

ANCIENT LIVES

Insights from
the Classics
and Archaeology
Collection

Old Quad

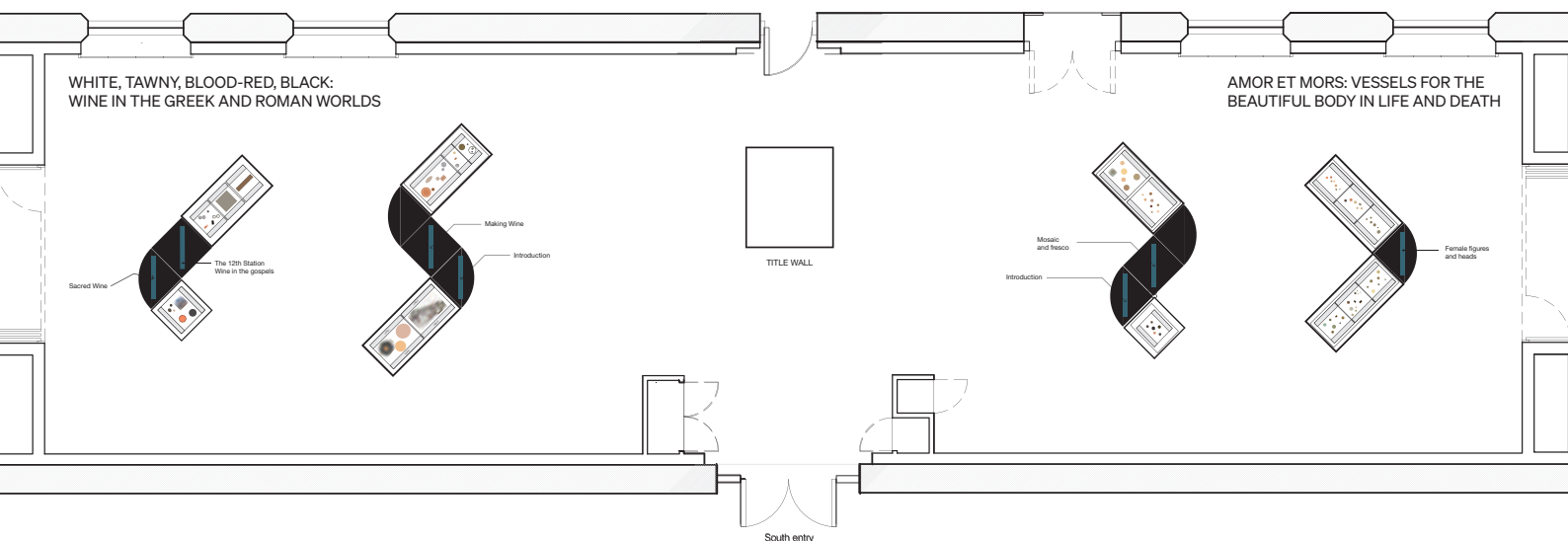
This exhibition provides a glimpse into life in the Greek and Roman worlds, through everyday, ritual and luxury objects from the University of Melbourne's Classics and Archaeology Collection.

Guest curators Dr Tamara Lewit and Dr Caroline Tully, both Honorary Fellows in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, have chosen items that tell a fascinating story of the often-hidden lives of women, men, children, athletes and artisans, rich and poor, in the ancient world—including wine drinking, mourning the dead, and beauty routines.

The Classics and Archaeology Collection is one of the cornerstones of object-based learning at the University of Melbourne. From the origins of the Collection in 1901 with the donation of five Egyptian papyri, it has played an important role in teaching and research. Now managed by the Museums and Collections department, it has continued to grow through donations and purchases to encompass over 300 objects, with significant holdings of Classical, Cypriot and Near Eastern material.

The Classics and Archaeology teaching program at the University of Melbourne offers a multidisciplinary perspective on Egyptian, Near Eastern, Aegean, Greek and Roman civilisations and their interactions with each other and the wider Eurasian region from prehistory to late antiquity. It includes the study of archaeology, ancient society, politics, literature, myth and art, and Greek, Latin and Egyptian languages.

Curated by Dr Tamara Lewit and Dr Caroline Tully



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This exhibition forms part of the Ian Potter Museum of Art's artistic program and is presented inside the Old Quad while the Potter is undergoing transformation of its entrance and teaching spaces.



POTTER
MUSEUM
OF ART

WHITE, TAWNY, BLOOD-RED, BLACK: WINE IN THE GREEK AND ROMAN WORLDS

Curator: Dr Tamara Lewit

Wine has made a long journey from the domestication of the wild vine thousands of years ago to 21st century Australian tables. A key stage in this journey was the adoption and spread of wine drinking in the ancient Greek and Roman world more than 2,000 years ago. Wine became an integral part of everyday life across the 5 million km² of the Roman Empire for all sections of the population—even slaves and children—a universal drink in the diet and essential to religious rituals in both pagan and then Christian practice.

More than 200 varieties of both white and red grapes were known. Described by Pliny as “white, tawny, blood-red and black”, wines which we term red, white and rosé were produced, as well as slightly fizzing wines (today known as “Pétillant Naturel”). White wine may have been most common, since texts do not mention the process of leaving grape skins in the juice for a period that gives the colour to red wine. Sweet and vintage wines were prized, but most wines were drunk within the year due to their tendency to spoil. Boiled grape-juice, salt, marble dust, gypsum, pine resin, shellfish shells, olive oil, herbs or spices were all used as additives.

Growing grapes and producing, transporting and selling wine were major activities in town, countryside and on the seas. The study of wine casts light on different groups in society, work and leisure, religion and myths, technology and trade. The spread of grape cultivation and wine drinking tells a fascinating story of cultural, technical and commercial exchange, which has left its mark on our world today.

