particularly well to the construction of vessels, like this elaborate gold amphora. Although this vessel appears to be seamless, it is fashioned from at least three sheets of gold; the first comprises the base and the body up to the shoulder; the second, the shoulder to the neck; and the third, the lip. These pieces were hammered to the desired shape and then connected by a solder joint. The amphora was then embellished using several cold work techniques: small beads of gold (granulations) were adhered in a decorative v-shaped pattern; filigree, or thin gold wires twisted together, was applied to the upper portion of the body to mask the solder joints; and a small hammer was used to create the embossed design, or repoussé work.



Roman

Barrel-shaped bead, 500-599 CE or later

Gold

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby
24.015

Sheet gold, or thin metal made by hammering a gold ingot on an anvil, was used throughout antiquity to create lustrous objects, like this bead. To form its barrel shape, two small pieces of gold sheet were bent into the desired form and then soldered together. A double row of tiny gold balls, referred to as granulations, was adhered to the bead to disguise the solder joint. The all-over granulation cluster designs, however, are purely decorative. To provide further embellishment, pieces of gold wire were attached to both ends and then pinched or chiseled. This ornate bead was probably part of a necklace.



RISD MUSEUM

earring, 500-599 CE

Gold; garnet

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby
24.016



Roman

Portrait of a man in the Republican style, first century CE or later

Marble

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.063

This carefully sculpted head represents a particular individual: a balding man of late middle age with wrinkled, sagging skin and a serious expression. At the same time, it depicts an ideal type: that of a statesman in the Roman Republican period, when high political offices were reserved for those of advanced years and patrician birth. Images of the time sought to highlight culturally defined virtues: frankness, integrity, and devotion to duty. Portrait statues of illustrious men filled Rome's public spaces and portrait busts of distinguished ancestors lined the entrance halls of the homes of the Roman elite.



Roman

Torso of a fighting giant, 117-138 CE

Marble

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.064

From the 5th century BCE, giants appeared often in all the arts, particularly in sculpture. This sculpture echoes an architectural example from ancient Corinth in size, pose, and rosette ornament, suggesting a similar identification: that of a giant in battle. The engraved hair rosette on the chest of this torso has been found on sculptural examples of centaurs, giants, and satyrs. According to legend, giants attempted to overturn the rule of the gods in an early and mighty struggle. This torso was meant to be seen from all sides and may have been part of a battle scene in the round.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek

Wine Jug (Oinochoe), 399-369 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.067

Every spring Athenians celebrated the Anthesteria, a three-day festival devoted to the new vintage of wine. The second day of the Anthesteria, called choes, featured a special event for young children, where they sampled the first wines out of a wine jug (chous). These vessels were specially sized for young drinkers. Many choes, including this one, were decorated with scenes of children at play. On this jug, a young child is shown riding on the back of a deer, in a landscape full of plants.



Etruscan

Mirror, 399-300 BCE

Bronze

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.071

Bronze hand mirrors were a characteristic product of the Etruscans. This mirror was most likely cast by the solid lost wax technique and then engraved. The incised scene depicts Artemis, the Olympian goddess of hunting, wilderness, and wild animals. Although depictions of Artemis riding on a pair of stags are very rare, she is identified by the Etruscan inscription. The dull bronze color and heavy pitting of the incised side suggests that it was, at one point, over-cleaned with abrasive chemicals.



Lewis Painter, Greek, ca. 475BCE-450BCE

Drinking Cup (Skyphos), ca. 480 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.072

On this drinking cup (skyphos) a young maiden is seen fleeing something or someone, with her head turned back and her right arm outstretched. In her left hand she holds a branch with two spiral tendrils that end with a lotus bud. Her pursuer is depicted on the vessel's reverse; he runs toward her with both arms outstretched. Behind him are two spears, points down, which suggest that he is also being pursued. The enigmatic nature of this scene is fitting for a drinking vessel, where it would have undoubtedly evoked lively discussion among guests at a symposium.



RISD MUSEUM

Makron, Greek, ca. 500-475 BC
Small Container (Askos), ca. 490-480 BCE
Terracotta, red-figure
Museum Appropriation Fund 25.074

The scene on this oil container (askos) is attributed to the artist Makron, who was known for his portrayals of daily life. Two reclining maenads are depicted as participants in a symposium; one holds a wine cup (skyphos) and the other holds an ivy-like staff (thyrsus) carried by Dionysos and his followers. Similar scenes of symposia, as well as images of the wine god Dionysos and his retinue, are frequently found on vessels used during symposia. While its exact function is unknown, the diminutive size of this vessel would have been ideal for the controlled pouring of precious oils into oil lamps. Makron's use of frontal and profile views reflects the changing conventions of depiction and experimentation in early Attic painting.



Brygos Painter, Greek, ca. 500BC-475BC
Oil Flask (Lekythos), ca. 490 BCE
Terracotta, red-figure
Museum Appropriation Fund 25.078

Hera, queen of the gods, was often shown seated upon a throne, as in this oil flask (lekythos). The throne itself, carved of wood, culminates in a palm-leaf-shaped decorative element and features an elaborate cushion. Hera wears an Ionic chiton, a flowing, belted garment. In her left hand she grasps a lotus bud scepter, and in her right, a sacrificial bowl (phiale). The falcon perched on her throne is very unusual; as goddess of women and marriage, the cow and the peacock are the sacred animals associated with Hera, but they are not included here. In fact, this is the only extant example showing the goddess with a falcon.



Reed Painter, Greek, ca. 420 BC-390 BC
Oil Flask (Lekythos), 420-400 BCE
Terracotta, white-ground
Museum Appropriation Fund 25.082

Oil flasks (lekythoi) were common household objects used daily in cooking and bathing. They were also routinely filled with oil and buried in tombs and left as gifts to the dead. In the early 5th century BCE, a type of lekythos, the white-ground, developed specifically as a vessel destined for the grave. The term "white-ground" refers to the creamy, off-white backgrounds on which funerary scenes were



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painted. The scene of the ferryman Charon waiting to transport the deceased woman across the river Styx on this lekytho confirms the vessel's intended function as a grave gift. The quiet, calm demeanors of the figures reflect the Greek classical ideals of dignity and restraint.

Greek

Storage Jar (Amphora), ca. 550-525 BCE

Terracotta, black-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund and Special Gift Fund 25.083

This storage jar (amphora) depicts the departure of Triptolemus on his mission to educate the whole of Greece to plant and reap crops. He rides a chariot and carries four spears of wheat in one hand and a scepter in the other. Facing Triptolemus is the goddess Demeter, who chose to teach him the art of agriculture so that he could sow wheat throughout the inhabited earth. Her daughter, Persephone, stands behind him. As the father of ancient Greek agriculture, Triptolemus was associated with successful harvest and abundance. In this context, the image of Triptolemus was perhaps intended to be apotropaic, or resistant to bad luck, ensuring the continued agricultural prosperity of the vessel's owner. As amphorae were often used to store and transport dry goods, this scene may have also indicated the vessel's contents.



Greek

Oil bottle (alabastron), 460-450 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.088

This tender scene of a woman and two children was intended as a farewell to a loved one, and would have stood at a gravesite. The woman on this vessel, presumably the children's mother, holds one child in her arms while another clutches her clothing. Although the child in her arm has disproportionately long limbs, he is meant to be an infant. On the other side of the flask, a woman stands holding a mirror before a seated man, as they reach out to one another.



RISD MUSEUM

Italo-Greek

Drinking Cup (Skyphos), 375-350 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.089

This drinking cup (skyphos) shows a variation of a children's game that was popular in the Greek world. The two-player game, ephedrimos, involved placing a target rock (dioros) in the ground, and then taking turns aiming other rocks at it until it was hit. Whoever failed to hit the rock would carry the winner on their back and try to reach down and touch the dioros. To further complicate the game, the winner would sometimes blindfold the loser with their hands. On this skyphos, a woman is shown carrying Eros on her back and searching for the dioros, which may be among the circles stacked at the base of the vessel. In this particular case, the image may indicate preparations for marriage, as the woman proves her strength and fertility by successfully carrying the god of love. On the other side, a woman is seated with a bird perched on her hand while a young man holding a scraper (strigil) stands nearby.



Greek

Wine Jug (Oinochoe), ca. 430 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.090

There are several forms of Athenian wine jugs (oinochoai); this form, called a chous, is known for its bulbous body and three-lobed mouth. During the Anthesteria, a springtime festival celebrating the new vintage of wines, it was customary to drink from choes and to pour libations from them at the tomb. As the ancient Greeks also considered springtime to be a period of rebirth, when the spirits of the dead returned to visit the living, choes were often used as grave offerings.



The image on this chous indicates that it may have been used in a funerary or ceremonial context. As a grave-gift, it would have allowed for the perpetual renewal of the deceased's lifetime accomplishments. For the Athenians, mounted horsemen were heroic figures. Here, the young horseman beside his steed can be understood as a fallen hero. The monument in the background was perhaps intended to commemorate him.

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Roman

Intaglio inscribed "Dioskourides", ca. 30-20 BCE

Rock crystal

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.094



Etruscan

Pair of earrings of the leech type, 399-200 BCE

Gold

Museum Appropriation Fund 25.106



Greek

Oil Flask (Lekythos), ca. 480 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund and Special Gift Fund 25.110

Attributed to the Pan Painter, one of the most skilled Greek vase painters, this oil flask (lekythos) exhibits his delicate style. This flask displays a scene of offering to the gods. The female figure is the winged goddess Nike, carrying a sacrificial bowl (phiale) and an incense burner (thymiaterion). These objects were commonly used in prayer rituals involving sacrifice and libations (liquid offerings) to the gods. The piece itself, an oversized lekythos, was most likely meant as a funerary gift. Made in Attica but found in Gela, Sicily, it shows that Athenian wares were exported to fulfill demands in the Greek colonies of Southern Italy and Sicily.



RISD MUSEUM

Pair of earrings with amphora pendants, 299-200

Gold; glass

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby
25.115



Greek

Aphrodite, 199-100 BCE

Bronze

Museum Appropriation Fund and Special Gift Fund 26.117

This bronze figure of Aphrodite, now green from oxidation, once would have been a warm brown. To heighten a sense of naturalism, the eyes and hair ribbon were inlaid with silver and the lips with copper. The left arm, reconstructed from the shoulders down, now shows her holding an apple; it was originally upraised like her right, to adjust a necklace, now missing. The right foot and ankle have also been replaced. These restorations date to the early 19th century.



