

Designed for Young Audiences

Discovery Guide

Pompeii and the Roman Villa:
Art and Culture around the
Bay of Naples

National Gallery of Art, Washington
October 19, 2008—March 22, 2009

About This Exhibition The exhibition is organized in three sections, and this guide is color-coded to help you navigate and explore the themes.

Green Begin with the theme of Roman houses and villas. Discover the owners, see objects from their homes, and explore art from gardens and a dining room.

Blue Next, learn about the Romans' interest in Greek art, history, and mythology.

Orange Then, examine the influence of ancient Rome on European art and culture after the discovery of the ruins of Pompeii in the eighteenth century.

How to Use This Guide Designed for families and school groups, the guide will help you locate key works and introduce you to important themes of the exhibition. The works of art are presented in the order in which they appear in the exhibition. Recommended for ages 7–12.

First, find the objects shown in the image.

Then, look carefully at the works of art to answer the questions.

Related information is provided in the columns along the right side of each page.

At the bottom of each page, “Connect to the Present” questions explore links between the ancient world and our own. Use these as discussion questions in the exhibition or to extend your visit back at home or in school.

Tips for Teachers Use this guide to identify good starting and stopping locations for your visit. If you have less than an hour, you may wish to tour only one or two sections. If you are visiting with a group of more than thirty students, stagger their entry times into the exhibition.

Reminder Please be careful not to touch the objects or lean on the walls or cases. Oils from your hands and clothing can be damaging.

The Bay of Naples is a beautiful place. The rocky coast, everywhere sparkling with light, drops dramatically into the Mediterranean, plunging into waters colored lapis, turquoise, and plum. The land is fertile and terraced with fruit trees. Cool breezes temper the heat of sunny days. No wonder the richest people in Rome—including emperors and their families—left the hot, dirty city for their lavish coastal villas.

But on an August day in AD 79, life around the Bay of Naples was abruptly silenced. The volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius buried many towns and villas, preserving a remarkable record of the past.



Enter a Roman House

Find the large photomurals on each side of the exhibition entrance. These murals reproduce watercolors painted in the early 1900s showing how the House of the Centenary in Pompeii might have looked in antiquity.

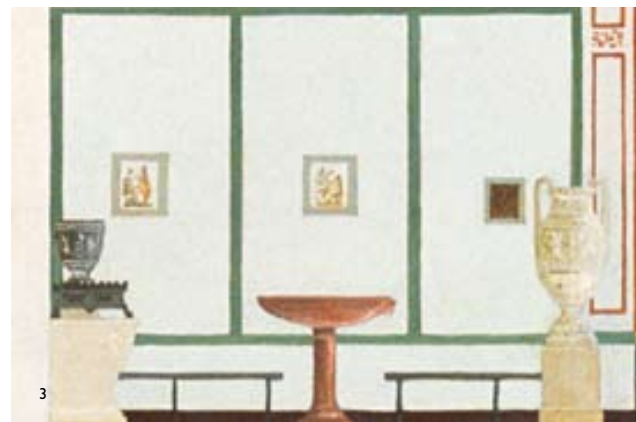
Explore this house with your eyes.

Find the photomural details illustrated here.

Imagine what it may have been like to live in this house: Which part of the house looks like the most fun to play in? Can you find a place where you might like to relax?

Connect to the present

Think about: How is this Roman house both similar to and different from houses today?



Beware the Dog

Cave Canem (“Beware the Dog”): A mosaic depicting a guard dog was placed at the threshold of the front door of some Pompeian homes as a humorous “no trespassing” sign.

What’s in a Name?

As you tour the exhibition, you’ll notice that many of the Roman houses have colorful names—House of the Centenary, House of the Tragic Poet, House of the Golden Bracelet. These names were given by archaeologists when they discovered the houses. Sometimes the name refers to a work of art found inside the ruins.

**a table legs**

These table supports carved with fantastic creatures must have been one of the family's prized possessions.

b lamp

Light came from lamps that burned olive oil. This one has spouts for two flames. Often lamps were set on tall stands.

c writing implements

Roman children learned to write on folding wax tablets using a stylus. These erasable tablets were also used for quick notes. Real books were written with ink on long rolls of papyrus.

d cup

This elegant two-handled silver cup was used for drinking wine.

e seafood

Romans loved seafood, and fish farming was a profitable business. Paintings and mosaics showed the bounties of the sea—sea bass, squid, clams, shrimp, octopus, lobster, eel, and flounder. Some people even had pet fish.

f jewelry

Romans thought that snakes brought good luck. Worn on the upper arm, spiral bracelets in the form of a snake were popular.