Dr Tamara Lewit is an Honorary Fellow in Classics and Archaeology, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, and a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, London. She specializes in the archaeology of wine production in the Roman world. Her research interests also include resilience in late antiquity, children's work, and investigating everyday life for historical children's novels written by her sister Anna Ciddor.

MAKING WINE

Ancient wine often went mouldy or turned into vinegar due to uncontrolled temperatures and sugar content. Grapes were picked very ripe and so lacked acid to prevent spoiling, and the use of sulphur and added yeast was unknown. Roman farming writer Columella gives this advice if snakes or mice fall into the vats during fermentation: “so it does not give the wine an evil odor, you should burn the body ... pour its ashes back into the same wine vat and stir in with a wooden ladle; this will cure the trouble”.

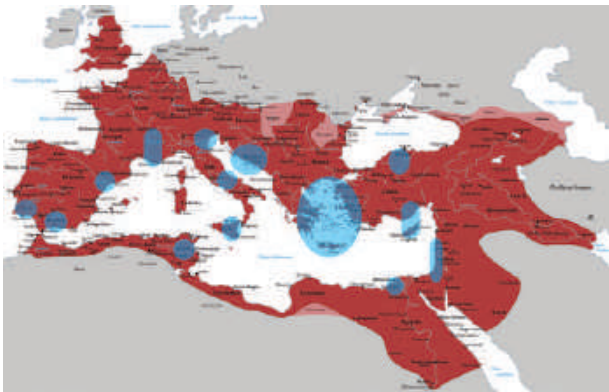


Wine transport amphora, possibly from Cos, Hellenistic period. Found during University of Melbourne excavations at Jebel Khalid, Syria. Photo courtesy Honorary Fellow Dr Heather Jackson

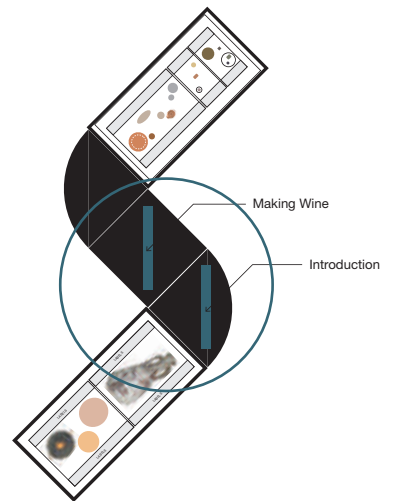


Wine-making vats, Podere Marzuolo, Italy, Roman period. Found during archaeological project of the University of Melbourne, Radboud University Nijmegen, and the University of Arkansas. Photo courtesy Associate Professor Dr Gijs Tol

Wine production and trade patterns can be seen from the archaeological excavation of amphora remains, since dates and places of origin can often be identified from clay fabrics and shapes. In the Roman Empire, wine was produced in many different centres for long distance trade, and for urban and military food supply which was organised by the state.



Map of major wine production regions in the Roman Empire. Base map Tataryn via Wikimedia commons.



FROM WILD VINE TO TABLE

The earliest evidence for grape domestication and wine making comes from the Middle East and the Caucasus region. Grape juice was extracted by foot, the men holding sticks or ropes to prevent slipping as they trod the grapes. Wine drinking was later spread through the Mediterranean by Greeks and Phoenicians (a Near Eastern trading civilization), about 2500–3000 years ago. With the expansion of the Roman Empire, it became an integral part of western European society.



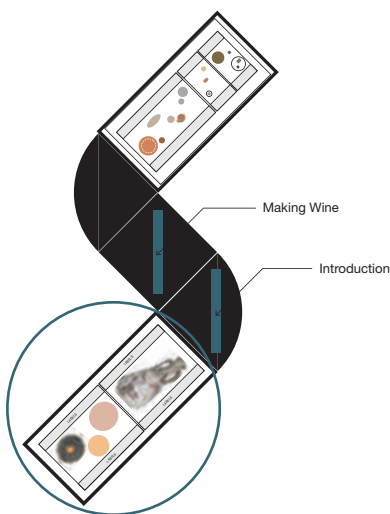
Wine jug, with image of wild sheep
Cyprus, c. 8th–7th century BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased from Australian Institute
of Archaeology, 1987
1987.0144



Amphora
Phoenician, 6th–4th century BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Joe Huber, 1995
1995.0115



FROM MEDITERRANEAN TO AUSTRALIA

The practice of wine-making has been passed on through millennia from the ancient Mediterranean to the contemporary world. In Australia, European colonisers established vineyards in the Hunter Valley (NSW) in 1823, Yarra Valley (Vic) in 1838 and Barossa Valley (SA) in 1843, including the Muscat variety which probably originated in the Middle East more than 10,000 years ago. Today, Australia is the 5th largest wine producer in the world. Ancient methods of production and transport using treading, clay pots, and wineskins have been replaced by mechanised and hygienic conditions, but the chemistry of wine making remains basically unchanged.



Cup with youth carrying a full wineskin
Attic Greek, c. 510 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
1971.0131

WINE TRANSPORT

Wine was widely transported by ship in amphorae, which were lined with pine pitch and sealed with clay, mud, or straw. They are often found in underwater excavations of shipwrecks, coated with encrustations of marine organisms. The pointed ends of some amphorae made them easier to carry onto ships, with wine transferred into smaller jugs or wineskins for daily use. A large amphora could weigh about 100kg when full of wine.



Amphora
Roman, 1st century BCE–1st century CE,
probably made in eastern Italy and found
in deep water near Malta.