In the 4th century BCE, the first nude image of Aphrodite was sculpted, breaking a long tradition of depicting Greek goddesses clothed. It was fitting, however, that the goddess of love and beauty was the first to be portrayed in this new way. The motif became so popular that hundreds of such images of Aphrodite survive from ancient Greece and Rome, where they adorned homes, gardens, and sanctuaries. Exceedingly rare today, bronze examples like this one must have been prized possessions of wealthy patrons.

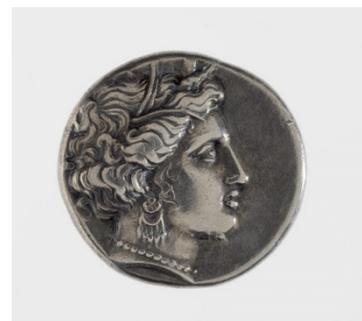
Greek

Stater coin, 360-330 BCE

Silver

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 26.118

Arkas was the child of the god Zeus and the mortal Kallisto. Hera, Zeus's wife, jealously transformed Kallisto into a bear, rendering the newborn Arkas an orphan. On this coin, the messenger god Hermes takes Arkas to be raised by the god's own mother. In ancient art, Hermes is often depicted not only transporting children to caretakers, but also transporting the dead to the underworld. The die-engraver



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of this coin did not depict Hermes in flight. Rather, he represented the god's movement more effectively by portraying him mid-stride on the ground.

Roman
Marble Column with Vine Decoration, ca. CE 120
marble
Museum Appropriation Fund 26.156

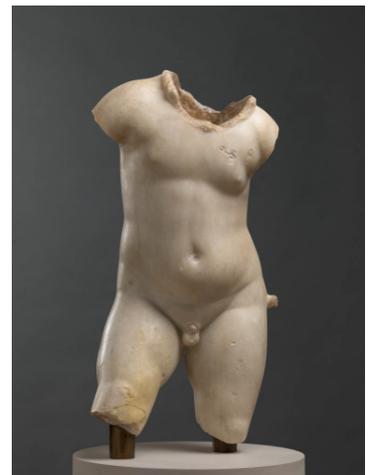
This column, carved with birds and delicate winding vines, may come from Hadrian's Villa, a sprawling estate several miles east of Rome. The Roman Empire was at its most expansive under Hadrian, who developed a love of travel as he maintained the empire's shifting borders. Hadrian sought to re-create various parts of the empire within the grounds of his massive villa. He also may have tried to re-create a particular time. During the reign of Augustus, acanthus, fruits, animals, and other naturalistic motifs came to represent the prosperity and peace that the emperor had brought. It is possible that Hadrian chose natural imagery to evoke a comparison between Augustus's leadership and his own.



The stains on this column are likely mineral deposits picked up from the grain it laid in prior to its discovery. When it was first found, it was probably washed with acids. More recently, the RISD Museum conservator cleaned the column with mild cleansing agents, used neutral solvents to remove any hand greases, then used soft brushes and soaps to brighten the mottled surface, which was finally washed with distilled water to remove any residue. The patch in front of you was left untreated for comparison.

Roman
Youthful Figure Wearing a Torque, 138-192 CE
Marble
Museum Appropriation Fund 26.158

As the Empire expanded, especially during and after the 2nd century CE, foreign practices and luxury goods were assimilated into Roman culture. In addition to its aesthetic qualities, the adopted neckpiece (torque) around this figure's neck served a function: it covered the seam where a portrait head (now lost) joined the torso. This traditionally Celtic ornament was worn by Roman soldiers and by youths who participated in the Trojan Games. Originally indicators of divinity, torques suggested the gods' protection. In fact they are



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common to representations of such child-deities as Horus-Harpokrates, Attis, and young Dionysos, who were connected with Eastern mystery religions that shared the promise of a happy afterlife with their initiates. Combined with a lost portrait head, the torque may establish this piece as a funerary portrait statue, an appropriate memorial to a deceased youthful son.

Roman

Male figure, 1-100 CE

Marble

Museum Appropriation Fund 26.159

This piece was long considered to be a statue of a standing athlete tying a victory fillet around his head. However, close observation of the figure's anatomical features suggest instead that he was in dynamic movement: he was lunging forward with most of his weight borne by a bent left leg (now missing) and his right leg was actively extended behind him.

The cavity between the shoulders indicates that the statue's neck area was prepared to receive a portrait head. This sort of athletic body type in sculpture became very popular in the Roman world and was used extensively in honorary portraits. As a type, it was favored by imperial and non-imperial persons alike, as the individual was paid tribute by his presentation in heroic nudity.



Roman

Portrait of Augustus, 0-39 CE

Marble (from Paros)

Museum Appropriation Fund 26.160

Augustus was remarkably handsome and of very graceful gait even as an old man... Augustus's eyes were clear and bright, and he liked to believe that they shone with a sort of divine radiance: it gave him profound pleasure if anyone at whom he glanced keenly dropped his head as though dazzled by looking into the sun.

— Suetonius, *Augustus*, 79. (69–140 CE)

Although likely sculpted towards the end of Emperor Augustus's life, this portrait depicts him as a handsome and solemn youth. Then, as now, images of rulers could be manipulated to serve propagandistic purposes. Depending on the message that Augustus wished to convey, he was variously represented as priest, military commander, or statesman. Here, the top and back of the head are unfinished, suggesting that the head was originally covered, perhaps by the fold



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of a toga. Depictions of Augustus with his head covered refer to his role as chief priest (pontifex maximus) of the Roman state religion.

Graeco-Phoenician

Relief of a Man Burning Incense, ca. CE 70

limestone

Museum Appropriation Fund 26.161

Although the man in this relief is wearing traditional Greek garments, the sculpture is of Roman origin. The only comparable extant reliefs come from the ancient Roman province of Phoenicia (modern Lebanon). Here, a man holds a box of incense and is about to place a grain on the censer before him. His cloak (himation) is delicately fringed and relates to the cult of Isis. This man, either a priest or initiate of this mysterious cult, has likely paused in a ritual procession to make incense offerings to the goddess.

Roman religion was inclusive: popular provincial gods were adopted into the Roman pantheon, and foreign deities were associated with Roman gods through a practice called syncretism. Many of these foreign divinities were worshipped through mystery cults, where elaborate initiation rites brought a strong sense of religious community and offered the promise of spiritual renewal in this world and salvation in the next. Isis was an Egyptian mother goddess whose worship and mystery cult were adopted in Rome during the 1st century BCE.



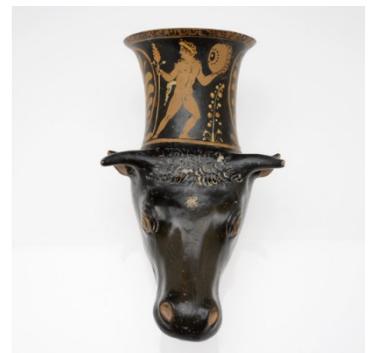
Italo-Greek

Drinking Cup (Rhyton), after 350 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund 26.166

The Greek colony of Tarentum in Southern Italy specialized in the production of drinking cups called rhyta. This terracotta vessel, like other Tarentine rhyta, is more fragile than examples from mainland Greece and was most likely intended for funerary purposes. Although animals were a common choice for depiction in these molded



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vessels, the bull carried special significance in Southern Italy, where Dionysus was worshipped in the form of a bull as both the god of wine and the favored god of the underworld. The painted satyr on the body of this rhyton also carries Dionysiac attributes and is a follower of the underworld god, suggesting that this vessel was intended for ceremonial use.

Greco-Roman

Funerary Vase, 425-400 BCE

Marble

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe 26.271

Constructed to hold perfume or perfumed ointment, this marble vase may have been used for baths, banquets, or weddings. However, the primary function of the ointment vase (exaleiptron) was as a funerary gift. Several examples exist of white-ground lekythoi, or oil flasks, depicting these vases in use. The elaborate shape of the vase is too complex for it to have been carved from one piece of marble; such vases are usually assembled of six pieces, the base, stem, lower bowl, upper bowl, lid, and knob. The knob belonging to this vase has been lost.



Roman

Mirror with three erotes around an altar, 100-199 CE

Bronze

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe 26.272

Ancient craftsmen commonly used thin sheets of bronze to create lightweight metal objects like this mirror case. The basic shape of this mirror was most likely formed by planishing, a technique by which a smooth hammer is used to work the base material in spirals from its center. As planishing one piece can require thousands of blows, this object was undoubtedly annealed (a restorative process used to prevent cracking) several times. Once the desired shape and size was achieved, a decorative scene was applied by repoussé or embossing techniques. The specific repoussé technique is unclear; it may have been embossed on the front side using a stamp, or it may have been gently hammered onto the backside using a small-headed hammer or punch. This bronze roundel would have been attached to the cover of a box-mirror.



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Attic (ancient style)

Horse and rider, 699-600 BCE

Terracotta

Museum Appropriation Fund 26.397

In 7th and 6th century BCE Greece, the region of Boeotia was a center of production for terracotta figurines, particularly standing and sitting goddesses, as well as these striped horses. Horse and rider statuettes were produced mainly as votive offerings for sanctuaries, but also as grave gifts and even children's toys. The figure of the rider ends at the hips, where it comes in contact with the horse. The geometric patterns that cover the figurine are both decorative and representative; hidden among the designs one can see the rider's hands and eyes and the horse's bridle.



Southern Italian

Woman's head plate, 340-300 BCE

Terracotta

Gift of E. P. Warren 27.188

This footed plate was created in the city of Falerii, just north of Rome. A woman is shown in profile, with billowing locks escaping her bun and a bold wave pattern framing her on the rim. The inscription on the base of the stem reads P. CENVCILIA, which is most likely the name of the woman who commissioned the plate, Poplia Genucilia. This style of vase painting is unique to the city of Falerii, and even to a group of similarly decorated pieces that have been dubbed "The Genucilia Group" after the inscription on this piece.



