

PRIVATE TASTE

• IN ANCIENT ROME •

SELECTIONS FROM CHICAGO COLLECTIONS

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THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

ALTHOUGH "TASTE" is defined as individual preference, private taste is never wholly private. Geography, politics, and social mores are among the factors that contribute to a private patron's choices. Private taste in



Dionysiac Mask

Roman,
1st cen. A.D.,
marble.
Collection of
Mr. Eugene
Chesrow, Chicago.
(Exh. no. 2)

ancient Rome can be chronicled through the catastrophic eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. which smothered human life in towns and farms around Pompeii, but preserved for posterity an intimate view of Roman experience in the first century. Literature, anecdote, and archaeological artifacts help to trace the evolution of private taste from the modesty of the early Roman Republic, through imperial expansion, to the opulent finale of the western empire as power shifted from Rome to Byzantium.

Early Rome was bracketed by Etruscan kingdoms in the north and the Greek cities of Magna Graecia in the south. During Etruscan domination, Rome was exposed to Etruria's skilled craftsmanship in metalworking, clay modeling, and stone carving. Rome's Etruscan ancestry is especially evident in its development of realistic portraiture.

The Greek cities of Sicily and southern Italy (Magna Graecia), were founded as outposts for mainland Greek city-states, and each carried its heritage of architecture, sculpture, and painting. Because the Etruscans also had found Greek culture irresistible, Rome was surrounded by Greek classicism, which she embraced wholeheartedly. Indeed, both Greek and Roman art are defined as "classical," but the relationship is one of common themes developed by different tastes.

The art of the Roman Republic, which ended with Octavian's elevation to emperor in 27 B.C., had promulgated the ancient virtues of modesty, simplicity, and stoicism. Republican portraits (6, 62-64) were straightforward and realistic. However, with the territorial expansion of the late Republic at the hands of Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar, artistic taste and patronage shifted to accommodate new colonies and new wealth. The earlier virtues of simplicity and modesty of materials were swept away in a wash of riches wrested from conquered nations. This

period of changing ambition and aesthetic is recorded in the ruins of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Boscoreale.

Unlike Greek artists, whose enduring fame resulted from their individual creativity, the Roman artist is anonymous; in fact, most were Greek slaves or freedmen. The patron and his taste, rather than the craftsman, dictated the style of the artistic product.

PUBLIC INFLUENCE ON PRIVATE TASTE

Different from public art in purpose and scale, the private aesthetic, nevertheless, often reflected the prevailing style of the government, whether republican or imperial. Craftsmen and their private patrons were constantly exposed to the rulers' taste in the coins they handled and in the public buildings they frequented. A portrait statue of the ruling emperor, such as Hadrian (10) was shipped to every major city of the empire to announce his accession. When Hadrian adopted a beard for his official portraiture, beards came into vogue, and bearded portrait busts of private citizens (3) became popular. Coinage with portraits of the emperor and his wife circulated throughout the Roman provinces as soon as a new emperor took office. Changing Imperial hairstyles are shown in a progression of coins (53-58)

whose influence affected citizens from Britain to Egypt. The classical basis of Roman taste was reinforced by the private taste of emperors such as Nero and Hadrian who admired all things Greek. Their expansive patronage of the arts could make public their private predilections.



Lamp showing
Jupiter and Eagle

Roman,
1st cen. B.C./
1st cen. A.D.,
bronze.
The Art Institute
of Chicago, gift of
Mr. and Mrs. James
Alsdorf, 1985.1041.
(Exh. no. 23)

The nature of the empire insured a wide dissemination of the Roman aesthetic at both the official and private level. In conquered provinces, the government created permanent outposts manned by Roman troops and bureaucrats. These transposed Roman families brought with them their culture and the craftsmanship to produce goods such as the terra sigillata bowl (38), made in Gaul to Roman specifications. Cultural influences traveled in both directions. Romans stationed in Egypt and the Near East absorbed foreign tastes, promoting an eclectic Roman aesthetic. The Egyptian goddess Isis was combined with the traditional depiction of a nude Venus, to produce a new image for private worship (13). In a bronze *imago clypeata*, a shield-shaped relief (15), she wears the cobra insignia (*uraeus*) and the Isis crown, and carries her attributes, the cult rattle (*sistrum*), and a basket of snakes. Also from the east comes a small marble copy of the cult statue of Aphrodite of Aphrodisias, a synthesis of the fertility goddesses Astarte and Aphrodite (4).