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Joe Huber, 1995
1995.0119



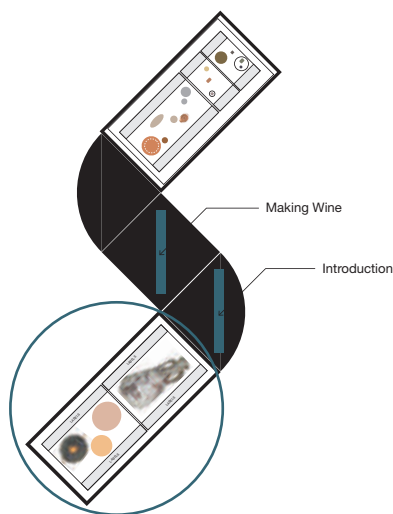
Reconstruction of ancient grape treading at the Mas de Tourelles, France.
Photo courtesy Mas de Tourelles



Roman style wine press with rope and winch mechanism, reconstructed at Mas de Tourelles, France.
Photo courtesy Mas de Tourelles

WINE MACHINES

To produce a higher quantity of lower quality wines for sale, trodden grape pulp was compressed further in large machines called “presses”. A variety of mechanical designs using ropes, huge stone weights, carved wooden screws, and 5–10 metre beams developed in different regions of the Roman Empire, some still used in traditional production until the 20th century. After several days of rapid fermentation of the juice in vats, secondary fermentation and ageing was carried out in terracotta pots or vats.



DRINKING FINE WINE

In the Greek world, wine was mixed with water and served in special decorative vessels to reclining male aristocrats wearing wreaths at a “symposium”, a drinking party with music, games or philosophical discussion. The custom was later adopted by the Roman elite. Elaborate banquets (now including women) preceded drinking with music, dance and other entertainments, an important means of social display. These were the only events held after dark, since lighting—by lamps burning olive oil—was poor.



Symposium cup with reclining wine god holding wine-cup and grapes, dancing maenads inside
Attic Greek, c. 520 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased 1980. Formerly in the collection of S. Schweizer, Arlesheim 1980.0209



Oil flask with wine god holding wine-cup
Attic Greek, c. 470 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. John Hugh Sutton Memorial Bequest, 1929 1929.0080



Glass cup
Roman, 1st–2nd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection 0000.0409



Oil lamp
Roman, 1st–2nd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection 0000.0288

TOASTING WITH WINE

A litre of high quality wine, which may have tasted like a modern sweet Madeira, cost about a day’s wages for a skilled labourer. Fine wine was a status symbol, served in elaborate glass or silver cups, although a cheap wine was sometimes served to the humbler guests. Some Roman glass cups bear the toast “Drink and live many years” or “Drink, live well forever”. The tradition of toasts and of serving sweet wine after dinner in fine vessels endures today.



Wine decanter decorated with grapes and vines
English, c. 1765

The Ernst Matthaei Memorial Collection of Early Glass, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased with funds from the Ernst Matthaei Memorial Bequest, 1988 1988.0010



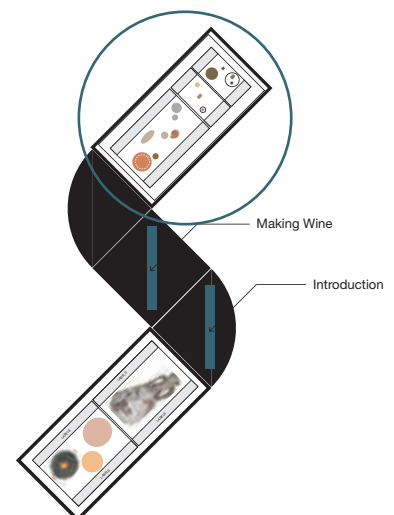
Wine glass with crest of Sir Redmond Barry, first Chancellor of University of Melbourne
French, c. 1880

The Ernst Matthaei Memorial Collection of Early Glass, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of Mr and Mrs W. Pate, 1979 1979.0242



Wine-cup from Greek settlement of Canosa in southern Italy
c. 4th century BCE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of David and Marion Adams, donated in memory of Robert Murray Heatley, 2018 2018.0128



DRINKING EVERYDAY WINE

Everyday wine and other grape-based drinks were essential to the Roman diet throughout society, although athletes were advised to drink wine only moderately. Cheap sour wine affected by acetic acid bacteria was called by the same word as used for vinegar (today defined by the percentage of acid present). Such sour wine, much diluted with water, was drunk by workers and distributed as rations to Roman soldiers but would be considered undrinkable today. Even slaves drank wine-like drinks made from the skins and pips of grapes



Coin with figure in military dress, holding spear
Roman, 268–270 CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased from Coins & Antiquities, 1974 1974.0082



Head of a wrestler
Roman, 2nd century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009 2009.0253

WINE AND WATER

Wine was always drunk heavily diluted with at least three or four parts of water, except for religious rituals. Children were given even more diluted wine. Men consumed about 140–180 litres p/a and women about half that quantity, although the wealthy drank more (and better) wine than the poor.



Statuette of a woman
Roman, 2nd century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of Peter Joseph, Marilyn Sharpe and Susan Rubenstein in honour of their parents Keith and Zara Joseph, 2009 2009.0324



Wine jug
Roman, c. 300 CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of Dr Geoffrey Kaye 1986 1986.0018

WINE IN MEDICINE

Wine was used extensively in medicine. A Roman handbook of home remedies recommends gargling ground pigeon dung or crushed snails in raisin wine for sore tonsils! Herbal wines made with mint, fennel and wormwood (the main ingredient of modern absinthe) were used as a tonic or to cure ailments such as a cough or stomach upsets. Hot wine was used as a skin treatment. One Greek treatise even recommends an injection of wine mixed with chopped up lizard as a horse aphrodisiac.