Cosmetic Jar (Unguentarium), 200-1 BCE

Glass, core-formed

Museum Appropriation Fund 27.212

This core-formed miniature flask was used to hold perfumes or oils. Made in Syrio-Palestine, its core of sand, clay, and dung was coated in molten glass. The vessel was shaped and decorated; once cool, the core was scraped out. The colorful design was created by trailing or spiraling molten threads of differently colored glass around the vessel as it was spun. These threads of color were then dragged up or down the flask, forming the feathered zigzag pattern.



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Roman

Couch decoration in the form of a horse's head, 100s CE

Bronze

Museum purchase with funds from Museum Appropriation Fund and Mrs. Gustav Radeke 27.221

As the symposium was a leisurely occasion, participants customarily reclined on couches (kline) while they drank and conversed. The headrest and footrest of kline were adorned with decorative elements, like this bronze horse head. The panther skin tied around the horse's neck and the corkscrew curls of the mane are associated with the wine god Dionysus, making this bronze particularly suited to the wine-drinking revelry of the symposium. Although attributed to ancient Rome, this figure's dramatic details — the flared nostrils, grooved jaw, open mouth, and twisted neck — reflect the heightened sense of realism and emotion in the art of Hellenistic Greece.



Pan Painter, Greek, ca. 475 BC-450 BC

Nuptial bowl (lebes gamikos), 480-460 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 28.020



Greco-Roman

Finger ring with serpent, 1-199 CE

Gold

Gift of Ostby & Barton in memory of Englehardt Cornelius Ostby 29.045



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Etruscan

Beaked jug, ca. 500 BCE

Bronze

Museum Appropriation Fund 29.089

Popular in Etruria from the late 6th century BCE, this form of jug was used for hand washing before meals or rituals, as described by Homer. The small male figure is a handle attachment, which came in many forms on this type of vase. The man is depicted running to the right wearing only calf-high winged boots, his long hair streaming behind him. Scholars believe that he is either an archetypal athletic youth adopted from the Greek tradition, or the male counterpart to a lasa, a winged female attendant, nude except for slippers, that commonly appeared on Etruscan bronze mirrors and vases.



Greek

Mixing Bowl (Krater), 520-510 BCE

Terracotta, black-figure

Museum Appropriation Fund 29.140

The ancient Greeks always diluted their wine with at least an equal amount of water, mixing the two liquids in large vessels such as this krater. The expansive exterior surfaces of kraters allowed vase painters to depict complicated scenes with multiple figures.



Side A

Here Herakles (the Roman Hercules), having successfully completed the Twelve Labors, enters Mount Olympus to become a god. Wearing a lion skin, Herakles steps onto a chariot drawn by four horses. Behind him is Iolaos, his charioteer. The goddess Athena, wearing a crested helmet and breastplate and carrying a spear, faces Herakles. Behind her stands the wine god Dionysos, identified by the garland of ivy leaves on his head. Apollo, god of music, wearing a laurel wreath and holding a kithara, is on the right.

Side B

The Athenian hero Theseus, shown here wrestling the Minotaur, is wearing a lion skin in imitation of the Greek hero Herakles. Directly behind Theseus is the princess Ariadne, who helped him to defeat the Minotaur. Behind her is a youth, holding a spear and watching the action. Two similar youths watch on the right. These probably represent the Athenians rescued by Theseus after the slaughter of the Minotaur.

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Greek

Medallion, 330-269 BCE

Gold, garnet; enamel inlay

Museum Appropriation Fund 29.256

This depiction of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, shows a bust in the center of a series of decorated circles ending in nine small gold loops. Medallions like this have been recovered from many places in the Hellenistic world. Scholars are unsure of their exact function. Theories suggest their use as the central piece of a lady's hairnet or as a small box cover. Although much of the jewelry in this case has clear modern parallels, some pieces, like this medallion, are more difficult to place.



Campanian

Large, round-bottomed bowl (dinos), 490 - 470 BCE

Bronze

Museum Appropriation Fund 30.017

This vessel of hammered bronze is delicately engraved on the shoulder with a tongue pattern and a band of honeysuckle. The four winged horses (pegasoi) galloping on the molded rim are statuettes representing a mythical breed of horses popular in antiquity. Remains of a knob, now lost, are still visible on the lid. Dinos (plural of dinos) made of terracotta and bronze were used as funerary urns during the 6th and 5th centuries BC. They were also awarded as prizes at games, including funeral games honoring the deceased. This dinos now rests on a modern ring stand, replicating how it would have stood in a tomb or a sanctuary nearly 2,500 years ago.



Etruscan

Pin (fibula), 700-600 BCE

Gold

Museum Appropriation Fund 30.051



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Greek; Mycenaean
Stemmed drinking cup (kylix), ca. 1300 BCE
Terracotta
Museum Appropriation Fund 31.001

Improved methods of ceramic firing on the Greek mainland facilitated the production of long-stemmed drinking cups (kylikes) such as this one. After the 14th century BCE, this shape became the standard form of drinking cup throughout most of the Mycenaean world. Decorative elements during this period were often mere approximations of the objects they were intended to represent. On this vessel, the tall pointed form suggests a mollusk shell, while the curled lines evoke the waves of the sea. Marine motifs are common in Mycenaean art, a tribute to the sea as an invaluable source of food, trade, and economic prosperity in the ancient world.



Attic (ancient style)
Grave marker (Radeke Stele), 399-300 BCE
Marble
Museum Appropriation Fund 31.278

From the 6th to the 4th century BCE, erect stone slabs (stelai) with painted or sculpted scenes and inscriptions were the most common form of grave marker in ancient Greece. This example shows a woman, probably the deceased, with her hair covered, indicating that she was married. Her left hand moves the cloth away from her cheek — a gesture often seen in funerary monuments. Grave markers with single figures, such as this one, could have been situated together to create family groupings; the individual figures would have appeared to be taking part in a family gathering. In fact, funerary displays became so elaborate that Athenian laws limited their size and ostentation in the late 4th century BCE.



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Etruscan

Candelabrum, 399-300 BCE

bronze

Museum Appropriation Fund 31.364

When in use, this candelabrum would have had a candle attached to each of the four prongs. The stand was most likely made in several parts, each solid-cast by lost-wax method and then soldered together. In ancient times, this candelabrum would have featured a decorative bronze finial, either a small statuette or a pair of figures, at the center of the four prongs. Although many types of such figures are known, athletes and warriors seem to have been the most popular subjects. The inside of the saucer bears an inscription in Etruscan dedicating it to the deity Lurs, about whom little is known.



Roman

Funerary wreath, 300-399 CE

Gold

Museum Appropriation Fund 32.007



Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), 297-282 BCE

Silver

Bequest of Lida Shaw King 32.067

Upon his death, Alexander the Great divided his empire among several of his officers. The general Lysimachos, who received the province of Thrace, minted a coin to justify his power. The obverse of the coin references the occasion during which Alexander had been hailed as a son of Zeus Ammon, a horned Libyan god. The reverse of the coin shows a seated Athena holding winged Victory, who crowns the name Lysimachos. Lysimachos at once honors Alexander and the gods by revering them, and promotes himself by alluding to his relationship with the gods and their entrusting him with power.



RISD MUSEUM

Etruscan

Pail (situla), 530 - 525 BCE

Bronze

Mary B. Jackson Fund 32.245

Bucket-shaped vessels (situlae) of this type are typical of the northeastern region of Italy but are found as far east as Slovenia. The puffy figural style is characteristic of non-Italian Iron Age art, although the subject matter is Etruscan. The three bands around the vessel depict processions of gazelle-like animals on the bottom level, armed warriors in the middle, and vignettes of funerary games complete with boxers, musicians, and banqueters on the third. Processions were commonly depicted in Etruscan funerary contexts — on tomb walls, on coffins, and as here, on grave goods. This situla was not meant for everyday use; rather, it was probably made as a grave gift for the person in whose tomb it was found.



Etruscan

Bucchero Stemmed Cup, ca. 600 BCE

Terracotta

Mary B. Jackson Fund 33.027

During the 7th century BCE, the Etruscans developed new ceramics technology, allowing them to produce finer vessels and more elegant shapes. The technique used to produce this cup, known as bucchero, required dark-gray purified clay to be shaped and burnished before firing. A low-oxygen environment was maintained in the kiln, creating the distinctive lustrous black of bucchero. This drinking cup and its stem were created separately and then joined; the seam is emphasized by a notched molding. The frieze around the cup's body depicts a chorus of ten men and women, holding hands and processing to the left. The decorative pattern around the foot, known as a guilloche, was created by rolling an engraved cylinder across the wet clay.



Etruscan

Bucchero Bowl on a Conical Foot, 539-500 BCE

Terracotta

Mary B. Jackson Fund 33.028

Beginning in the 6th century BCE the Etruscans exported bucchero, a fine, dark-gray to black ceramic, throughout the Mediterranean region. Exported Etruscan wares have turned up in shipwrecks from the era as well as in Greek cities and sanctuaries. This vessel is a common form for the period. The bowl was constructed separately from the stem and then attached. The male heads on the large, flat



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rim, all made with the same shallow mold, were affixed after shaping the bowl. The profile view of the heads is unusual; similar pieces more commonly have frontal views of these figures.

Etruscan; Umbria
Warrior, 450-425 BCE
Bronze
Mary B. Jackson Fund 34.011

Depicting a warrior striding into battle, this piece was a votive offering to Mars, the god of war. It was intended to bring good fortune in battle, and represented either the donor or the god himself. Adorned in armor and greaves (shin guards), the figure would have been brandishing a spear in his upraised right hand, and likely bore a shield in his left. The helmet is delicately crafted, with an elaborate crest that emphasizes the elongated style of the piece. This figure was discovered in modern Umbria, a region in central Italy. The military prowess of the Etruscans was legendary, reaching its height by the 6th century BCE, with most of the Italian peninsula, even the city of Rome, under their control.