At Home

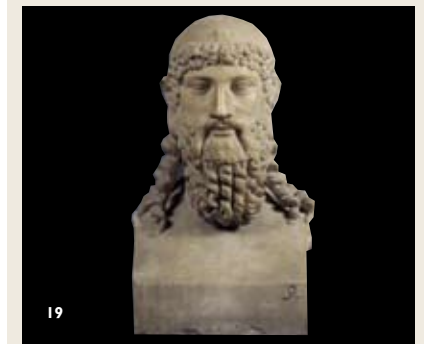
Many of the things Romans used in everyday life are familiar to us today: dishes, glassware, and jewelry are not really that different from ours. The objects in this room give us a glimpse into the elegant lifestyle of the wealthy people who lived around the bay.

Find the six household objects shown in the details on the opposite page.

Match the images to the descriptions on the right.

Connect to the present

Consider which of these items we still use today. How are today's objects different from household objects from Pompeii?



Dionysos in the Garden

Images of the wine god Dionysos (Bacchus in Latin), along with his band of revelers, appear in many garden paintings and sculptures. Dionysos was a “natural” fit for the garden because he was associated with the fertility and abundance of the earth. He was also the god of theater—the very first plays must have been part of harvest festivals dedicated to him—and sculptures showing the exaggerated masks worn by actors were common garden decorations.

Courtyards and Gardens I

While villas were surrounded by gardens, houses in town had gardens planted in interior courtyards. These gardens were accented with fountains, carved reliefs, statues, and figurines that spurted water into pools. Gardens could be places for quiet, contemplative pursuits—reading and writing, discussing philosophy with friends, or simply enjoying nature.

Find these animals:

dog

lion

snake

peacock

boar

Think about What sound does each of these animals make?

Connect to the present

Decide: How do we bring animals and other elements from nature into our homes today?

Entertainment and Fine Dining

The dining room was often the grandest room in a Roman house. These frescos, which decorated a dining room, allude to the many entertainments that diners would have enjoyed along with their food, such as music, poetry readings, or a play.

Find the god Apollo, floating in the center and playing his lyre. He was the ancient god of light, reason, and music. Apollo is surrounded by muses, sister goddesses who represented different arts.

Examine the fresco and identify the following muses:

Euterpe, muse of music, is shown with a flute.

Urania, muse of astronomy, is holding a globe.

Melpomene, muse of tragedy, is holding an actor's mask with a sad expression.

Thalia, muse of comedy, is holding an actor's mask with a happy expression

Connect to the present

Imagine: If you could create a fresco for a room in your home, which room would you choose? What would you paint?



Dining in Style

Dining rooms were often located to provide guests with a view of the garden. The dining room was called a triclinium because it contained three couches. It was the ancient custom to recline while eating! A meal could last for hours, with entertainment between courses. Imagine what it would have been like to dine in this room: reclining on an elegant couch, eating with your fingers, and enjoying entertainments. This could have been the menu:

APPETIZERS
OLIVES
MUSHROOMS
EGGS
OYSTERS
MAIN COURSE
HOT BOILED GOOSE
STUFFED HARE
SONGBIRDS WITH
ASPARAGUS
SQUID
DESSERT
FRESH FIGS
STUFFED DATES
GRAPES
HONEY CAKES

Pompeian Wall Painting

Romans loved wall painting. Even the poorest houses in Pompeii had one or two painted rooms. The rich could afford splendid colors (green and blue were among the most expensive, yellow and red the most popular). The best artists were hired to paint intricate and beautiful scenes, some covering entire walls, others set like small pictures inside painted architectural frames.

Courtyards and Gardens II

Find the garden scene from the House of the Golden Bracelet. This painting decorated a living room wall in a luxurious house. Filled with plants and birds, it was a way of bringing nature into the house. No matter what the season, these flowers are always in bloom and the sky is always bright blue.

Explore this garden with your eyes. It is thickly planted with laurel, oleander, sycamore, and palm, as well as roses, daisies, ivy, and poppies. The birds have also been identified—see pages 16, 17.

Imagine sitting in this garden:
 What sounds might you hear?
 What are some things you might smell?
 How might you feel?

Find two masks and a birdbath in the painting. Next, look for similar objects in this room.

Connect to the present

Share: Where do you like to go to relax and to think?