Coin with Salus, goddess of health and well-being, feeding wine to a snake
Roman, 138–161 CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009 2009.0294

DRINKING WINE FOR HEALTH

Medical writers recommended that babies be weaned using bread softened in sweet wine. Without refrigeration, milk would easily spoil. Water was safer when drunk with wine, as it was often contaminated and wine's acidic and alcohol content kills pathogens. Fermentation acts as a preservative, so wine provided nutrition when fresh fruits were unavailable in winter.



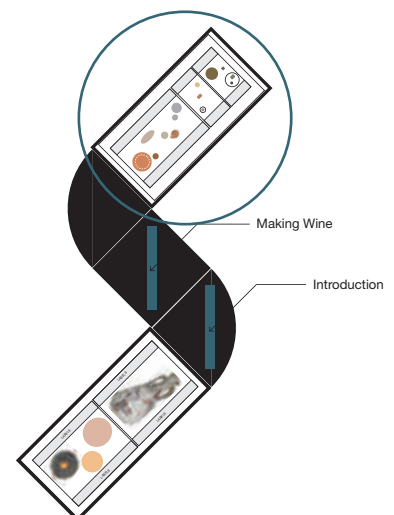
Statuette of nurse and child
Greek, c. 350 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased 1983 1983.0107



Woman carrying water
Greek, 4th–3rd century BCE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of Dr Geoffrey Kaye 1986 1986.0093



SACRED WINE

According to Greek and Roman myths, the inventor of wine was the god variously called Bacchus, Dionysos, or Father Liber. He was associated with cycles of nature, death and resurrection, 'divine madness', eroticism and ecstasy. He was represented with vine imagery and altars to him are found in Roman wine-making buildings, where a fertility goddess called Libera was also worshipped.



Wine god dressed in a bunch of grapes, in front of Mt Vesuvius with grape vines on its lower slopes. Painting from Pompeii IX.8.6, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, public domain

WINE FESTIVALS

The grape harvest, wine making and wine fermentation were marked by religious festivals. Processions, dancing and music, drinking competitions and masked theatrical performances were held. The end of the grape harvest was a time of celebration for both workers and elite. Although these festivals ended with the spread of Christianity, Greek and Roman wine divinities continued to be symbols of revelry in art and literature through the centuries.



Wine jug with children performing music at the festival of Dionysos and wine fermentation

Attic Greek, 420–400 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. John Hugh Sutton Memorial Bequest, 1929 1931.0004



Plate with Comus, god of festivity and revels, holding wine glass

English, 1934

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of Mr and Mrs Elden de Steiger, through Mrs Jennings, 1975 1975.0056

WINE DIVINITIES AND MYTHS

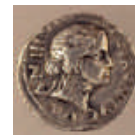
In legend, the wine god inspired drunkenness and wild sexual frenzy among half-animal satyrs and Silenus creatures and maenads (ecstatic female dancers). His son and cupbearer Comus was the god of festivity and revels.



Wine decanter with wine god Dionysos and dancing maenad

Attic Greek, c. 500–490 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased from the Luscombe Collection, Kyancutta, South Australia, 1972. 1972.0113



Coin with head of wine god Liber

Roman, 19–4 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased Münchener Num. Antiq. Frühling Cat. no. 1036 1974.0070



Statuette of a satyr

Roman, c. 1st century CE

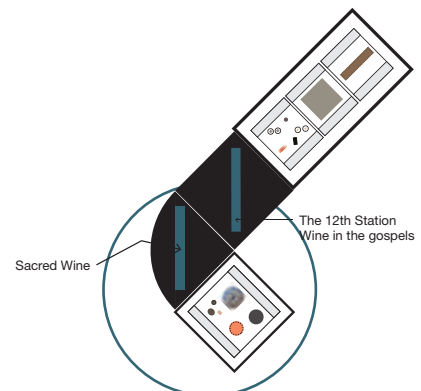
The Vizard Foundation Collection of Antiquities, on loan to the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne 2222.0023



Bowl in form of a theatrical mask of a Silenus

Roman, 2nd–4th century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009 2009.0260



WINE FOR THE DEAD

At Roman funerals, mourners feasted with wine, which was also poured into the tomb as an offering to the dead. On the deceased's birthday and during festivals for the dead, families gathered for meals in dining areas at the tomb, and made offerings of wine which was poured into the grave through holes or tubes.



Fragment of a sarcophagus with typical winged Cupid motif
Roman, 1st–2nd century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009
2009.0250



Mummy mask

Roman Egypt, c. 1st–4th century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009
2009.0217

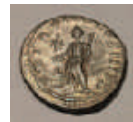
WINE FOR THE GODS

Wine offerings were an essential part of Greek and Roman daily religion and life cycle rituals. Pure wine (unmixed with water) was poured from a special bowl as an offering to the gods at household shrines every day and on occasions such as birthdays or departure on a journey, as well as during festival celebrations. Weddings were celebrated by feasting with wine, a tradition which continues to this day.



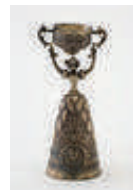
Coin with goddess Vesta holding sceptre and wine offering bowl
Roman, 69 CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased Münchener Num. Antiq. Frühling Cat. no. 1051
1974.0044



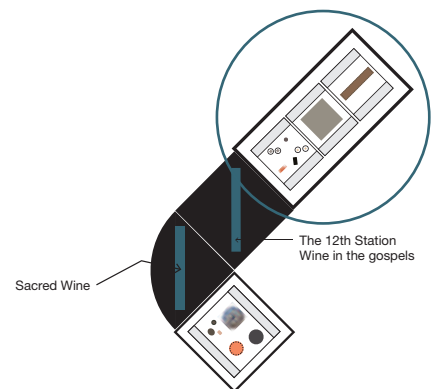
Coin with Emperor Elagabalus pouring wine from offering bowl over fire on altar
Roman, 3rd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased Münchener Num. Antiq. Frühling Cat. no. 1116
1974.0049



Cup of type originally used for 16th century German weddings, groom drinking from skirt and offering bride cup without spilling wine
c. 19th century

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of the Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequest, 1973
1973.0199



WINE AND CHRISTIANITY

With the spread of Christianity in the later Roman Empire, wine became essential to church rituals. Crosses were also often carved on wine-making equipment, perhaps to bless the wine. Some amphorae were marked with crosses, possibly because they contained wine to be used in rituals.