Haimon Painter, Greek, ca. 460-435 BC
Lidded Cylindrical Box (Pyxis), 500-474 BCE
Terracotta, black-figure
Museum Appropriation Fund 34.1374

In ancient Greece small, lidded boxes (pyxides) were primarily used to hold cosmetics, trinkets, or jewelry; less frequently, they served as containers for incense or medical ointments. These boxes, however, were not everyday objects, but rather luxury items designed for the wealthy. Pyxides are commonly found in burial contexts, suggesting that they were used to store valuable objects in life and in death. They are often embellished with elaborately painted images designed to communicate wealth and social status. The decorative elements of this terracotta pyxis illustrate leisure activities of the elite; the body features a symposium scene of five reclining men drinking and playing the double-flute and lyre, while the lid depicts a lone hunter and his prey.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek

Oil Flask (Lekythos), ca. 480 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Bequest of Susan Martin Allien 35.707

This red-figure oil jar (lekythos) has been attributed to the anonymous artist called the Brygos Painter. The scene depicts Hera, queen of the gods, and her messenger Iris, goddess of rainbows. On the right, the winged Iris holds a winged staff (caduceus) and a jug of wine (oinochoe). She is pouring a libation in honor of Hera into the sacrificial bowl (phiale), which the other goddess holds in front of her. Hera, her hair topped by a leafed diadem, grasps her signature spiral staff.



Greek

Oil Flask (Lekythos), 480 BC - 470 BC

Terracotta, red-figure

Bequest of Susan Martin Allien 35.708

Found in Gela, Sicily, this oversized oil flask (lekythos) was created as a funerary votive offering. The piece was painted by one of the most skilled Greek vase painters, an anonymous artist called the Pan Painter, known for his love of intricate patterns and details. The winged goddess Nike is depicted on the flask, holding a lyre and flying gracefully toward the viewer. Although she is the goddess of victory, Nike could also represent the achievement of wealth and success, and evoke a pleasant afterlife. This Nike, as a funerary votive, was probably meant to hint that death could be overcome.



Etruscan

Jar with lid (stamnos), late 300s BCE-early 200s BCE

Bronze

Mary B. Jackson Fund 35.791

Used to store liquids, stamnoi were wide-mouthed jars with lids and two horizontal handles. In Etruria, the handles of stamnoi often took the form of hands. When the vessel is picked up, the hands on the handles become directly associated with the hands of the person who carries the vessel. The beautiful dark blue and rich green patina on the surface of the stamnos results from the bronze's oxidation process over a long period of time.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek; Mycenaean
Standing Goddess, 1400-1000 BCE
Terracotta
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 36.187

Painted anthropomorphic figurines have been found throughout the Greek mainland and islands. This goddess figure is an example of a typical Mycenaean figurine, which depicts a standing female figure with a long cone-shaped skirt and a flat body. These figures exist in three different forms — “phi,” “tau,” and “psi” — named after Greek letters that approximate the position of the arms. Although the archaeological context and cultural significance of this figure are unclear, similar figurines have been found in household shrines, sanctuaries, and tombs, suggesting their use as cult objects, ceremonial offerings, or as company and protection during the deceased’s journey to the afterlife.



Greek; Cycladic
Female Figure, 2500 BC - 2400 BC
Parian marble
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 36.188

Cycladic figurines like this were likely to have had funerary or magical associations and would have been used in ceremonial cult contexts or household shrines. With the head tilted back, knees slightly flexed, toes slanted downward, and arms folded beneath the chest, this female figure is an example of the most popular type of figurine found in the Cyclades. Cycladic figurines were created using tools made from stones such as emery, obsidian, flint, and pumice to carve and then smooth the surface of the marble. While it may be difficult to imagine today, in antiquity this figure would have been painted. Faint traces of pigment still remain, delineating the figure’s lower eyelashes and two braids on the back of the head.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek

Oil Flask (Lekythos), ca. 500-490 BCE

Terracotta, black-figure on white ground

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 37.020X

Dionysos, god of wine, revelry, and ecstatic madness, is often shown carousing with his thiasos, or retinue. He is shown on this oil flask (lekythos) with three of his main followers, the maenads. Literally translated as "raving ones," the maenads were always female, generally inebriated, and carried a thyrsus, a long stick wrapped in ivy or vine leaves and here topped by a cluster of leaves (more usually, a pinecone). Dionysos is twisted, looking back, and appears to be pouring wine from the tipped high-handled drinking cup (kantharos) he carries in his right hand. Grape vines wind around and through the scene, adding to the sense of frenzy that Dionysos inspired.



Greek

Cylindrical Lidded Box (Pyxis), ca. 760 BCE

Terracotta

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 37.022

Death and burial in ancient Greece provided an important forum for conspicuous displays of wealth, class identity, and familial pride. Luxury items, like this terracotta lidded box (pyxis) were particularly appropriate grave-gifts, as they reflected the former lifestyle of the deceased, and thus reaffirmed their social status. Wealthy women primarily used pyxides to store cosmetics, trinkets, or jewelry. This box was most likely found in the tomb of an elite woman, as evidenced by the elaborate paintings and sculptural figures that adorn the body and lid. The linear patterns that encircle the body's exterior, as well as the concentric circles on the inside, are consistent with the style of the late Geometric period. During this period only landowners could afford to keep horses, thus the two horse figures on the lid would have associated the deceased with wealth and social status.



RISD MUSEUM

Roman

Fragment of a wall depicting a candelabrum, 14-37 CE

Fresco and lime painting

Museum Appropriation Fund 38.058.20

Elaborate wall frescoes provided elite Roman citizens with an opportunity for conspicuous displays of affluence and social status. This fragment from a villa near Pompeii exemplifies the candelabrum motif, an ornate decorative scheme characterized by its mixture of figurative elements and vine-like shapes. The yellow color of the candelabrum, which evokes the luster of gold, identifies it as an object of great value, thus indicating the proprietor's wealth. This display of luxury is continued within the framed still life that appears within the wispy candelabrum. By depicting a goose nibbling on fruit, this scene also evokes the lush environment of the wine god Bacchus, thus associating the villa, and its owner, with the abundance of the gods. Such imagery was ideally suited for a dining room (triclinium) which is most likely where this fragment was originally located.



Roman

Fragment of a black wall, 14-37 CE

Fresco and lime painting

Museum Appropriation Fund 38.058.2C

Buried by the same volcanic eruption that destroyed Pompeii in 79 CE, this wall painting comes from the domestic quarters of a country farm (villa rustica) on the Bay of Naples. This panel is only a small fragment of the original composition, which would have been painted directly onto the walls of the room. During excavation these walls were cut in pieces, which were then dispersed to various museums; fragments from this same room can also be found in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



In this panel, imaginary architectural elements, like the delicate structure and plantlike column on the left, create a highly ornamental surface that evokes a sense of grandeur. Images associated with the wine god Bacchus, specifically the drinking horn and the veiled basket (liknon) seen in this panel, and the hanging theater masks found on other sections of the wall, were used to evoke a lush, wine-rich environment befitting a Roman banquet. The room that housed this fresco, most likely a dining room (triclinium), thus provided a conspicuous display of the owner's wealth, culture, and intellect through this dramatic depiction of architecture and myth.

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Roman

Fragment of a black and red wall, 14-37 CE

Fresco and lime painting

Museum Appropriation Fund 38.058.5B



In Ancient Rome it was common for elite citizens to use decorative elements, such as wall paintings and mosaics, as a means to display their wealth and culture within the domestic setting. Like the other fragments on this wall, this painting was once part of a much larger wall fresco, possibly from a dining room (triclinium). In this panel, elongated columns, candelabra, and floral motifs are used to create the illusion of three-dimensional space. This visual manipulation exaggerated the size of the room and created a dramatic atmosphere ideally suited for the luxurious dining banquets hosted by the elite.

Roman

fresco, 30-79 CE

Fresco and lime painting

Museum Appropriation Fund 38.058.9



Depictions of luxurious villas are ubiquitous in Pompeian wall frescoes, where they were considered to be symbols of wealth and cultivation. Tiny vignettes, like this harbor scene, provided a secondary focal point within a larger mythological or narrative theme. These seemingly independent works were intended to generate scholarly and philosophical discussion among the villa guests, allowing the host to demonstrate his intellectual and cultural superiority. The seaside villa depicted in this panel would have been associated with prosperity, and thus identified with the leisurely and pleasurable activities of the elite.

Roman

Oval Dish, 200s CE-400s CE

Glass, blown

Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 39.102



RISD MUSEUM

Cypriote

Storage jar (amphora), 7th century BCE

Terracotta

Museum Appropriation Fund 39.124.1

Cyprus's location made it an important center for trade in the classical world, linking Greece with civilizations in the Near East and Egypt. The influence of the Aegean world on Cypriote art and culture is visible in the stylistic shifts in their pottery. This well-preserved, geometric storage jar (amphora) is an example of bichrome ware, a style of pottery that evolved in Cyprus as a result of increased contact with the Phoenicians. The amphora was common in antiquity; it was customarily used for the transportation and storage of perishables, such as grapes, olive oil, and wine.



Cypriote

Tankard, 1400-1350 BCE

Terracotta

Museum Appropriation Fund 39.124.2

During the Late Bronze Age (about 1600 – 1050 BCE) Cyprus's trading contacts expanded considerably, with handcrafted pottery as a primary export. White slipware vessels like this tankard were highly sought after for both their decorative and functional value. The white "slip," the coating of thinned clay applied to the gray clay body, provided a background for various patterns in brown or black. Given their textural quality, these patterns might have been imitating ancient embroidery, woven designs, or etched decorations on gourds. The shape of this tankard, reminiscent of a gourd, would have made it an ideal vessel for wine drinking — a purpose that is further evidenced by the handle and high thumb hold that project from its lip.



Cypriote

Ridge-Handled Jug, ca. 700 BCE

Terracotta

Museum Appropriation Fund 39.124.3

The migration from the Greek mainland to the island of Cyprus following the end of the Late Bronze Age introduced linear and geometric forms to Cypriote art and culture. The design of this ridge-handled jug reflects the style that emerged during the Geometric and the Late Geometric period. The concentric, compass-drawn black rings that circumscribe the central, hand-painted red circle are traditional decorative elements of the "circle" style of bichrome ware. Customarily found in the western and northern areas of Cyprus, similar black-on-red pieces have been found throughout the area.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek
tetradrachm, 290-289 BCE
silver
Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.103



Greek
Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), ca. 227-221 BCE
Silver
Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.113

This coin exemplifies the great skill of early die-engravers. The delicate carving of the wood planks of the ship and the contours of Poseidon's face show a precise attention to detail. The inscription on the hull of Apollo's ship means "king Antigonus," and refers to Antigonus Doso, the ex-general of Alexander who ordered the minting. This bold statement is tempered by pious representations of two gods in the coin's imagery: Poseidon, the god of the sea, and Apollo, the god of the sun. The coin commemorates the victory of the battle of Andros, one of the many victories achieved by this respected ruler.



