

## Ancient Greek gods and goddesses at The Ashmolean

- The Ashmolean Museum's collections from ancient Greece include Greek gods and goddesses represented on pottery, coins and in sculpture.
- Gallery displays also include objects used in religious contexts including votive offerings, inscribed plaques, and lekythoi which once contained liquids for making offerings to the gods.
- The same gods were worshipped throughout ancient Greece and formed a key part of daily life.
- The Greeks believed their gods were very powerful and should be treated with reverence and respect. They honoured the gods by presenting them with gifts and sacrifices at temples. In return, they hoped that the gods would help them with different aspects of their lives.
- Greek religion was polytheistic. Each god was responsible for many different areas of life and was worshipped according to the needs of the individual at the time. They were represented in human form, each with their own attributes.

## Galleries containing ancient Greek objects

Gallery 7: Money Gallery

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

Gallery 16: The Greek World

Gallery 20: Aegean World

Gallery 21: Greek and Roman Sculpture

## Gallery 16: The Greek World

### 1. Zeus

Cast of a bronze statue of a man, about 470BC possibly Zeus



The original was found in the 1920s at sea near Euboea, Greece. The nude bearded male about to hurl a now-lost object is most commonly identified as Zeus brandishing a thunderbolt, as shown in a similar pose on other sculptures and painted vases. It was probably a votive gift or perhaps a cult statue.

CG B 72A

## Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

### 2. Nike

Cast of Nike of Paionios, from Olympia, c425-421BC



Nike, the winged goddess of victory, is flying in to land on top of a tall triangular pillar as an eagle passes beneath her feet. Originally made from Parian marble and found fallen from its base in front of the Temple of Zeus.

CG B 86

### Gallery 16: The Greek World 3. Poseidon

Athenian black-figure, white-ground, pottery lekythos (oil jar) attributed to the Athena Painter, From Gela, Sicily, 525-475 BC



Poseidon, god of the sea, rides a winged sea-horse with a trident in his hand. He was important to sailors and fishermen and was also believed to be the god of earthquakes. AN1889.1011

### Gallery 16: The Greek World 4. Hephaestus

Athenian red-figure pottery krater (mixing bowl) attributed to the Group of Polygnotos, 475-425 BC



The birth of Pandora, the first woman, who opened the jar releasing evils into the world. Pandora is fashioned from clay by the craftsman God Hephaestus. Zeus and Hermes observe.

AN1896.1908.G275

### Gallery 21: Greek and Roman Sculpture 5. Athena

Colossal marble statue of Athena, Roman, around AD50-300



The head and helmet of the goddess are restorations, probably made in the 1720s when a shield and spear were probably also added, remnants of which can be seen by the left elbow and the right wrist. AN MICHAELIS 19

### Gallery 7: Money 6. Athena

Athenian Silver coins, 500-480BC



Silver coins minted in Athens. Early Athenian coins varied in design. By 450BC, a head of the city's patron goddess Athena, and an owl had become the standard, easily recognisable in trade overseas.

HCR 9476

## Gallery 16: The Greek World

### 7. Aphrodite

Terracotta statuette of Aphrodite, Smyrna, Turkey, 200-1BC



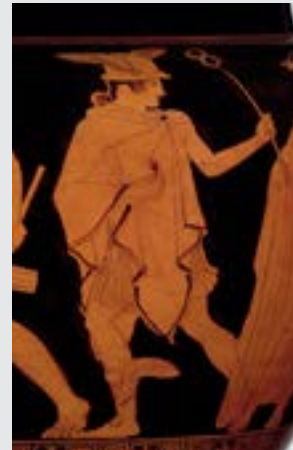
Aphrodite was the ancient Greek goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, and procreation.

AN1911.23

## Gallery 16: The Greek World

### 8. Hermes

Athenian red-figure pottery krater (mixing bowl), attributed to the Group of Polygnotos, 475-425BC



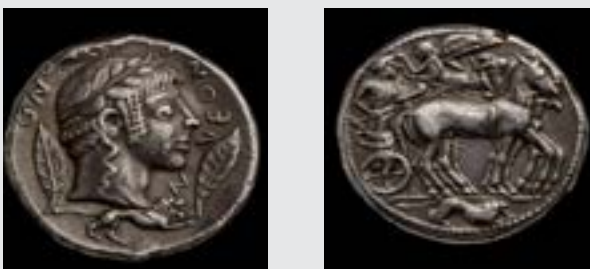
Hermes was the messenger of the gods who travelled vast distances. He had a special role in escorting the souls of the dead to the underworld.

AN1896.1908 G 275

## Gallery 7: Money

### 9. Apollo

Silver coins



Apollo was one of the most important Greek gods. He was god of the sun, music, education, the arts, healing and prophesy whose symbols are a laurel wreath, a bow and arrow or a lyre.

HCR 6180

## Gallery 7: Money

### 10. Artemis

Silver coins



Twin sister of the god Apollo, Artemis was goddess of the moon and the hunt whose symbols are a bow and arrow and a stag.

HCR 6266

## Lines of enquiry: Greek Religion

- Explore different Greek gods and goddesses. Catalogue their different attributes and symbols.
- Discover Greek temples and shrines and find out about worship, offerings and sacrifice.
- Explore how the Greeks worshipped gods and goddesses. Consider the role of festivals and games such as the Olympic and Panathenaic games.
- Read about the role played by gods and goddesses in Greek literature and stories such as The Iliad and The Odyssey.
- Explore Greek sculpture and find different representations of Greek gods and goddesses.
- Consider how and why Greek gods and goddesses are represented on coins. What does this reveal about their significance?
- Find examples of Greek pottery decorated with gods and goddesses. Explore the stories that are illustrated.

## Cross curricular links

- History: the rise and expansion of the Greek empire and its legacy today
- English: find out about the work of Greek writers, poets and philosophers
- Citizenship: explore Athenian democracy

## Working with objects: key questions

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



Athenian red-figure pyxis (lidded box) attributed to the Meidias Painter, 420-401BC. This jewellery box is embellished with added gold leaf and shows women trying on necklaces, with the help of the winged Erotes, gods of love and lust. AN1896. 1908 G.302

## Further resources:

Ashmolean online learning resources [www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources](http://www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources)

Cast Gallery

<http://www.ashmolean.org/departments/castgallery/research/>

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