Gold coin, angel with Christian symbols

Eastern Roman Empire, c. 527–565 CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, donated
in memory of Robert Murray Heatley, 2018
2018.0188



Part of a dish stamped with early Christian symbols of cross and lamb

Tunisia, 6th century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the
University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0325



Lamp decorated with cross

Eastern Roman Empire, 5th to 7th
century CE

The University of Melbourne Art
Collection. Gift of Dr Geoffrey Kaye
1986
1986.0092



Gold coin, Emperor Phocas wearing crown with cross and holding orb surmounted by cross

Eastern Roman Empire, 602–610 CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, donated
in memory of Robert Murray Heatley, 2018
2018.0189

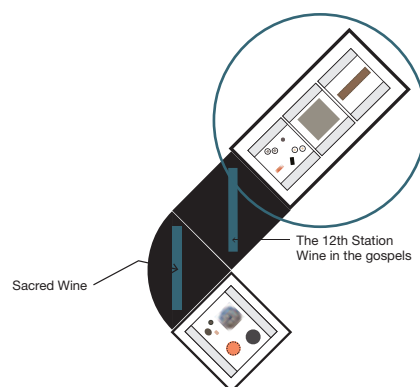
WINE IN THE GOSPELS

Wine is frequently referred to in the Christian Gospels, reflecting its fundamental role in 1st century CE Roman society. The sour wine normally drunk by soldiers is said to have been offered to Jesus on the cross. According to John (15.1), Jesus referred to himself as “the true vine” and to God as a farmer who tends the vine. He and his followers drank wine at the Passover meal (the “Last Supper”), the origin of the wine drunk during Christian church ritual. The wine cup he had used came to be called the Holy Grail—also used to collect his blood, according to medieval poetry and legend— and was sought by the crusaders as a holy relic.



12th Station, painting of crucifixion
by Australian-born artist John Trinick
(1890–1974)

The University of Melbourne Art
Collection. Gift in memory of
Ruth Trinick, 2013
2013.0200



Sacred Wine

The 12th Station
Wine in the gospels

AMOR ET MORS: VESSELS FOR THE BEAUTIFUL BODY IN LIFE AND DEATH

Curator: Dr Caroline Tully

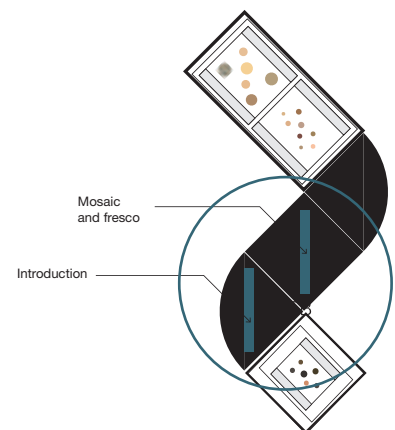
In the Greek and Roman worlds there was a wide range of cosmetic preparations available to both enhance and maintain socially accepted expectations of physical beauty. Foundations, face powders, blushers, eye makeup, anti-wrinkle creams, hair dyes, hair removers, breath fresheners, and deodorants were concocted from a range of animal, vegetable, and mineral ingredients. Faces were whitened with powdered mixtures of chalk, clay, or gypsum; cheeks reddened with pigments such as red ochre, or plant dyes like madder; eyes and eyebrows darkened with lead sulphide or soot. Earth pigments, plant extracts and animal fat were often harmless; other components of beauty recipes, like animal dung, were distasteful, while several more, such as white lead and cinnabar, were downright poisonous.

People not only wanted to look beautiful, but also to smell divine. Ancient perfumes were made using a base of fat, or olive, almond or sesame oil, which acted as a carrier for fragrant ingredients that could include rose, iris, coriander, quince, saffron, marjoram and wild thyme. The most expensive and sought after perfumes contained exotic ingredients such as frankincense, myrrh, cinnamon or cassia and depended on access to products from Asia Minor, Egypt, Arabia and India. Fragrances were fixed with gums, resins, and balsams, and colour added with plants such as dragon's blood and alkanet. The most popular perfumes were solid unguents, but liquid lotions and perfume-powders were also available.

Both cosmetics and perfumes were sold and stored in various types of containers. At first wooden and pottery containers were used, then occasionally metal containers, and finally glass bottles. Most perfume containers have a narrow neck opening into a wide flat-rimmed or funnel-shaped mouth that allows the substance to be poured out very slowly. These were suitable for containing liquids, while open-mouthed vessels were more appropriate for solid perfumes or unguents.

Fragrant oils, aromatic resins, and unguents were also used to beautify and honour the dead. Funerary practices involved washing the body and anointing it with oil. At the grave site fragrant oils were offered along with honey, milk, water, and wine. If the corpse was burned, perfumes were thrown onto the fire, and finally the bones were sprinkled with perfumes and placed in an urn.