Commercial trade was probably the most direct conduit between Rome and her colonies.

Much of the glass bought on the Roman market was produced in Syria or Palestine. The image of oriental fruits came into mundane Roman households in the form of glass flasks shaped like dates (68, 69). Glass "face-beads" (49) made in Egypt would have adorned a Roman woman, and typify the richly decorative nature of goods from the eastern Empire. A fibula, a fastening pin for clothing, shaped like a cross-bow and executed in gold, was derived from a Celtic prototype seen in Gaul (46).

INFLUENCE OF GREEK ART ON ROMAN TASTE

With territorial expansion came booty-collecting. General Marcellus's conquest of Sicily in 212 B.C. resulted in the wholesale removal of original Greek sculpture. Collecting became a patrician avocation. Looted statues and paintings were displayed in public baths, gardens and libraries, and also reserved for private delectation. Some of the earliest private and public museums were founded at this time by connoisseurs amassing collections of sculpture, books, silverware, glass, and gems. The supply of original works of art diminished before the demand decreased. Sculpture factories began an enormous trade in copies and adaptations of Greek originals. Cicero's letter to Atticus in 67-66 B.C. deputized his friend to send him "as many other statues and objects as seem to you appropriate to (the villa) . . . and to your good taste."

Romans looked upon Greek art as the apogee of cultured taste, and taste was an attribute that could be cultivated by education. Wealthy Romans sent their sons to Greek schools for a final polish in the study of philosophy, literature, and rhetoric. Placing the statue of a Greek philosopher (5) in one's garden would have

suggested a culturally sophisticated householder. A small bronze copy of a famous Greek statue of Heracles by Lysippos (22) placed on a banquet table signaled an erudite host. The three centuries of Greek art available to the Roman patron provided an example for every taste. Pro-Republican sentiments could be expressed in the severe style of the early fifth century, hearkening back to a time when Athenian democracy overthrew autocratic despots. This Neo-Attic style can be seen in terracotta relief panels (37, 39, 40) used to decorate private houses and public buildings. The more opulent art of the Hellenistic rulers of the 4th and 3rd centuries appealed to the expansive tastes of emperors such as Nero. But throughout the Roman period, Greek classicism drove Roman taste.



Statuette of Aphrodite
of Aphrodisias

Roman,
2nd/3rd cen. A.D.,
marble.
The David and Alfred
Smart Gallery, The
University of Chicago;
The F. B. Tarbell Collection;
Gift of E. P. Warren,
1902.
(Exh. no. 4)

PRIVATE TASTE IN ANCIENT ROME

Checklist of the Exhibition

STONE AND MARBLE

- 1 **Mosaic showing Dionysiac Head**
Roman, 2nd cen. A.D.
Stone tesserae
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 2 **Dionysiac Mask**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Marble
Collection of Mr. Eugene Chesrow
- 3 **Portrait Head of Man**
Roman, mid-3rd cen. A.D.
Marble
Collection of Mr. Eugene Chesrow
- 4 **Statuette of Aphrodite of Aphrodisias**
Roman, 2nd/3rd cen. A.D.
Marble
The David and Alfred Smart Gallery, F. B. Tarbell Collection:
Gift of E. P. Warren, 1902
- 5 **Head of Philosopher**
Roman, 2nd cen. A.D.
Marble
The Oriental Institute, X331
- 6 **Portrait Head of Man**
Roman, Republican Period, mid-1st cen. B.C.
Marble
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mrs. Florence Glessner Lee, 1936.135
- 7 **Portrait of Woman**
Roman, 4th cen. A.D.
Marble
The Art Institute of Chicago, Edward A. Ayer Fund, 1960.64
- 8 **Fountain-spout in form of Child's Head**
Roman, (said to be from Pompeii), 1st cen. A.D.
Marble
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mrs. Henry Pope, Jr., 1961.108
- 9 **Statue of Young Boy**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Marble
The Art Institute of Chicago, Katherine K. Adler Fund, 1976.426

- 10 **Portrait Head of Emperor Hadrian**
Roman, 2nd cen. A.D.
Marble
The Art Institute of Chicago, Katherine K. Adler Fund, 1979.350
- 11 **Torso of Venus**
Roman, 1st/2nd cen. A.D.
Marble
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Edwin DeCosta