Greek
Two-drachma coin (didrachm), 380-345 BCE
Silver
Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.115

This coin depicts Phalanthos, a native Spartan and the founder of the Greek colony of Tarentum. According to legend, Phalanthos was once saved by a dolphin during a shipwreck. He was therefore often depicted as he is here, astride a dolphin. The horseman on the obverse of the coin examines a pillar topped with the head of a god, called a herm. The stillness of this scene offers a contrast to the leaping dolphin and Phalanthos on the reverse.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek

Stater coin, ca. 360 - 350 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.116

The people of Corinth honored the winged horse Pegasus depicted on the obverse of this coin. The hero Bellerophon was believed to have first bridled the horse at the peak of the city's mountainous citadel, the Acrocorinthus. There, Pegasus was thought to have stamped his hoof and opened up the Peirene spring, an important source of water for the city. The reverse of the coin shows the goddess Athena, a deity of wisdom who was worshipped all across the ancient world. This coin therefore exemplifies the varying nature of Greek religion, as it honors both a local animal hero and a universal deity.



Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), 323-285 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.117

Ptolemy I Soter, the first of the Macedonian kings of Egypt, was a general of Alexander the Great who distinguished himself in his martial and administrative organization of Egypt after the death of his commander. This coin is distinctive in the realism shown in the face of the ruler. Ptolemy's humanity is emphasized by the shadows and sinews of his portrait. The eyes are sunken, the chin protruding, and the face angular. Around his neck he wears an aegis, or religious collar, similar to that of Zeus.



Greek

Two-drachma coin (didrachm), 300-298 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.125

Featured on this coin is the famous silphium plant, which grew almost exclusively in Cyrene. In his *Natural History*, the Roman author Pliny described the plant as being "greatly in vogue for medicinal as well as other purposes, being sold at the same rate as silver." These other purposes may have included birth control for women and feed for cattle. Pliny later wrote that the last stalk of the plant on the island was "sent as a curiosity to the Emperor Nero." The plant became extinct soon after, and survives today only in ancient writing and imagery.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek

Two-drachma coin (didrachm), 525 BC - 475 BCE

Incuse silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.130

This coin exemplifies the trend toward artistic imagery in Greek numismatics. The engraver did not choose to represent the god Poseidon, but instead depicted a famous statue of the deity. Referencing a work of art shows that ancient coins were not designed with purely utilitarian motives. This coin also reflects the endurance of certain styles of art. Although this archaic style of sculpture was no longer employed by the time this coin was minted, the statue was still considered worthy of representation.



Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), 313-305 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.136

Coins were often minted to pay mercenaries, a history that is reflected in their imagery. On the reverse of the coin, Nike, the goddess of victory, decorates a trophy. As early as the 6th century BCE, the Greeks and Persians had begun to dedicate suits of enemy armor to the gods after a victory on the battlefield, calling them "trophies." This concept of victory is tempered by the obverse image of Persephone, goddess of the underworld which was the final resting place of slain soldiers. Although Nike and the trophy represent victory in the mortal world, all dead are equal in Persephone's realm. The coin therefore comments on the temporality of the victories of war achieved by the mercenaries.



Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), 297-287 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.163

Upon his death, Alexander the Great divided his empire among several of his officers. The general Lysimachos, who received the province of Thrace, minted a coin to justify his power. The obverse of the coin references the occasion during which Alexander had been hailed as a son of Zeus Ammon, a horned Libyan god. The reverse of the coin shows a seated Athena holding winged Victory, who crowns the name Lysimachos. Lysimachos at once honors Alexander and the gods by revering them, and promotes himself by alluding to his relationship with the gods and their entrusting him with power.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), 300-295 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.164

At the time these coins were minted, Demetrius had just won the nickname "Poliorketes," or "the Besieger," in recognition of his contributions to the siege of Rhodes. Despite an unsuccessful outcome, Demetrius was respected for the machines he built as well as his boldness and determination. Soon after the siege, he was elected king by the armies of Macedon. Demetrius's life ended in tragedy, however, when his troops deserted him and he was forced to surrender to King Seleucus of Cilicia. He died three years later in 283 BCE. The reverse of this coin, featuring the sea god Poseidon, could symbolize Demetrius's naval victories. This coin exemplifies the utilitarian nature of coinage. Despite the fact that Demetrius was eventually disgraced, coins bearing his image retained their value.



Greek

Two-drachma coin (didrachm), 550-500 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.226

Aegina is thought to be one of the first places in Greece to adopt a system of coinage. These early, simply engraved coins were recognized throughout the ancient world as legitimate currency. Like many coin images, the turtle on the obverse of the coin was a pun. The word "turtle" had been a nickname for Aegina's silver mines before the island began minting coins. The turtle is cast in high relief to stand up to years of use. The dots down its back serve both aesthetic and practical purposes. These bumps would gradually show wear on the coin, indicating when a buyer should reweigh the coin to recalculate its value.



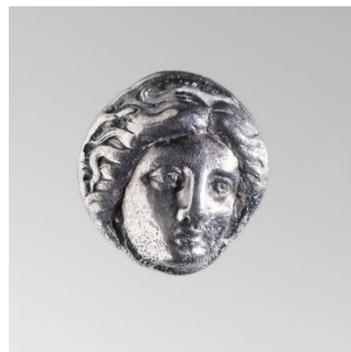
Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), ca. 394-304 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.229

Helios was an eastern sun god who was assimilated into Greek culture. In this coin the unique frontal depiction allows the hair to fan out, much like the rays of the sun. Roses like the one on the reverse of the coin were so abundant on the island that it was said that sailors could smell the shore miles away. Here, it is also a pun on the name of Rhodes, which sounds very similar to the Greek word for flower, rhodon.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek

Two-drachma coin (didrachm), 550-500 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.241

Aegina is thought to be one of the first places in Greece to adopt a system of coinage. These early, simply engraved coins were recognized throughout the ancient world as legitimate currency. Like many coin images, the turtle on the obverse of the coin was a pun. The word "turtle" had been a nickname for Aegina's silver mines before the island began minting coins. The turtle is cast in high relief to stand up to years of use. The dots down its back serve both aesthetic and practical purposes. These bumps would gradually show wear on the coin, indicating when a buyer should reweigh the coin to recalculate its value.



Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), 313-305 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.246

Coins were often minted to pay mercenaries, a history that is reflected in their imagery. On the reverse of the coin, Nike, the goddess of victory, decorates a trophy. As early as the 6th century BCE, the Greeks and Persians had begun to dedicate suits of enemy armor to the gods after a victory on the battlefield, calling them "trophies." This concept of victory is tempered by the obverse image of Persephone, goddess of the underworld which was the final resting place of slain soldiers. Although Nike and the trophy represent victory in the mortal world, all dead are equal in Persephone's realm. The coin therefore comments on the temporality of the victories of war achieved by the mercenaries.



Greek

Stater coin, ca. 360-350 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.247

The people of Corinth honored the winged horse Pegasus depicted on the obverse of this coin. The hero Bellerophon was believed to have first bridled the horse at the peak of the city's mountainous citadel, the Acrocorinthus. There, Pegasus was thought to have stamped his hoof and opened up the Peirene spring, an important source of water for the city. The reverse of the coin shows the goddess Athena, a deity of wisdom who was worshipped all across the ancient world.



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This coin therefore exemplifies the varying nature of Greek religion, as it honors both a local animal hero and a universal deity.

Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), ca. 277-239 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.249

This coin, with its unique martial imagery, may have been minted to pay a specific army. Like many coins created for military payment, it may have been reformed from the art, armor, or other metals of the very enemy the army defeated. Therefore this object illustrates that coins are shape-shifters as well as world travelers. The malleability of metal lends itself to frequent transformation, so few metal artifacts survive; many metal objects surviving from antiquity originally had another form.



Greek

Ten-drachma coin (decadrachm), 405-400 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.25



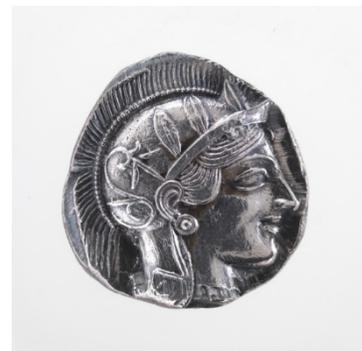
Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), After ca. 460 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.266

The 6th-century Athenian ruler Peisistratus established the Panathenaea, a festival honoring the region's patron goddess, Athena. At that time, Peisistratus minted what is thought to be the first two-sided coin in the world. Whereas earlier coins had one side in relief and the other "incuse," or indented, these new coins had two uniquely engraved reliefs. Each featured imagery reflecting the Athenian pride in their city-state, from Athena's Attic helmet to the sprigs of olive next to the region's revered bird, with an inscription meaning "of the Athenians." Variations of this coin type were used



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for centuries in Athens, and visitors to Greece today will recognize the reverse of this coin as the reverse of the Greek euro.

Greek

Two-stater coin (distater), 336-323 BCE

Gold

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.288

Coins minted at the behest of rulers and powerful citizens, who usually dictated what was portrayed. Here, Alexander the Great's choice of content communicates his martial objectives: to represent himself as capable of commanding the Corinthian League of Greek city-states that his recently deceased father, Philip II of Macedon, had united. The obverse of the coin shows the warrior goddess Athena in her war helmet, while the reverse shows Nike, goddess of victory. These symbols were meant to reinforce Alexander's inherited power.



Greek

Stater coin, ca. 421-365 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.303

In the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, the city of Elis hosted the Olympic Games. These games were highly profitable for the Eleians, and at the end of each festival they had an excess of silver that they used to mint their own coinage. This coin features a realistically rendered eagle head and a winged thunderbolt. These symbols are attributes of the father god Zeus, who is rarely depicted on coinage. This unique choice of symbols of Zeus was appropriate for the city hosting the games honoring the gods.