Dr Caroline Tully is an Honorary Fellow in Classics and Archaeology, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, and a professional tapestry weaver at the Australian Tapestry Workshop. She specialises in Bronze Age Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean art and religion. Her research interests also include the reception of ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman art and architecture within Neoclassical and Egyptian Revival styles, particularly funerary monuments.





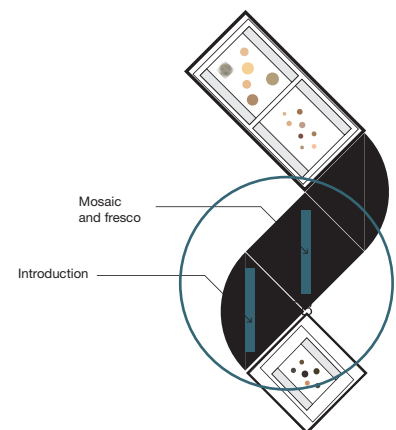
Asàrotos òikos (detail), 2nd century CE, Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano, ex Lateranese, Rome.

Discovered in 1833 CE, the Heraklitos Mosaic is an example of the ‘asàrotos òikos’ (unswept floor) design and originally graced the floor of the dining room of a villa on the Aventine Hill in Rome, dating to the early 2nd century BCE. Signed in Greek by the artist Heraklitos, it was made using the technique known as ‘opus vermiculatum’ in which very small (from 1mm to 4mm) cubes of stone, ceramic, or glass are arranged to make a detailed image. This section of the mosaic depicts a glass unguentarium placed behind the two theatrical masks in the foreground. Its dark colour may indicate that it was made from dark coloured glass or that it contains a dark substance, and its opening is secured with leather or cloth and string. The composition may have been intended to compare human life with theatrical drama as part of the ‘carpe diem’ (seize the day) theme.



Woman pouring perfumed oil into a glass unguentarium.
From Villa Farnesina, late 1st century BCE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme.

A Second Style Roman fresco depicting a young woman pouring perfumed oil. In her right hand she holds an askos or an aryballos from which she pours the oil into an elongated unguentarium held in her left hand. Elongated unguentaria have pointed, solid ‘toes’ and are unable to stand alone. They were probably sealed by cork, wax, leather, or textile, secured by string tied around the vessel’s neck. The painting originally decorated a Roman villa on the site of the later Villa Farnesina, a Renaissance suburban villa in the Via della Lungara, in the district of Trastevere in Rome, built between 1506 and 1510 CE. The original Roman villa is dated to the late 1st Century BCE, approximately 28–19 BCE. It was excavated in 1878–1879 CE during the digging of embankments for the Tiber, and the project destroyed most of the ancient villa.



LEKYTHOI

A lekythos (pl. lekythoi) is an oil bottle for perfume or cooking oil. The most common form is the shoulder lekythos which has a calyx-shaped mouth and thick lip, very narrow neck, single handle, concave shoulder, cylindrical body, and disk foot. The narrow neck of the lekythos restricted the flow of oil to a thin stream, while the thick lip prevented wastage. There are many variations of the lekythos; the bulbous-bellied squat lekythos is a common form decorated in red-figure style. Lekythoi were frequently buried in tombs and left at graves as gifts to the dead. Funerary lekythoi are usually decorated in the white-ground style and often depict visits to the grave. Some black-figure lekythoi were fitted with a small inner chamber attached to the bottom of the neck so that they appeared full while actually only containing a small amount of oil. This token amount was sufficient for a funerary offering.



Squat Lekythos

Attic Red-Figure, c. 450 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1985
1985.0114



Squat Lekythos

Apulian Xenon-ware, 4th Century BCE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, donated
in memory of Robert Murray Heatley, 2018
2018.0124



Pagenstecher Lekythos

Campanian Black Figure, 390–350 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1990
1990.0020



Footless Lekythos

Lucanian, 510–490 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1985
1985.0113



Lekythos, Attic

White-Ground, 470–450 BCE

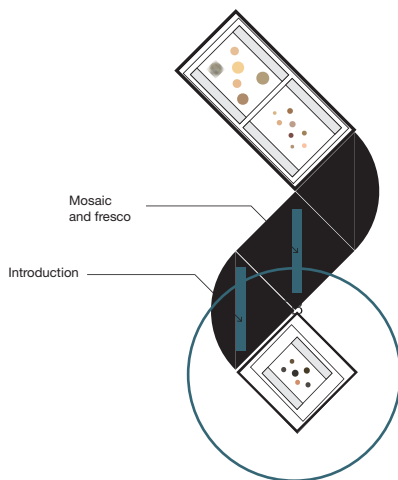
The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Dr Geoffrey Kaye 1986
1986.0090



Lekythos

Attic white-ground, 430–420 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the
University of Melbourne Art Collection.
John Hugh Sutton Memorial Bequest, 1929
1929.0081



PYXIDES

A pyxis (pl. pyxides) is a small cylindrical box with a lid used to contain cosmetics, medicinal ointments, perfume bottles, incense, jewellery, or trinkets. Their form is often a low, wide shape that resembles a modern powder box and pyxides sometimes have internal compartments divided into three or four sections. They can have straight, convex, or concave sides, a ring-like foot, three slab-like legs or a flat bottom, and a flat lid with a knob handle. Vase paintings show women with pyxides. While pyxides served as containers for small objects during a person's lifetime, they are frequently found in burials where they may have contained perishable offerings, such as food.