BRONZE

- 12 **Mirror Cover showing Three Graces**
Roman, 2nd cen. A.D.
Gilded bronze
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 13 **Statuette of Isis-Aphrodite**
Roman, 2nd cen. A.D.
Bronze, cast in two parts
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 14 **Roundel with Relief of Molossian Hound's Head**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Bronze
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 15 **Roundel with Relief of Goddess Isis**
Roman, 1st/2nd cen. A.D.
Gilded bronze
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 16 **Statuette of Eagle**
Roman, 2nd cen. A.D.
Bronze
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 17 **Statuette of Horse**
Roman, 2nd cen. A.D.
Bronze
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 18 **Askos**
Roman, 1st cen. B.C./1st cen. A.D.
Bronze
Field Museum of Natural History, 105236
- 19 **Hanging Lantern**
Roman, from Boscoreale, Villa I, 1st cen. A.D.
Bronze
Field Museum of Natural History, 24404

- 20 **Patera with Ram's-Head Handle**
Roman, from Boscoreale, Villa I, 1st cen. B.C./1st cen. A.D.
Bronze
Field Museum of Natural History, 24410
- 21 **Pitcher with Handle showing Hippocampus**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Bronze
Field Museum of Natural History, 105237
- 22 **Heracles holding Apples of the Hesperides**
Roman, 2nd cen. A.D.
Bronze
The Art Institute of Chicago, Katherine K. Adler Fund, 1978.308
- 23 **Lamp showing Jupiter and Eagle**
Roman, 1st cen. B.C./1st cen. A.D.
Bronze
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf, 1985.1041
- 24 **Mirror Cover showing Woman in Rustic Sanctuary**
Roman, (said to be from Asia Minor), 2nd cen. A.D.
Gilded bronze
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf, 1985.1042

FRESCO AND STUCCO

- 25 **Wall Painting Showing Column**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Fresco
Private Collection
- 26 **Wall Painting showing Deer**
Roman, from Boscoreale, Villa I, 1st cen. A.D.
Fresco
Field Museum of Natural History, 24653
- 27 **Wall Painting showing Window and Two Birds**
Roman, from Boscoreale, Villa I, 1st cen. A.D.
Fresco
Field Museum of Natural History, 24654

- 28 **Wall Painting showing Suspended Vase**
Roman, from Boscoreale, Villa I, 1st cen. A.D.
Fresco
Field Museum of Natural History, 24655
- 29 **Wall Painting showing Winged Sphinx**
Roman, from Boscoreale, Villa I, 1st cen. A.D.
Fresco
Field Museum of Natural History, 24647
- 30 **Relief Panel showing Seated Woman with Griffin**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Stucco
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mrs. Edith Healy Hill, 1922.4428
- 31 **Relief Panel showing Winged Woman between two Deer**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Stucco
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mrs. Edith Healy Hill, 1922.4429

SILVER

- 32 **Beaker**
Roman, mid-1st cen. B.C.
Silver
Field Museum of Natural History, 24313
- 33 **Shell-shaped Dish**
Roman, mid-1st cen. B.C.
Silver
Field Museum of Natural History, 24312
- 34 **Footed Bowl**
Roman, mid-1st cen. B.C.
Silver
Field Museum of Natural History, 24311.2
- 35 **Cochlearia (Snail Spoon)**
Roman, mid-1st cen. B.C.
Silver
Field Museum of Natural History, 24315.2
- 36 **Spoon**
Roman, mid-1st cen. B.C.
Silver
Field Museum of Natural History, 24314.4

TERRACOTTA

- 37 **Panel showing Perseus, Minerva, and Gorgon Head**
Roman, 1st cen. B.C./1st cen. A.D.
Terracotta, mold-made
Field Museum of Natural History, 24967
- 38 **Terra Sigillata Bowl**
Roman, made in southern France, c. 60-85 A.D.
Marked by maker, "Vitalis"
Terracotta, mold-made
Field Museum of Natural History, 24669
- 39 **Panel showing Nike Sacrificing Bull**
Roman, 1st/2nd cen. A.D.
Terracotta
The David and Alfred Smart Gallery, F. B. Tarbell Collection:
Gift of Prof. W. G. Hale, 1918
- 40 **Panel showing Women Festooning Candelabrum**
Roman, Augustan period, second half of 1st cen. B.C.
Terracotta, mold-made
The Art Institute of Chicago, Katherine K. Adler Fund; restricted gift of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth A. Bro, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Alexander, RX 18202