Greek

Eight-drachma coin (octodrachm), 261-252 BCE

Gold

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.311

This coin is unusual not only because it is gold, but also because it portrays a woman, Arsinoe II, who ruled Egypt alongside her husband Ptolemy II. Although her reign was short, she was an exceedingly popular ruler, and was deified by her people almost immediately upon her death. She is shown here wearing a diadem and veil, both symbols of ancient religion. To the left of her head are



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the horns of Zeus Ammon, the Libyan god Alexander claimed as a father. Arsinoe's depiction with such important religious symbols attests to the power she held in her community.

Greek

Stater coin, ca. 323 BCE

Gold

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.324

Coins minted at the behest of rulers and powerful citizens, who usually dictated what was portrayed. Here, Alexander the Great's choice of content communicates his martial objectives: to represent himself as capable of commanding the Corinthian League of Greek city-states that his recently deceased father, Philip II of Macedon, had united. The obverse of the coin shows the warrior goddess Athena in her war helmet, while the reverse shows Nike, goddess of victory. These symbols were meant to reinforce Alexander's inherited power.



Greek

Two-drachma coin (didrachm), 380-345 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.325

This coin depicts Phalanthos, a native Spartan and the founder of the Greek colony of Tarentum. According to legend, Phalanthos was once saved by a dolphin during a shipwreck. He was therefore often depicted as he is here, astride a dolphin. The horseman on the obverse of the coin examines a pillar topped with the head of a god, called a herm. The stillness of this scene offers a contrast to the leaping dolphin and Phalanthos on the reverse.



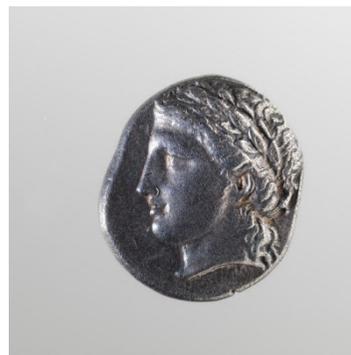
Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradrachm), ca. 420-355 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.34

Depicted on this coin is a lyre, a popular instrument in the ancient world. The Greeks commemorated births, harvests, banquets, and deaths with music. Poetry was written to have musical accompaniment, musical competitions were held during athletic contests, and musicians gained fame for their skill and compositions. This coin honors Apollo, god of the sun and music. Apollo's representations share a repetitive yet unique nature. The sun rises



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every day and the beats and rhythms of music can be repeated, but no day or performance is ever the same.

Greek

Stater coin, 320-270 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.371

The island of Crete, site of the prehistoric Minoan civilization (3000–1000 BCE) had a colored history when this coin was minted. Homer wrote of the Cretan King Minos, whose wife gave birth to the half-man half-bull Minotaur. At the king's behest, the craftsman Daedalus designed a labyrinth to contain the creature. The hero Theseus slew the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne, the daughter of Minos. The story of the Minotaur and his labyrinth was cherished on Crete for centuries. The portrayal of the famed labyrinth on this coin shows the enduring nature of cultural mythology.



Greek

Stater coin, ca. 421-365 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.5

In the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, the city of Elis hosted the Olympic Games. These games were highly profitable for the Eleians, and at the end of each festival they had an excess of silver that they used to mint their own coinage. This coin features a realistically rendered eagle head and a winged thunderbolt. These symbols are attributes of the father god Zeus, who is rarely depicted on coinage. This unique choice of symbols of Zeus was appropriate for the city hosting the games honoring the gods.



Greek

Two-drachma coin (didrachm), 575-400 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.70

The Greek colony of Metapontum on the southern tip of the Italian peninsula was primarily a farming colony. The city's patron goddess was Demeter, the goddess of crops, and their civic symbol was the ear of barley. Like the coins representing patron deities who were worshipped throughout the rest of the Greek world, this coin depicts



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a crop which, though especially important to the residents of Metapontum, was used throughout the Mediterranean region. It is an example of the many unifying traits and aims of ancient Greece, in spite of its myriad states and divisions.

Greek

Four-drachma coin (tetradachm), ca. 227-221 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.8

This coin exemplifies the great skill of early die-engravers. The delicate carving of the wood planks of the ship and the contours of Poseidon's face show a precise attention to detail. The inscription on the hull of Apollo's ship means "king Antigonus," and refers to Antigonus Doso, the ex-general of Alexander who ordered the minting. This bold statement is tempered by pious representations of two gods in the coin's imagery: Poseidon, the god of the sea, and Apollo, the god of the sun. The coin commemorates the victory of the battle of Andros, one of the many victories achieved by this respected ruler.



Greek

Stater coin, 500-480 BCE

Silver

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.015.83

Neapolis was a colony founded to mine the precious metals of Mount Pangaeus, the mythical home of the Gorgons. Gorgons like the one pictured on this coin were mythological beings with snakes for hair whose glance turned men to stone. Despite this fierce reputation, gorgons were believed to protect Mount Pangaeus, and thus the livelihood of the Greeks living there. This coin therefore is a unique example of the patron deity type. The gorgon shown was believed to have protected the very substance of which it was made.



RISD MUSEUM

Roman

Floor mosaic fragment depicting Silenus, 325-330

Limestone and glass tesserae

Acquired by exchange from Worcester Art Museum 40.194

In the prosperous city of Antioch, images of the wine god Bacchus and his followers were commonly used in domestic contexts, reflecting wine-rich Roman banquets as well as the Antiochene preoccupation with luxury and pleasure. This image of Silenus (follower of the wine god) is from an opulent villa at Daphne, a suburb of Antioch; it was once part of a larger floor pavement that also included the mosaic to left. To make these vividly colored images, small pieces of colored stone (tesserae) were set into mortar. Their naturalistic treatment of the human form reflects the influence of Hellenistic artistic tradition on Roman style. During their excavation a coin minted during the reign of emperor Constantine was found beneath these mosaics, indicating that they were created between the years 325 and 330 CE.



Roman

Floor mosaic fragment depicting Bacchus, 325-330

Limestone tesserae

Museum Collection, by exchange 40.195

In the city of Antioch, a vital agricultural and commercial center at the crossroads of the Roman Empire, economic prosperity created an expansive middle-class population with a taste for luxury and beauty. Villas in this region were often opulently decorated with stunning wall frescoes and floor mosaics, like this medallion of the wine god Bacchus (the Greek Dionysos). While today this mosaic is displayed on the Museum's wall, it was originally located in the entrance hall of a Roman villa, as part of a much larger floor pavement that also included the mosaic to the right. As guests walked across the mosaic, these images of the wine god Bacchus and his followers would have created an atmosphere of wine-drinking revelry and merriment, inviting them to enjoy the pleasures of life.



RISD MUSEUM

Roman

Fragment of a wall depicting a candelabrum, 14-37 CE

fresco and lime painting

Mary B. Jackson Fund 41.019

Although this wall painting of a candelabrum is presented as an independent work, it was once part of a larger fresco painted directly on the interior walls of a villa from the vicinity of Pompeii. Within this original work, each element complemented one another, as well as the room they adorned. The compositional elements of this fragment, specifically the vine-shaped volutes of the candelabrum, would have been viewed as an extension of the room's architectural elements. This would have exaggerated the size of the room, creating a heightened sense of grandeur within the space. The prosperity of the house is expressed in the framed still life depicting a rooster approaching several varieties of fruit. As the juxtaposition of birds and food was commonly associated with the sumptuous ingredients of the Roman banquet, this image would have hinted at the lavish table presented to villa guests, thereby communicating the proprietor's affluence and social status.



RISD MUSEUM

Corinthian (ancient style)
Helmet, 500 BCE - 470 BCE
Bronze
Museum Works of Art Fund 43.185

Developed in the 5th century BCE, this type of helmet, which offered greater protection than previous designs by encasing the entire head and face, often appears in art of the time. The helmet was cast from bronze and hammered to fit the foot soldier (hoplite), for whom it was made. Because men had to purchase their own armor and equipment, military service in ancient Greece was dictated by socioeconomic status. Hoplites carried more than seventy pounds of equipment, between their spear, shield, helmet, and body armor. Helmets were commonly included in the grave of a deceased soldier, either as a mark of their profession or possibly to perform some function in the afterlife.



Roman
Cinerary Urn, 1st century CE
Marble
Gift of Marshall H. Gould 46.083



Early Etruscan; Villanovan
Belt, 800-700 BCE
Bronze
Gift of Mr. Walter C. Baker 46.562

In the Villanovan period, expensive possessions were deposited in the graves of members of the elite class. Belts like this were almost exclusively found in women's graves. They first appear in Villanovan culture as status symbols for the upper classes, and were worn by Italic peoples for centuries after. The intricate details and delicate metalwork of this example exhibit a craftsmanship that only wealthy Villanovans could have afforded.



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Roundel for a shield or breast plate, early 600s BCE-late 500s BCE
Bronze
Gift of Mr. Walter C. Baker 46.563

The Villanovans are often characterized as warrior-farmers. Using the various mines and metal ores at their disposal, they became experts in metalworking, equipping themselves with bronze weapons. A disc like this one would have been used as armor. It was either suspended in front of the warrior's heart (thus the term *kardiophylakes*, or "heart protectors") or inserted into a wooden shield that would be carried. These discs often included depictions of animals. The deer represented here might illustrate a local pride in indigenous fauna. The design of this disc, with its concentric circles and abstract patterns, was influenced by Greek Geometric style.



Roman
Pair of earrings with pearls, 1st century CE-3rd century CE
Gold; pearl
Mary B. Jackson Fund 47.007



Greek
Inscribed Kouros, ca. 540 BCE
Bronze
Mary B. Jackson Fund and Jesse Metcalf Fund 54.001

The smile that graces the face of this statuette of a young man (*kouros*) was a common feature of the Archaic period of Greek sculpture. The rigidly upright striding pose was also characteristic of this period, which drew much inspiration from Egyptian statuary. This piece in particular was created as a votive offering. The inscription running down the exterior of the legs translates to: "Amphias made this dedication from the tithes to the Far-Shooter." This *kouros* was thus a gift to Apollo, the Far-Shooter, thanking him for some unknown favor, and informing him that a tenth of the donor's fortune had been given to the god's temple.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek

Horse, 750-700 BCE

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 54.132

As a common symbol of status and power in 8th century Greece, the horse was a favorite motif for small bronze votive statues. Many bronze horses similar to this were left as offerings for Zeus at Olympia, where horse racing was a popular part of the Olympic Games, and at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta. The patterns inscribed on the horse are reminiscent of the pottery designs that give the Geometric period its name. The strange, knobby knees are characteristic of bronze horse votives from this region.