Cosmetic dish

Roman, 1st–2nd Century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, donated
in memory of Robert Murray Heatley, 2018
2018.0133



Pyxis lid and bowl, odd halves

4th century BCE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009
2009.0237



Tripod pyxis

Corinthian, 570–560 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1976
1976.0109



Gypsum pyxis

Roman, 1st century BCE–1st century CE

The University of Melbourne Art
Collection.
Flinders Petrie Collection
0000.0656



Cylindrical pyxis with lid

Archaic, c. 510–490 BCE

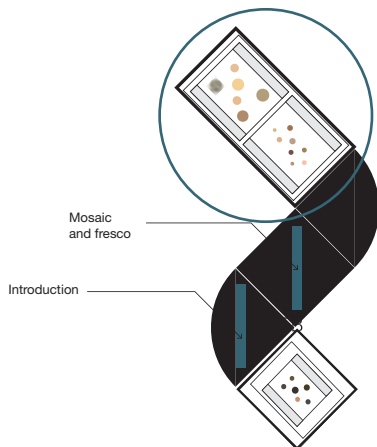
Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
John Hugh Sutton Memorial Bequest, 1929
1929.0006



Convex pyxis with lid

Corinthian, 590–570 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
John Hugh Sutton Memorial Bequest, 1929
1929.0007



ARYBALLOI

An aryballos (pl. aryballoi) is an oil flask for perfume or massage oil with a small round or ovoid body and a narrow neck, the aryballos also has a broad, flat lip that prevents spillage, and a single small handle. Aryballoi are commonly decorated in the Corinthian style, characterised by a buff-coloured background and black and purplish-red painted slip decoration featuring Eastern motifs such as sphinxes, griffins, lions, lotuses and palmettes arranged in decorative friezes across the centre of vases. Depictions of humans are rare, but when they do appear are in the form of silhouettes with incised detail. Representations on vases and in sculpture depict athletes (men and boys) holding an aryballos in one hand, dispensing oil onto their skin, or carrying the vase suspended from the wrist by a string looped around its narrow neck. Aryballoi were also made in piriform (pear) shape and sculptural form as human figures or animals.



Aryballos in the form of a hedgehog
East Greek, ca. 550 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1975
1975.0191



Aryballos
Corinthian, c. 660 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1977
1977.0152



Aryballos
Corinthian, 590–570 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Peter Chaldjian, 1995
1995.0094



Aryballos in the form of a bearded, seated man

East Greek, c. 525–500 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1975
1975.0075



Aryballos

Corinthian, 625–600 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0269



Aryballos

Corinthian, 590–570 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1978
1978.0118



Aryballos

Corinthian, c. 550 BCE

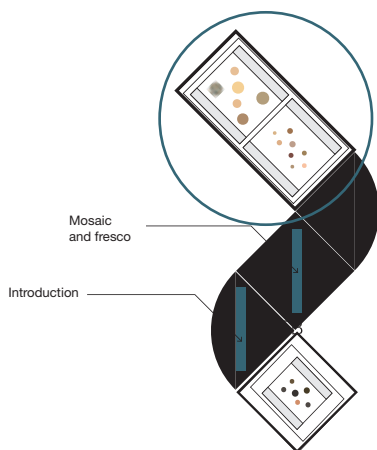
Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1972
1972.0034



Aryballos

Corinthian, 650–630 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
John Hugh Sutton Memorial Bequest, 1929
1929.0077



GLASS UNGUENTARIA

An unguentarium (pl. unguentaria) is a modern term for a small glass bottle found at Hellenistic and Roman sites, especially cemeteries. They are among the most common Roman blown glass containers and are distributed throughout the Mediterranean region from Palestine to Spain, and north into Britain and Germania. Also known as a balsamarium (balsam-container) or a lacrimarium (tear-container), in antiquity they were probably called an ampulla. Unguentaria contained materials such as perfumed oils, ointments, powders, and cosmetic preparations. The long slender necks of unguentaria are most suited for dispensing liquids, oils, and powders because solid ointments would be difficult to remove through the narrow neck. Corks, wax, or clay seals may have been used to prevent their contents from spilling, and a dolomite stopper sealed with bitumen has recently been discovered. The frequently asymmetrical shape of unguentaria is an indication of mass production.



Unguentarium
Roman, 2nd–3rd century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Donated through the Australian Government's
Cultural Gifts Program by Harold and Barbara
Sacks, 2011
2011.0034



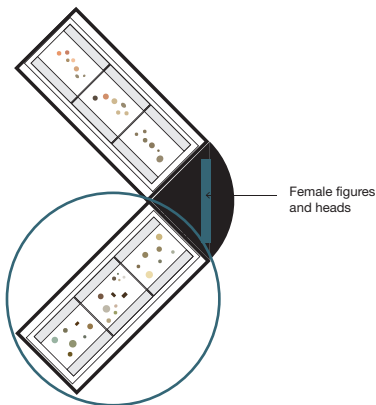
Sprinkler Flask
Roman, 3rd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0412



Jar
Roman, 3rd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0271



Unguentarium
Roman, 2nd–3rd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0413



Sprinkler Flask, pomegranate shaped
Roman 3rd–4th century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0895



Unguentarium, candlestick type
Roman, late 1st–mid-2nd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0407



Unguentarium, candlestick type
Roman, late 1st–mid-2nd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0408



Plaque of female head
1st century BCE–1st century CE

The Vizard Foundation Collection of
Antiquities, on loan to the Ian Potter Museum
of Art, the University of Melbourne
2222.0024

Ovid's *Medicamina Faciei Femineae* (*Treatments for the Female Face*, 53–68)

Strip the barley, which farmers from Libya have sent by ship, of its husks and coverings: an equal measure of bitter vetch is soaked in ten eggs: but the stripped barley should amount to two librae. Once dried by the gusty breezes, have these crushed on a rough millstone by a slow she-ass. Grind into this the first horns that fall from a long-lived stag—see that a sixth of a whole as goes in. Next, having mixed this into the pounded meal, you must immediately sift every last granule through closely-meshed strainers; add twelve narcissus bulbs minus the rind (which a vigorous right-hand should grind on clean marble) and let gum along with Tuscan seed weigh one-sixth of an as; into it let there go nine times as much honey. Any woman who applies this treatment to her face, will gleam more smoothly than her own mirror.