Plato's Academy

Gardens were places of learning. Romans admired Greek philosophers, including Plato, who is depicted here pointing to a globe. The setting is the olive grove outside Athens where Plato founded his school in the fourth century BC.

Mosaics

The Romans got their taste for mosaics from Greece. The earliest were made with simple river pebbles. But artisans soon started to use colored marbles and glass, greatly expanding the range of colors. These were cut into smaller and more regular pieces called tesserae, allowing artists to create subtle effects of light and shade and greater detail.

Most mosaics in Pompeian homes were laid on the floor. Reproductions in this exhibition will give you a sense of what it would have been like to walk on them.



barn swallow

dove

house sparrows

blue rock thrush

magpie

wood pigeon



turtledove

golden oriole



wood pigeon

Greek Legacy: Mythology

Find the Thracian gladiator's helmet. The oldest permanent amphitheater we know about is the one built in Pompeii in 80 BC. The most popular events held there were mortal combats between gladiators. Warriors from Thrace (mostly modern Bulgaria) wore helmets such as this one with a latticed visor to protect the eyes and a wide, flaring rim.

Look closely at the helmet's decoration: the scenes illustrate episodes surrounding the fall of the city of Troy, center of the legendary Trojan War.

Discover Did you know that the Trojan War was an important part of the mythology of Rome? After the Trojan prince Paris stole Helen, the beautiful wife of the Greek king Menelaos, the Greeks and Trojans fought for ten years. At last the Greeks were victorious. The greatest of all Greek poets, Homer, told the story from the Greek point of view. The greatest Latin poet, Virgil, took up the story from the other side. Virgil's *Aeneid* follows the Trojan hero Aeneas in his long journey toward a new life in Italy. Aeneas' son established the town from which Rome itself was founded.

Identify a few scenes on the helmet:

Front Menelaos and Helen before the walls of Troy

Left Death of the Trojan king Priam

Right Aeneas fleeing the burning city carrying his father on his shoulders

Consider Why would a gladiator want this story to be shown on his helmet?

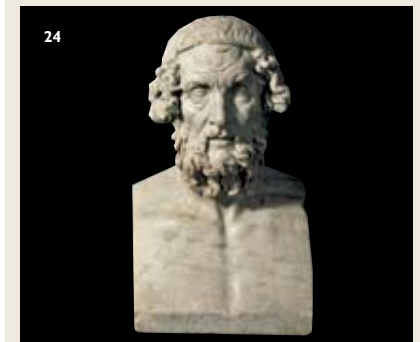
Connect to the present

Think about: Which athletes today wear protective helmets? How do the helmets vary for different sports?



The Legacy of Greece

For Romans, part of the allure of the Bay of Naples was its rich Greek heritage. Greeks colonized the region as early as the eighth century BC and founded Neapolis (modern Naples) around 600 BC. After the Romans conquered Greece, they became captivated by Greek art and culture. Romans revered classical Greece as a repository of culture, wisdom, and beauty, and they adorned their houses and gardens with works of art that referred to this legacy.



Homer

Homer probably lived during the eighth century BC. Images of him are all imaginary because he lived long before the Greeks made true portraits. Yet the many portraits of him all look alike, emphasizing his age and blindness. Well-educated Romans were taught Greek at an early age so that they could read the "classics." Sometimes they even spoke Greek, rather than Latin, to each other.

Greek Legacy: History

Find the bronze statuette of Alexander the Great on horseback.

Pretend that you are in Alexander's place. Look closely at this sculpture. Use your eyes and your imagination to complete the following sentences from his point of view:

My horse is _____.

I wonder _____.

Why did I _____?

What will happen if _____?

Find the Alexander Mosaic, reproduced on the floor of this room. Compare it with the sculpture: How are these images of Alexander similar, and how are they different?

Connect to the present

Discuss: Which historical figures do you admire? Why? What moment in their life would you choose to represent in a work of art?



Alexander the Great

The Romans were interested in Greek rulers, too—especially Alexander the Great, who took his armies all the way to India in the fourth century BC. It was the greatest conquest the world had ever seen.

Alexander hired the most famous artists of his day to make images of him. The likenesses they made of him were copied many times over—so we have no trouble today recognizing Alexander's waving hair, swept up like a lion's mane, and his eyes, burning with intensity. We know a lot about his horse Bucephalus, too. Only young Alexander could tame him.



