

Studying Classics at The Ashmolean Resources for teachers

The Ashmolean Museum's collections provide a rich resource for studying Classics. Gallery displays cover Ancient Greece and Rome, the Aegean world and classical sculpture. The wide range of objects on display includes sculpture, coins, pottery, metalwork, jewellery, glassware, building materials, stonework, armour and weapons.

This guide includes information about each gallery, outlining gallery contents and display themes. We offer delivered sessions for school including object handling and online resources.

Lower Ground Floor

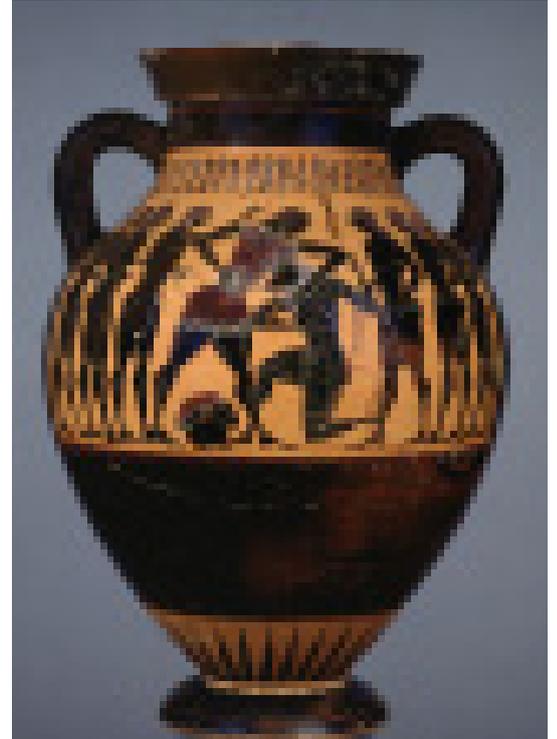
Gallery 7: Money

Roman coins

The Romans viewed their coins not only as money but also as a form of monument. When Rome was ruled by emperors, from 31BC onwards, coin designs combined writing and pictures to commemorate the image, achievements and virtues of the emperor and his family. The coins record imperial victories and buildings and illustrate the emperor's piety to the gods and his generosity to his subjects.



Silver coin Athens, 500-480BC
HCR 9476



Athenian black-figure amphora attributed to the Painter of Berlin 1686, 550-501BC
AN1918.64

Greek coins

Greek coinage emphasised the separate identity of each city state. It also evoked a sense of belonging to a wider Greek world. Coinage was first developed sometime before 600BC and from 550BC spread rapidly within areas colonised by Greeks and through them into adjacent regions. The imagery on coins is drawn from religion and myth, victories in the Olympic Games, distinctive local features and products and visual representations of city names.

Other coin displays:

The myth of Hercules, The Trojan War, Julius Caesar, Claudius, Britannia and Roman victories in Britain.

The Ancient World-Ground Floor

Gallery 13: Rome 400BC - AD300

Display themes:

Moving around the Roman Empire; religion in Roman Britain; gods and goddesses; decorating a Roman home; drinking and dining; Roman Oxfordshire; countryside, farming and the army; Roman sculpture; influence of Greek culture. The Felix Gem, coins showing the 12 Caesars, and a statuette of Hercules slaying the Nemean Lion.



Red-gloss bowl, 25-1BC
AN1984.881



Greek Doctor and his wife, Marble tombstone, AD100
AN MICHAELIS 155

Gallery 15: Italy before Rome 800-400BC

These peoples occupied an area rich in mineral ores, timber and fertile land. They contributed to urbanisation, law, trade and aspects of Greek culture and were eventually absorbed into the Roman world. Key features of Roman life: the toga, gladiatorial games, the alphabet, terracotta roof tiles and the Tuscan Doric Order, were all wEtruscan in origin.

Display themes: before the Etruscans; Etruscan banquets 550-350BC; Eastern Mediterranean Influences 700-600BC; Early Iron Age Italy 900-700BC; Lucera Bronzes and Etruscan craftsmen in bronze.