JEWELRY

- 41 **Necklace with Medallion showing Dionysus**
Roman, 2nd/3rd cen. A.D.
Gold
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 42 **Necklace with Intaglio said to be Empress Herennia Etruscilla**
Roman, c. 250 A.D.
Rock crystal intaglio with gold mount and chain
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 43 **Cameo showing Seated Warrior**
Roman, 1st/2nd cen. A.D.
Agate cameo set in modern gold ring
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf

- 44 **Ring with Cameo showing Goddess Abundance**
Roman, 1st/2nd cen. A.D.
Gilded bronze ring with agate cameo
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 45 **Ring showing Head of Hercules**
Roman, 1st cen. B.C./1st cen. A.D.
Gold
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
- 46 **Fibula, "Cross-Bow" Type**
Roman, 2nd/4th cen. A.D.
Gold
Field Museum of Natural History, 239149
- 47 **Pair of Earrings**
Roman, 1st/2nd cen. A.D.
Glass, gold and gold leaf
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Henry H. Getty and Charles L. Hutchinson, 1892.24
- 48 **Necklace of Glass Beads and Gold**
Late Roman/Early Byzantine, 4th/5th cen. A.D.
Gold discs with inlaid glass, gold glass and silvered glass beads
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1949.459
- 49 **Necklace of Crystal and Glass Beads**
Roman, Egypt, 1st cen. B.C./1st cen. A.D.
Mosaic glass face beads, rock crystal and gold glass beads, shell spacers
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1949.1103
- 50 **Bracelet**
Roman, 1st/2nd cen. A.D.
Gold
The Art Institute of Chicago, Classical Collection, RX 18051.1
- 51 **Coin with Hippopotamus**
Silver double denarius, 248 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4898
- 52 **Coin with Camel and Suppliant King**
Silver denarius, 58 B.C.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of W.F. Dunham, 1920.739
- 53 **Coin with Head of Agrippina**
Gold aureus, 37-38 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4860
- 54 **Coin with Head of Sabina**
Gold aureus, 134 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4873
- 55 **Coin with Bust of Plautilla**
Silver denarius, 202-205 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4886
- 56 **Coin with Bust of Julia Domna**
Gold aureus, c. 196-211 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4883
- 57 **Coin with Bust of Julia Mamaea**
Silver denarius, c. 231 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4889
- 58 **Coin with Head of Herennia Etruscilla**
Bronze sestertius, 249-251 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of William N. Pelouze, 1923.1330
- 59 **Coin with Head of Vespasian**
Gold aureus, 75-79 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4867
- 60 **Coin with Head of Trajan**
Silver denarius, 103-111 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of W. F. Dunham, 1920.998
- 61 **Coin with Head of Honorius**
Gold solidus, c. 405 A.D.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4906
- 62 **Coin with Head of Julius Caesar**
Silver denarius, 42 B.C.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4850
- 63 **Coin with Head of Pompey**
Silver denarius, 42-40 B.C.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Martin A. Ryerson, 1922.4851
- 64 **Coin with Head of Mark Antony**
Silver denarius, 42 B.C.
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of William N. Pelouze, 1923.1237
- GLASS**
- 65 **Askos**
Roman, from Boscoreale, Villa I, 1st cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
Field Museum of Natural History, 24581
- 66 **Cinerary Urn with Lid**
Roman, 1st/2nd cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
Field Museum of Natural History, 24606.1+2
- 67 **Flask showing Vases**
Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 1st cen. A.D.
Opaque white glass, mold-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of George Schneider, 1891.24
- 68 **Date Flask**
Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 1st cen. A.D.
Glass, mold-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of E. G. Keith, Ebenezer Kohlsaat, 1891.32
- 69 **Date Flask**
Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 1st cen. A.D.
Glass, mold-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1949.435
- 70 **Cosmetic Container**
Roman, early 1st cen. A.D.
Marbled glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1943.1162
- 71 **Pyxis**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Marbled glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1943.1166
- 72 **Head Flask**
Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 2nd/3rd cen. A.D.
Glass, mold-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1944.444
- 73 **Grape Flask**
Late Roman, 4th/5th cen. A.D.
Glass, mold-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1944.446
- 74 **Cosmetic Container with Handle**
Late Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 4th/5th cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1949.425
- 75 **Ribbed Bowl**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Glass, mold-cast
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1949.433
- 76 **Pilgrim Flask**
Late Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 4th/5th cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1949.1114
- 77 **Jug with Handle**
Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 3rd/4th cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1941.1095
- 78 **Flask with Double Handles**
Late Roman, probably Syria, 4th/5th cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1945.666
- 79 **Bowl with Scalloped Edge**
Late Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 4th cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1945.670
- 80 **Cosmetic Container**
Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 1st/2nd cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1947.887
- 81 **Flask**
Late Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 4th/5th cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1947.963
- 82 **Jug with Handle**
Late Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, 4th/5th cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1949.432
- 83 **Shallow Bowl**
Roman, 1st cen. A.D.
Glass, mold-cast
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1949.449
- 84 **Jug with Handle**
Late Roman, 4th/5th cen. A.D.
Glass, free-blown
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. Robinson, 1949.455