Alexander Mosaic

The mosaic reproduced on the floor came from an opulent house in Pompeii. Large sections were missing when it was discovered in 1831, but they have been filled in here to suggest the mosaic's original appearance.

Greek Legacy: Art

Find the statues of Artemis, goddess of the hunt, and Aphrodite, goddess of love.

Examine each sculpture carefully. Next, describe the hairstyle, the facial expression (eyes and mouth), the pose, and how the drapery is arranged.

ARTEMIS

APHRODITE

hairstyle

eyes

mouth

pose

drapery

Think about What is similar about these two statues and what is different?

Decide Which sculpture do you like best? Why?

Connect to the present

Discover: Romans were inspired by Greek art. Which works of art from the past inspire you?



Artemis

27

The Lure of Greek Art

For wealthy Roman collectors, ownership of Greek art was a mark of sophistication. Some bought “antique” sculptures from Greece. Romans also created new art, such as these sculptures of Artemis and Aphrodite, that evoked the styles of Greek masterpieces.



Aphrodite

28

Marble Sculpture

When you imagine a work of ancient sculpture, chances are you see pure white marble. But in fact, most marble sculpture from Greece and Rome was brightly painted. So was the carved decoration on buildings. Most of the paint has long since faded away. But if you look closely at many sculptures, you can still see traces of paint.

Eruption

Find the painting *Vesuvius from Portici*, by Joseph Wright. This painting was made about 1,700 years after Pompeii was destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The volcano erupted often in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — though not as violently. Artists had to imagine how it would have looked that day in AD 79.

Circle the words below that you think describe the scene in this painting:

welcoming mysterious relaxing
 peaceful wild powerful
 eerie lonely fiery dusty
 dark frightening noisy warm
 exciting cool quiet

Connect to the present

Remember: Can you think of any natural disasters that have occurred in your lifetime?

August 24–25, AD 79

Mount Vesuvius erupted around noon on August 24 in AD 79. A series of tremors had shaken the region four days earlier, and wells and springs had gone dry. The Romans thought that Vesuvius was extinct: it had not erupted for seven hundred years.

A twelve-mile-high column of ash and rock rose into the sky, turning night into day and setting off electrical storms. The wind was blowing toward Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae. Other areas were spared the worst. In Pompeii, as the giant cloud collapsed, ash, pumice, and rock fell through the day, lightly at first. Many people fled—pillows tied to their heads—as the debris began to pile up in streets and collapse roofs. Around midnight, pyroclastic surges of poison gas and ash blew down the mountain at speeds of fifty miles an hour or more. On one side of the volcano, Herculaneum was overwhelmed with a flow of volcanic mud some seventy feet thick. Surges raced toward Pompeii as well, and early on August 25, they overtopped the city walls. Everyone still in town was killed instantly. Fine ash continued to fall. When the eruption was finally over late that day, probably only the tops of the tallest buildings in Pompeii remained visible—and Herculaneum had disappeared.



Touring Pompeii

Find the painting *The Forum at Pompeii with Vesuvius in the Background*, by Christen Købke. After the buried ruins were discovered in the eighteenth century, Pompeii became one of Europe's most popular tourist attractions. Artists came to see the ancient cities that had been uncovered, and they made paintings (and later photographs) for tourists to buy as mementos. Mount Vesuvius in the distance was a constant reminder of the event that led to Pompeii's destruction.

Imagine that you are a visitor to this place. What clues tell you where a building once stood? What kinds of things might you discover as you explored these ruins? What parts of this scene are you most curious about?

Connect to the present

Choose: Select four objects from your life that you would like to place in a time capsule. If people two thousand years from now opened the capsule, what would they learn about your life from these objects?



Discovery

The towns and villas in the immediate shadow of the volcano were all but forgotten. Farmers returned to the land—made even more fertile by the volcanic deposits—and they planted grapes and other crops. Only a hint of the past was contained in a local name for the area: La Cività, the city.

Systematic excavations began at Herculaneum in 1738 and at Pompeii in 1748. News of the discoveries spread rapidly throughout Europe.

Recreating the Past

Find the painting *A Sculpture Gallery*, by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. Here past and present come together in a fantasy scene. The people in this painting are the artist's family members, posing as ancient Romans. They are gathered amid a collection of Greek and Roman works, unearthed in excavations.

Wonder Why might the artist have wanted to combine elements from the past and present in one painting?

Find the objects labeled in the painting in this room.

Remember Which parts of the painting remind you of things you saw earlier in the exhibition?