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

A large collection of plaster casts of Greek and Roman sculpture, reliefs and architectural sculptures. Particular strengths are Classical sculpture, but also Hellenistic and Roman material. Many of the historical casts, some dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are in better condition than the acid-rain-damaged originals from which they were moulded.

Display themes: objects in their ancient context; sanctuaries, tombs, public areas and villas. Lower ground floor cast gallery be visited by special appointment.



Cast of 'Kritian Boy', athlete or hero, from the Athenian Acropolis, 480-470B
CG B68a

The Ancient World- Ground Floor

Gallery 16: The Greek World

Ancient Greece covered Europe across the Aegean Islands to the coast of Asia Minor, connected by the Mediterranean Sea. From 800-600BC, Greek peoples founded settlements in southern Italy, Sicily, North Africa and the Black Sea. They traded in olive oil, wine and distinctive painted pottery, carrying tales of gods and heroes. Although politically divided into city states, the ancient Greeks were united by language, customs and religious practices. They came together at shrines, games, festivals and during wars. In the 300s BC, Greek rule fell under Philip II of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great, whose conquests spread Greek cultural influence to its furthest extent in Egypt and western Asia.

Display themes: Early Greece, Sparta, Corinth and Athens; the Hellenistic world; heroes and myths; gods and goddesses; arts and crafts; the symposium death and burial; theatre and athletics; art and literature; trading posts across eastern and western Greece; the Parian Marble. The collection is especially strong in Athenian painted pottery showing everyday life in Greece.



Athenian black-figure pottery pelike attributed to the Eucharides Painter. Found in Rhodes, 550-500BC AN1896-1908 G.247



Octopus Jar, Palace at Knossos, 1450-1400BC AN1911.608

Gallery 20: Aegean World

The Ashmolean's Aegean collections are the most significant outside Greece. They focus on the emergence of complex societies around the Aegean Sea. The Bronze Age, 3200 to 1100 BC, saw the transformation of societies in the Cyclades, Crete and mainland Greece. Displays cover administrative systems, religious practices and monumental architecture, and show how these societies participated in exchange networks within the Aegean and beyond.

Display themes: Mycenaean Greece; Theseus and the Minotaur; trade; seals, Aegean scripts, Cretan Hieroglyph, Linear A and B; Arthur Evans; The Palace at Knossos; Pottery across the Palace periods; arts and crafts; cult and ritual; jewellery; tools and burial. Early Cycladic material from 3200- 2100BC, including Cycladic figures.

The Ancient World- Ground Floor

Gallery 21: Greek and Roman Sculpture

This gallery displays the 'Arundel Marbles', part of the art collection of Thomas Howard, 2nd Earl of Arundel (1585-1646). The original ancient sculpture and inscriptions are arranged to tell the story of their collection and display. Arundel collected Greek and Roman objects reflecting the ancient Roman ideals of gravitas, virtue, honour and nobility. Arundel excavated in Rome, bought objects from Italian artists and commissioned his agents throughout Europe to seek and buy antiquities to ship back to his wide ranging collection in London. In 1672 alone, his chaplain and agent, William Petty sent back 200 Greek and Latin inscriptions to his home, Arundel House. The collection was gradually dispersed after his death and the inscriptions were given to Oxford University in 1667, some mounted in The Sheldonian Theatre, others were later displayed in the grounds of Easton Neston and Vauxhall pleasure Gardens. The sculptures arrived at the Museum in the late 1880s when many of the 'improvements' that had been added in the 1600s and 1700s were removed.



Pithos, Palace at Knossos, 1700-1400 BC
AN1896.1908.AE1126

Online learning resources

including object sheets and information about taught sessions

www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources

Collections online

www.ashmolean.org/collections/online/

Cast gallery

www.ashmolean.org/departments/castgallery/

Antiquities

www.ashmolean.org/departments/antiquities/

The Beazley archive

Classics Department Outreach

www.classics.ox.ac.uk/Outreach.html

Ashmolean Latin Inscriptions Project 'Reading, Writing, Romans'

www.ashmolean.org/ashwpress/latininscriptions/

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