Roman

Spoon, 1st century CE-4th century CE or later

Bronze

Gift of Mr. Albert Harkness 54.142.42

The ancient Romans used spoons for a variety of eating functions. This cochlear spoon would have been used to eat shellfish and eggs; its sharp point was particularly useful for picking out the meat of snails. It was probably solid-cast by the lost-wax method, and then polished. Although the natural golden glow of polished bronze was undoubtedly prized through antiquity, archaeological evidence suggests that the Romans may have used different alloys to alter the color and surface of bronze. As prolonged environmental exposure has caused this spoon to develop an all-over dark to light gray patina, its original finish remains unknown.



Greek

Bird, ca. 700 BCE

Bronze

Museum Works of Art Fund 54.198

This tiny bronze bird figurine was probably intended as a gift for the gods. While in northern Greece pendants were worn as jewelry, in the south they were most likely suspended by the loop from the branches of trees within an outdoor sanctuary, acting as votive pendants that would sway in the wind. The bird is stylized and abstract in form, a trend in both animal and human figurines of the Geometric period. The artist has chosen to give the bird bulbous eyes but no feet.



RISD MUSEUM

Greek

Head of a woman, ca. 420 BCE

Marble

Museum Works of Art Fund 55.027

Rarely does an object from antiquity survive in its original condition. The lips, eyes, and hair of this head of a woman were once painted, but the pigments have worn away over the centuries. A diadem or crown, perhaps of silver or gold, would have been fastened to the hair through the drilled holes visible behind the temples. This head was probably once part of a statue group from the pediment of a Greek temple. A viewer in antiquity would have seen it from below and from some distance. Vivid paint and a metallic diadem would have rendered the head more visually coherent and lifelike from afar.



Sardinian

Warrior, 4th century BCE-3rd century BCE

bronze

Anonymous gift 55.030

This small bronze warrior wears armor fashioned out of reeds, a helmet, and shorts. His extended left arm may have held a bow, while his right arm drew back the bow-string. Similar figurines have been found depicting other warriors, shepherds, women in the home, and animals. It is a work of the Nuragic culture, which flourished on the island of Sardinia from the 7th to the 4th centuries BCE. Named for their distinctive round tower-fortresses known as nuraghi, these peoples probably migrated to Sardinia from Etruria, an area in central Italy.



Greek

Miniature Oil Flask (Lekythos), late 5th century BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Anonymous gift 55.049

Standing at only one and a half inches high, this miniature vessel was certainly not used for storage. In spite of the diminutive size, a painter used the space to depict a relatively detailed representation of a goose. The exact purpose of such tiny vessels is unknown, but examples in different shapes and forms are found all over the ancient Greek world. Some may have been left as votive offerings in temples, while others may have been for children, who played with many toys, including the nearby doll.



RISD MUSEUM

Roman

Portrait of Agrippina the Younger, ca. 40 CE

Marble (from Paros) head, and 18th-century colored marble bust
Anonymous gift 56.097

Agrippina (15–59 CE), the subject of this portrait, was related to four different Roman emperors: she was granddaughter to Augustus, sister to Caligula, mother to Nero, and niece and later wife to Claudius. It is therefore not surprising that many portraits of her survive. They invariably depict her with a broad forehead, a square jaw, large eyes, thin lips, and a sharp chin,— all features shared by many members of the imperial family.



Ancient pieces were sometimes combined with other sculptural elements to create “new” composite sculptures. This ancient portrait head was inserted into a bust composed of different-colored marble in the 18th century.

Etruscan

Striding kouros, 400s BCE

Bronze

Museum purchase in memory of Eliza G. Radeke 57.036

Most likely an athlete, this statuette of a young man (kouros) presumably held a javelin or staff in his left hand. This figure may have served as a votive offering. The Etruscans dedicated small figurines like this one in sanctuaries sacred to the gods. Such an offering would remain in the sanctuary, increasing the import both of the mortal person who placed it there, and of the deity to whom it was dedicated. This victorious young athlete, exhibiting graceful movement and a muscular physique, would have served as a fitting gift to an Etruscan god.



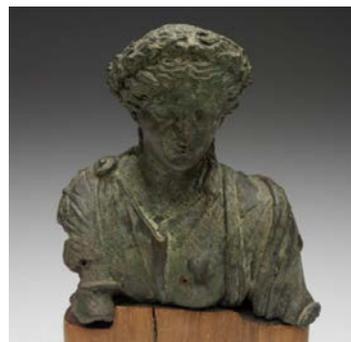
Roman

Bust of a Female Divinity, late 2nd century CE - 3rd century CE

Lost-wax process

Anonymous gift 59.022

To produce large bronze objects that were not exceedingly heavy and expensive, craftsmen used a process known as the hollow lost-wax technique. There are several types of hollow lost-wax casting; this Roman bust is an example of the direct method. First a clay core approximating the intended size and shape of the bronze is made. Then the core is coated in wax, and modeled into the desired form. Once the model is complete, tubes of wax (gates) are applied, and iron dowels (chaplets) are inserted through the wax layer and into the



RISD MUSEUM

clay core. This assemblage is coated in fine clay and heated. As the wax melts it leaves behind a hollow matrix. The channels created by the gates are then used to fill the mold with molten bronze. After the bronze cools, the mold is broken and the clay core is scraped away. Finally, the chaplets and gates are cut off and any casting imperfections are removed. The four small punctures on this bust were most likely caused during the chaplet removal. As these holes were never filled and the surface never finished, it is reasonable to assume that this piece was flawed in casting and discarded.

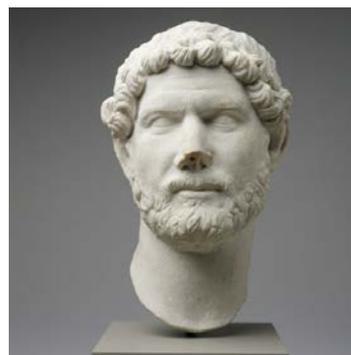
Roman

Portrait of Hadrian, ca. 130 CE

Marble (from Thaaooa)

Anonymous gift 59.050

Hadrian was emperor at the very height of the Imperial Period (117–138 CE). He was selected to rule the Roman Empire because of his personal skills rather than his ancestry. One of the most well-traveled and cosmopolitan Roman emperors, he made two journeys around the empire during his reign. He is remembered for his love of the Greek world, particularly its arts and architecture.



Portraits of reigning emperors ensured that Roman citizens knew what their ruler looked like, and were widely distributed throughout the empire. This portrait of Hadrian would have been inserted into a carved bust and prominently displayed. The beard Hadrian wore (allegedly to conceal blemishes), started a trend among emperors that endured up to the 3rd century CE. This head was damaged and has not been repaired. Although it was once fashionable to replace all the “missing” parts of statues, we cannot be sure these later additions give an accurate idea of how the sculpture originally appeared. It is now considered best practice to leave fragments as they were found.

Roman

Double Cosmetic Jar (Unguentarium), late 3rd century CE-4th century CE

Glass, free-blown, applied deep aqua glass

Gift of Mr. Albert E. Southwick 60.021.26

This double unguentarium was one of the most common forms of ancient glass vessels; it was especially favored by women in the eastern provinces. The piece was made by pinching a blown glass tube in the center and folding it upon itself. The handles were trailed on by touching hot glass near the base and drawing it up the tube. The trail was then pinched to create the zigzag pattern.



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Roman

Bottle, 2nd century CE-3rd century CE

Glass, free-blown

Gift of Mr. Albert E. Southwick 60.028

The flakiness and iridescence of this bottle are evidence of deterioration due to weathering. The weathered layers of the glass are part of the object; they are not dirt or minerals that have fused to the glass. Seasonal wetting of the soil leached alkali from the exterior of the object, leaving a layer of almost pure silica behind. As the glass weathers from the outside in, subsequent wet seasons will leave a buildup of silica layers. There can be dozens of these layers, even hundreds. The brittle silica layers create a flaky effect which refracts light, giving an iridescent appearance.



Greek

Fragment of a mixing bowl (krater), ca. 600 BCE

Terracotta, black-figure

Walter J. Kimball Fund 62.059

These fragments were part of a large mixing bowl (column krater) that was made in Corinth, where black-figure painting was invented. Black glaze was used on most of the figures; this glaze would have been thinned out to paint the spear shafts, shields, helmet crests, and horses' reins. A matte paint was employed in detail work on the horses' manes and the soldiers' helmets.



Roman

Household god (lar), late 200s CE - early 300sCE

Bronze

Anonymous gift 62.061

In ancient Rome, small bronze protective household deities (lares) were grouped in shrines (lararia) throughout the house. This bronze is a well-preserved example of this statue type; only the fingertips and the thumb of the outstretched hand are missing, along with the object his right hand would have held, most likely a cornucopia or drinking horn (rhyton). Under the rear of the skirt a rectangular hole leads to a cavity in the body, suggesting that this lar was cast around a core using the direct method of hollow lost-wax casting, like the bust on the right.



Traces of gilding can be observed in the folds of the skirt, on the top of the hair and wreath, and on the underside of the skirt. The vertical channels below the sash indicate that the costume also featured inlaid copper strips. Despite the attention paid to this bronze's

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surface during antiquity, a casting flaw remains visible in the skirt above the right knee. The surface pitting, however, is most likely not from ancient processes, but rather the result of chemical solvents used by early conservators.

Inscription painter, Greek, ca. 475-450 BC
Oil flask (lekythos) depicting a visit to the grave, 470-450 BCE
Terracotta, white-ground
Anonymous gift 69.142.1

Scenes depicted on Greek vessels can give us information regarding the function of such vessels and contribute to our understanding of Greek customs. Visits to the grave are common subjects on funerary vases. Here a woman brings offerings, including an oil flask (lekythos), to a grave. The warrior to the right of the grave monument may represent the deceased as he would have appeared in life. The Greeks believed that a person lived on after death mainly through remembrance by the living; loved ones continuing to offer at the grave, as in the scene on this piece, would achieve that living memory.



