

Roman Art from the Louvre / American Federation of Arts

Indianapolis Museum of Art, Seattle Art Museum, Oklahoma City Museum of Art
Object Chat Labels by Josh Feinberg, 2007



Selected Texts from the Exhibition:



Citizen Wearing a Toga
Late 1st century A.D.
Marble

The toga was the official costume of the Roman citizen. Consisting of a semicircular piece of white wool cloth, about 18 feet in diameter, it was rolled several times around the body. The toga was an extremely flexible garment. It could be wrapped in a variety of ways, depending on the context or the fashion of the day. In this depiction, the fabric has slid off the man's right shoulder, exposing the tunic (a loose shirt-like undergarment)—a style perfectly appropriate for an orator in the heat of discourse.



Medallion Coin
ca. 324 – 326 A.D.
Gold

This gold medallion is one of several believed to have adorned a single necklace. The others are housed in London, Cleveland and Washington, D.C. At its center is a commemorative coin decorated with a bust of Emperor Constantine. Constantine's sons Crispus and Constantine II, who became consuls for the second time on January 1, 321 A.D., are featured on the back of the coin. Originally, six figures surrounded the coin, but none have been identified with certainty. The coin and figures are set within a frame of openwork decoration.



Historical Relief, Sacrificial Scene
First or second quarter of 1st century
A.D.

Grey-veined marble

This relief depicts a sacrificial procession. On the right, a priest with veiled head—the emperor himself—performs the rites. Victimarii (assistants responsible for carrying out sacrifices), lictors and an incense-bearing camillus (a person who assists in the performing of rituals) follow him. The procession includes a pig, ram and bull. These animals lent their names to this particular form of offering, the *suovetaurilia*.

Suovetaurilia ceremonies were traditionally dedicated to Mars, the Roman god of war, and were often held to conclude a census or military campaign. This relief may commemorate the census organized by Augustus and Tiberius in 14 B.C.



Portrait of Caligula
ca. 40 A.D.

Marble

Either calculating or weak-minded, Caligula avoided Emperor Tiberius' cruelty by adopting a slavish attitude toward the emperor, even imitating his hairstyle. The Roman people had high hopes for him when he became emperor at the age of 25 in 37 A.D., but he proved ineffective as a leader and mentally unstable. He was assassinated in 41 A.D. Caligula's portraits show that he made little effort to ennoble his image or conceal the features of his far from handsome face. This marks a significant departure from the idealized portraiture inaugurated by Emperor Augustus.



Mosaic Panel
Early decades of the 2nd century
A.D.

Marble, limestone, molten glass

In this scene from Greek mythology, the god Hermes entrusts the Trojan prince Paris with a mission to select the most beautiful goddess from among Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite. His choice of Aphrodite sets in motion a series of events that ultimately result in the Trojan War. This mosaic was the central floor decoration in the triclinium of an elaborate house in the eastern Roman capital of Antioch. The fineness of its technique and the classicism of its style distinguish this as a masterpiece among mosaics.