Connect to the present

Investigate: How is your world—architecture, fashion, government—influenced by the ancient Romans?



lamp stand

birdbath

snake bracelet

silver bowl

marble table

Pompeii around You

The excavations around the Bay of Naples had a profound impact on the tastes and styles of Europeans and Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: “neo-classical” fashions appeared—and reappeared—in dress, jewelry, tableware, and other decorative arts. The look of Pompeian paintings found its way into the interiors of homes and public buildings, even into some rooms in the United States Capitol in Washington. Roman and Greek styles dominate this city—just visit the National Gallery’s West Building to see examples.

captions

The works of art from Italian collections were lent to the exhibition under the authorization of the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei

cover View across Bay of Naples from hillside site of so-called Tomb of Virgil, with umbrella pine in foreground c. 1900, postcard (detail), Collection Carol Mattusch

back *Garden* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, fresco, House of Marine Venus, Pompeii, photograph © Luciano Pedicini

1–4 Jules-Léon Chiffrot, *Plan of the House of the Centenary* (details), 1903, watercolor and gouache, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris

5 *Cave Canem* mosaic in situ, from Pompei, *pitture e mosaici* (Milan, 1993)

6 *Augustus* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, marble, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

7 *Seaside villa*, 1st century BC–1st century AD, fresco, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

8 *Double-spouted lamp* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, bronze, Ufficio Scavi, Pompei

9 *Two table supports* (detail), 1st century AD, marble, Ufficio Scavi, Pompei

10 *Kanthalos entwined with olive branches* (detail), mid-1st century BC, silver, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

11 *Writing implements* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, fresco, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

12 *Bracelet in form of serpent* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, gold, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

13 *Still life with seafood* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, fresco, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

14–16, 18 *Boar attacked by dogs* (two details), *Snake* (detail), *Lion* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, bronze, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

17 *Peacock on a garden fence* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, fresco, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

19 *Dionysos*, 1st century BC–1st century AD, marble, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

20 *Apollo with the muses Clio and Euterpe* (detail), 1st century AD, fresco, Ufficio Scavi, Pompei

21 *Garden scene* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, fresco, Ufficio Scavi, Pompei

22 *Plato's Academy* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, mosaic, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

23 *Thracian gladiator's helmet* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, bronze, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

24 *Homer*, 1st century BC–1st century AD, marble, On loan from The British Museum, London

25 *Alexander the Great on horseback* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, bronze, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

26 Photographic reconstruction of the Alexander Mosaic, original, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

27 *Artemis (Diana)* (detail), 1st century BC–1st century AD, Pentelic marble, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

28 *Aphrodite (Syon House/Munich type)* (detail), probably early 1st century AD, Pentelic marble, Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei, Baia

29 Joseph Wright (British, 1734–1797), *Vesuvius from Portici* (detail), c. 1774–1776, oil on canvas, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens; Acquired with funds from the Frances Crandall Dyke Bequest

30 Christen Købke (Danish, 1810–1848), *The Forum at Pompeii with Vesuvius in the Background* (detail), 1841, oil on canvas, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

31 Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (British, 1836–1912), *A Sculpture Gallery* (detail), 1874, oil on canvas, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. Gift of Arthur M. Loew, Class of 1921A

These books about Roman culture and Pompeii can be found at your local library or bookstore.

Classical Kids: An Activity Guide to Life in Ancient Greece and Rome
By Laurie Carlson
Ages 5 and up

Pompeii: Lost and Found
By Mary Pope Osborne
Ages 5 and up

Ancient Rome
Eyewitness Workbooks
Ages 7 and up

Pompeii: The Day a City Was Buried
By Melanie and Christopher Rice (DK Discoveries)
Ages 7 and up

Pompeii (Through Time)
By Richard Platt
Ages 7 and up

Pompeii
By Karen Ball (Usborne Young Reading)
Ages 7 and up

Pompeii...Buried Alive
By Edith Kunhardt Davis
Ages 7 and up

The Pompeii Pop-Up
By Peter Riley
Ages 7 and up

Life and Times in Ancient Rome
Kingfisher Publications
Ages 7 and up

Find Out About: The Roman Empire
By Philip Steele
Ages 9 and up

Pompeii (Roman World)
By Peter Connolly
Ages 9 and up

Pompeii: Unearthing Ancient Worlds
By Liz Sonneborn
Ages 9 and up

Bodies from the Ash: Life and Death in Ancient Pompeii
By James M. Deem
Ages 12 and up



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