Greek
Female Figure, 2400 BCE - 2300 BCE
Island marble
Anonymous gift 69.142.4

The abundance of marble on the Cyclades led to its wide use in the production of functional and decorative objects. Marble figures like this example have been found resting horizontally on the ground at gravesites, perhaps indicating their use in funerary ceremonies. However, as a result of grave looting and illegal exportation, many Cycladic figures lack the archaeological context necessary to identify their function and cultural significance. As preserved today, most Cycladic figures appear almost minimalist, but their original effect — with painted facial features, hair, and occasional jewelry — was quite different. On this figure “paint-ghosts,” once-painted surfaces that now appear lighter in color and smoother due to the protection provided by their pigment, can be observed in areas of the forehead, eyes, cheeks, and chin.



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Palmyrene

Head of a Man, late 100s CE-early 200s CE

Limestone

Museum Works of Art Fund 71.167

This portrait of a bearded man was broken off a rectangular relief panel that sealed a grave. The panel formed part of the wall of an underground family tomb chamber or an above-ground tower tomb. Panels from Palmyra often included a portrait of the deceased from the waist up, with the head carved in high relief and an inscription in Palmyrene Aramaic. Large eyes and a linear treatment of the hair are characteristic of these portraits.



Originally an oasis settlement in the Syrian desert, Palmyra controlled the trade routes between the Roman Empire and lands east of the Euphrates River. Palmyra lost its prominence as a trading center by the mid-650s and was gradually abandoned. The buried city was rediscovered in 1691, and in the mid-1700s wealthy British tourists began visiting the site. By the late 1800s, Western Europeans and Americans were traveling there, some bringing back Palmyrene portraits as souvenirs. Thousands of these portraits are now in museum collections in the U.S., Western Europe, Turkey, and Russia. Systematic excavations of the site did not begin until 1902. This portrait was purchased by the RISD Museum at an art auction in 1971, but records suggest it was probably taken out of Syria much earlier.

In 2015, the terrorist group ISIS seized Palmyra, killing many people and using Palmyra's Roman amphitheater as a site for executions. ISIS intermittently controlled the city over a period of about two years, during which they destroyed several important ancient structures. Because Palmyra is culturally important to Syrians, and because Westerners have long romanticized the site, ISIS considered its destruction particularly meaningful.

This sculpture of a man from Palmyra reflects the fact that museum collections are often shaped by histories of colonialism, and that objects were sometimes first collected in contexts we can find troubling today. At the same time, this sculpture also illustrates that in an era of global political upheaval, contemporary museums often play important roles in preserving irreplaceable cultural material.

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Minoan

Blossom Bowl, ca. 2000 BCE

Serpentine

Jesse Metcalf Fund 77.001

This high-shouldered vessel, also known as a blossom bowl, is characterized by the six ribbed flower petals carved around its body. Crafted from serpentine, a stone native to the island of Crete, it provides a stunning example of the mastery of Minoan stone carvers. Although the actual methods of production remain unknown, it is believed that this type of vase was crafted through a subtractive process; the stone was first shaped with a hammer, then the interior was drilled, and finally the relief decoration was added with a chisel. The finished blossom bowl was likely polished with oil to enhance the natural luster of the stone. This style of vessel has been found in both domestic and funerary contexts, and was presumably used to hold precious goods such as perfumes, ointments, or spices.



Greek

Wine jug (oinochoe), ca. 550 BCE

Terracotta, black-figure

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 77.003

Executed in the black-figure technique, this wine jug (oinochoe) was decorated by the St. Raymond Painter (an anonymous artist named for the museum in France that holds his most characteristic work). The decoration on this jug is intended to evoke the designs of the Near East. This “orientalizing” style became a hallmark of vase painting in Corinth, where the black-figure technique was developed.



Ancient Greek

Fragment of Standing Male Figure (kouros), ca. 330 BCE

Bronze

Anonymous gift in memory of Professor Richard Stillwell 82.185

During the classical and Hellenistic periods in Greece, great advances were made in creating more realistic depictions of the human body. This torso of a young man, or kouros, is lost below the knees, yet it is clear that the figure was resting its weight on the right foot, with the left leg relaxed. This pose causes the entire body to twist in a sinuous curve and is known as contrapposto, or counterbalance. The twist of this piece seems extreme enough that the figure may have been leaning on an arm or a spear. The statuette was most likely dedicated as a votive offering to a deity.



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Greek

Two-handed drinking cup (skyphos), ca. 725-700 BCE

Terracotta

Anonymous gift in memory of C. A. Robinson, Jr. 83.024

In contrast to the many ancient vessels that were produced by several different artisans, the form and painted decorative scheme of this skyphos achieve an artistic cohesion that suggests the potter and the painter may have been one and the same. During the late Geometric period (760–700 BCE) several distinct styles of skyphoi were developed in Athens. This vessel, with a shallow body, offset lip tapering up to a straight rim, horizontal ribbon handles, and small base, is a characteristic example. The sharp division between the main decorative area and the solid glossy black of the lower register reflects the more severe painting style of the middle Geometric period (850–760 BCE), while the overall number of motifs hints at the ornamental profusion that emerged in the more imaginative work of the late Geometric period.



Roman

Cosmetic Jar (Unguentarium), ca. 50 CE

Glass, free-blown with pinched ribs

Jesse Metcalf Fund 83.154

Intended to contain makeup or perfume, this diminutive cosmetic jar (unguentarium) is a testament to the skill of ancient glass artists. Most likely made in a Syrio-Palestinian workshop, this piece is an excellent example of glassblowing techniques. To make this vessel, hot glass was gathered on the end of a long blowpipe and rolled against a flat surface, a process known as marvering. The marbled look of the surface was achieved by rolling the hot vessel in chips of colored glass, reheating it, and swirling the colors together. It was then inflated like a balloon by blowing gently into the pipe, causing the swirls of color to stretch. The final shape was achieved by spinning and simpletooling; the ribs were pulled out with a pincer tool while the piece was still hot.



Greek

Ram, 700s BCE

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Celia Robinson Stillwell 84.065

The stylized silhouette of this figurine suggests a ram, although it omits the details of fleece, eyes, or hooves. Only the most necessary features have been included. The horns, though not following the curve found in nature, follow the muzzle in an arc that lends grace to



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the piece. This streamlined, simple form is a hallmark of the Geometric period, known for its geometrically patterned pottery as well as abstract human and animal statuettes. This diminutive sculpture was most likely left as an offering to a divinity.

Etruscan

Acrobat (probably the handle of a cista lid), 300sBCE-200s BCE

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Celia Robinson Stillwell 85.107.1

This male acrobat was likely the handle of a bronze cosmetic container (cista). These vessels, often found in the graves of wealthy women, were used to store their toiletries. Attached to the lids of cistae, such handles often took fanciful forms; pairs of mythological figures or wrestlers were common handle motifs. This acrobat was attached to the lid by his hands and feet. Acrobats were popular performers in ancient times. They are known from a description of a private party in Xenophon's 5th-century BCE work *Symposium*, and are depicted on a wide range of utilitarian objects, from vases to spoons.



Greek

Standing goddess, 600 BC - 550 BC

terracotta

Collection of Brown University, Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World EL030.53

Native to the Boeotia region and typical of locally made statuettes of the Archaic period, this standing goddess is a composite female-bird figure, with a beak protruding just below the cylindrical crown (polos). The red dot on the figure's chest represents a pomegranate, a symbol of Persephone, the queen of the underworld. Though many of these figurines were used as offerings in sanctuaries, they were often found in graves, and with their allusion to the afterlife would seem to have played some funerary, religious role.



Andrew Kopp, American

Bench, 2011

TL104.2011.1



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Andrew Kopp, American
bench,

TL104.2011.2



Greek
Olive Wreath, 4th-3rd Century BCE
gold
TL115.2010

Olive wreaths were typically associated with the goddess Athena. Several naturalistically rendered olive branches were intertwined to form this gold wreath. The fullness of the olives provides a contrast to the thin leaves and the delicate buds emerging from between the leaves.



In the classical world wreaths served several important functions: they were worn during festivals and banquets, bestowed upon prominent citizens, awarded to victors at athletic contests and musical competitions, offered to the gods in temples and sanctuaries, and given to the deceased. Elaborate gold wreaths representing identifiable plant species have been found in tombs. This wreath's well-preserved condition suggests its use within a similar funerary context.

Roman
Strigilated sarcophagus with carved panels of satyrs and maenads,
3rd century
Marble, probably from Proconessus Turkey
On loan from the Museum of Natural History and Planetarium,
Providence TL155.2009

The blue-gray striations on this stone are typical of marble from Proconessus in northwestern Turkey, a major source of marble used for Roman sarcophagi in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. Undecorated chests and lids for sarcophagi have been found in shipwrecks throughout the Mediterranean, suggesting that they were shipped from quarries in the eastern provinces to Rome, where they were carved according to the specifications of various patrons.



On the front, panels of s-shaped motifs (strigils) separate three relief panels featuring followers of the wine god Dionysos. The central

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panel depicts a satyr and a maenad dancing with a panther between them; the left panel shows a satyr playing a reed pipe; and the right represents a maenad holding a tympanum. The two ends are carved with seated griffins, mythological creatures with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. Certain elements, such as the instruments held by the satyrs, the round-based columns, the striding griffins on the ends, the poses of individual figures, and the overall carving style are atypical of other strigilated sarcophagi, suggesting that these figural panels were carved in the 18th century or later.

Greek

Fish plate, ca. 360-320 BCE

Terracotta, red-figure

Lent by the family of Sidney Greenwald TL18.2017

The Hellenistic colonies in Italy borrowed Greek pottery styles and transformed them to fit their local needs. "Fish plates," found all over Italy and dated to the 4th century BCE, are a good example of this trend. This fish plate was probably made in Campania, a region in the south of the Italian peninsula. It shows two fish, either perch or bream, circling the central hole. Campanian diners may have placed similar fish on top of the plate, then dipped them in the hole, which could have held sauce.



Scot Bailey, American

Gallery Bench, 2012

soft maple

TL36.2012