COINS

INTERIOR DECORATION

Roman patrons' increasing sophistication and wealth encouraged artists to expend their talents on elaborate interior decoration of houses and gardens. Found in a country estate near Boscoreale and in Pompeii, the fresco fragments (25-29) in the exhibition are examples of the styles of painting popular in the decades prior to Vesuvius's eruption. In fresco, water-based paints were applied to plaster which, when dried, chemically bonded the pigments to the wall. Mythological vignettes and illusionistic scenes, including realistic architectural elements, created rooms of strong colors, delicate detail, and deceptive space. Tall candelabra, animals, sphinxes, and birds became the stock-in-trade. During the early empire, stucco work on walls and ceilings became popular. In the Art Institute's panels (30, 31), fantastic and natural animals teamed with fanciful nymphs parallel the stucco decoration of Nero's Golden House. Polychrome mosaics decorated floors with geometric patterns and mythological scenes. A mosaic showing the head of Dionysus (1), probably served as the floor of a *triclinium*, or dining room, where a reference to the god of wine was deemed fitting.

Peristyle colonades and gardens were decorated with the same enthusiasm as the interiors of houses; however, as decorative needs arose for which there was no Greek prototype, adaptations were invented. A mask of a Dionysiac follower (2), lifted from a Hellenistic sculptural frieze, was used by Roman householders as a hanging sculpture (*oscillum*) suspended between the columns of a peristyle. Well-heads and fountain spouts

such as the child's head spout (8) were common objects ordered for gardens. Terracotta relief panels were used in a series to create friezes on protected exterior walls. The Field Museum's panel (37) depicts the mythological scene of Perseus holding the head of the Gorgon Medusa, while Minerva displays her shield, used in the killing of the monster.

HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS

Expensive goods, such as bronze culinary vessels, present a further example of the Roman love of decorative objects. A pitcher (21) sports a handle formed of a mythological beast, the *hippocampus*, half-horse and half-fish. A bronze goat-skin-shaped pitcher (*askos*) (18), which was one of a matched pair, was used to pour wine and water. Shown with it is a more modest version in glass (65). Animals, real and fictional, were favored subjects, as can be seen on the lip of the bronze *askos* where reclining goats refer to the vessel's shape.

Small bronze statuettes of animals (17) were valued by connoisseurs for their charm and technical refinement. A bronze eagle (16), Jupiter's symbol and the emblem of the victorious Roman state, expressed both religious and political fidelity. Another eagle, combined with Jupiter's head, decorates a lamp in the Art Institute's collection (23). Household furniture for the wealthy was often made of bronze or ornamented with bronze fittings, such as the dog's-head roundel (14) which probably decorated the scrolled end-rest of a couch that was used for reclining during meals as well as for sleeping. A more utilitarian household object is the suspended lantern (19) which was found in the olive-press room of a *villa rustica* where olive oil was processed.



Beaker

Roman,
mid - 1st cen. B.C.,
silver.
Courtesy, Field
Museum of Natural
History, Neg. No.
95694, Chicago.
(Exh. no. 32)

Romans collected silver on a gargantuan scale. Five pieces from a hoard (32-36) said to be from Tivoli are part of a larger group made during the late Republican period and perhaps hidden during the civil wars of that time. Since there were few vehicles for the storing of excess capital in the Roman financial world, silverware was a popular means of using and storing wealth which could be converted into coinage when necessary. Inscriptions on the silver tell us that it belonged to a Roman woman named Sattia.

Rome's imperial ambitions provided not only the raw material for the manufacture of precious goods, but also led to the leisure and wealth to cultivate elaborate tastes. Mirrors with sculptured covers can trace their heritage to fourth-century Greece, as can the iconographic theme of the Three Graces (12). The Graces also appear on the tunic of the Aphrodite of Aphrodisias statuette (4). A second mirror cover (24), which also refers to Aphrodite, depicts a young woman in a rustic sanctuary where she will make an offering, hoping for beauty and love.

The analogy of beauty to love was the underpinning for the enormous cosmetic industry of Rome. Some of the most elaborate glass containers (70, 74) were made for cosmetic materials and were buried with their owners. Until glass blowing became common in the first century, glass was an expensive luxury commodity. It was used for jewelry in place of gems, not as a fraud, but as a legitimate decoration (48). Glass was also made to imitate stones such as onyx and marble (71). As the composition of glass and the skill of craftsmen developed, glass could either be blown into a mold (72, 73), free-blown (66), or, using an older method, mold-cast (75) by pressing soft glass into a mold. The iridescence that we admire today did not exist when these glass objects were made; it is the product of their long burial, during which minerals in the soil interacted with the glass surface.

PORTRAITURE

Portraiture, whether in marble busts, cameos, or on coinage, was Rome's particular glory. From at least the third century B.C., Romans had made death masks and funerary effigies used as memorials in the household shrine. Portrait busts were also used to mark graves in large, communal burial rooms. Remaining true to nature in recording an individual's physiognomy was of primary importance. Although Imperial portraits display a degree of heroizing, the artist's depiction of Hadrian's features takes precedence over idealization (10).

Victorious generals such as Julius Caesar (62) and Mark Antony (64) followed Alexander the Great's lead in reproducing their profiles on coins. The propagandistic value of circulating one's portrait on coinage into every household in Rome was used frequently as generals and, later, emperors sought popular support. The shifting political climate can be traced through the images on imperial coins from Trajan's confidence and Vespasian's military bravado to Honorius, who is a symbol of office rather than a personality.

JEWELRY

The highly developed skills of coin-die, intaglio, and cameo carving were brought to Rome with Greek craftsman-slaves. Intaglios and dies for coins require the same process of carving a recessed design into a stone or metal matrix. Cameo carving reverses the process of intaglio: the artist removes the background material while leaving the design to project from the surface. Used in rings (43, 44) and pendants,

cameos were often made of layered stone such as agate in which colored layers could be removed to create shading and contrast.

Jewelry, by having both a decorative use and an intrinsic value, was very popular throughout the Roman world in spite of various sumptuary laws which tried to curb excessive investment in valuable gold. Styles in jewelry can be traced from imperial inspiration to private consumption, with jewelers producing multiple copies of popular items such as the domed gold bracelet (50). Rings, worn by men and women, often carried images of one's guardian god, such as Hercules or Abundance (45, 44). Dionysus was a frequent subject, and appears as the medallion of a fragmentary gold necklace (41).

A SIMPLE TERRACOTTA bowl (38) epitomizes the complex nature of Roman private taste. From the first century B.C., such molded, relief-decorated tableware, called Arrentine ware, was mass produced in Italy. It imitated Hellenistic Greek silver bowls with decoration that quoted from classical sources, often using garlands, acanthus friezes, putti, and allegorical figures in repeated patterns. In the Romanized town of Condatomagus in southern France, a Roman potter named Vitalis made molds to copy Arrentine ware, producing bowls for both Gallic and Italian trade. He typifies the artisan's response to Roman private taste by making a product drawn from a Greek prototype and using classical motifs popularized by patrician fashion to satisfy the predilections of his patrons, the private citizenry.

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Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf
Mr. Eugene Chesrow
Dr. and Mrs. Edwin DeCosta
Field Museum of Natural History
The Oriental Institute of The University of Chicago
The David and Alfred Smart Gallery, The University of Chicago
A Private Collector

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Necklace
with Dionysus
medallion

Roman,
2nd/3rd cen. A.D.,
gold.
Collection of
Mr. and Mrs. James
W. Alsdorf, Chicago.
(Exh. no. 41)

KAREN ALEXANDER

with the assistance of

MARY GREUEL

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Decorative Arts and Sculpture,
and Classical Art