Miniature amphora
Roman, 1st century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Mr Paul Hackforth-Jones 1993
1993.0018



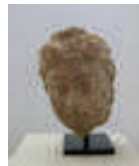
Sprinkler Flask, pomegranate shaped
Roman 3rd–4th century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased 1980
1980.0211



Juglet
Roman, c. 200 CE

The Ernst Matthaei Memorial Collection of
Early Glass, the University of Melbourne Art
Collection. Purchased with funds from the
Ernst Matthaei Memorial Bequest, 1984
1984.0228



Female head in Graeco-Buddhist style
100 CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009
2009.0269



Jar
Roman, 2nd–3rd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0415



Unguentarium
Roman, 2nd–3rd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0869



Jar
Roman, 3rd century CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0871



Unguentarium
Roman, 3rd century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009
2009.0257



Unguentarium
Roman, 1st century CE

The Ernst Matthaei Memorial Collection of
Early Glass, the University of Melbourne Art
Collection. Gift of Dr Geoffrey Kaye, 1980
1980.0088



Unguentarium, candlestick type
Roman, 1st–2nd century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Donated through the Australian Government's
Cultural Gifts Program by Harold and Barbara
Sacks, 2011
2011.0033



Flask
Roman, 2nd–3rd century CE

The Vizard Foundation Collection of
Antiquities, on loan to the Ian Potter Museum
of Art, the University of Melbourne
2222.0012



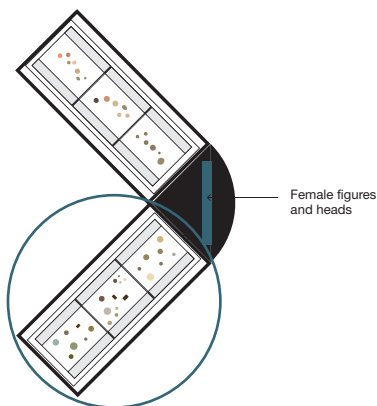
Double unguentarium
Roman, c. 3rd–5th century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Donated through the Australian Government's
Cultural Gifts Program by Harold and Barbara
Sacks, 2011
2011.0036



Unguentarium
Roman, 1st–2nd century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, donated
in memory of Robert Murray Heatley, 2018
2018.0173



Pliny the Elder Natural History (Book XXVIII. XX), medical recipe

The ashes of a woman's hair, burnt in an earthen vessel, or used in combination with litharge, will cure eruptions and prurigo of the eyes; used in combination with honey they will remove warts and ulcers upon infants; with the addition of honey and frankincense they will heal wounds upon the head, and fill up all the concavities left by corrosive ulcers; used with hog's lard they will cure inflammatory tumours and gout; and applied topically to the part affected, they will arrest erysipelas and haemorrhage, and remove itching pimples on the body which resemble the sting of ants.



Unguentarium

Roman, 1st century CE

The Ernst Matthaei Memorial Collection of Early Glass, the University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of Dr Geoffrey Kaye, 1980 1980.0089



Elongated unguentarium

Roman, 1st century CE

The Vizard Foundation Collection of Antiquities, on loan to the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne 2222.0009



Sprinkler Flask

Roman, 3rd century CE

The Vizard Foundation Collection of Antiquities, on loan to the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne 2222.0011



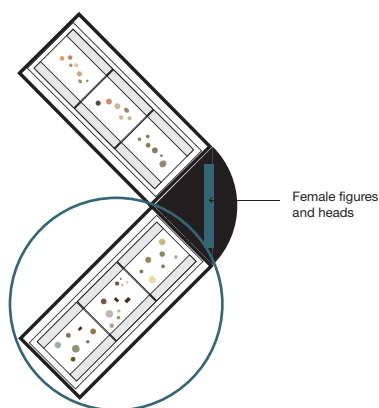
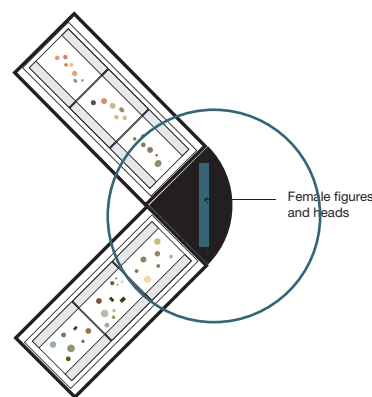
Seated female figurine

2nd–1st Century BCE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of Peter Joseph, Marilyn Sharpe and Susan Rubenstein in honour of their parents Keith and Zara Joseph, 2009 2009.0316

FEMALE FIGURINES AND HEADS

The terracotta female figurines and heads displayed here span the Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. In contrast to monumental marble or metal sculpture, terracotta figurines were usually small, suitable for domestic display, and are typically found in houses as well as burials and sanctuaries. In the Greek and Roman worlds they were used for religious, ideological, and decorative purposes and their vernacular nature can inform us about the ways ancient peoples saw themselves. In these examples, although we cannot see evidence of cosmetic use on their faces, stylistic differences in hairstyle are evident and these range from the extremely elaborate to the relatively simple. One example has pierced ears with holes for earrings. The seated figurine is a type related to marriage rituals, particularly the prenuptial bath. The clothed figurine undoes her garment at the shoulder, signifying erotic availability.



CERAMIC UNGUENTARIA

Ceramic unguentaria come in two forms: fusiform (from Latin *fuscus*, spindle), and piriform (from *pirus*, pear). The fusiform shape is distinguished by a long tubular neck and a heavy ovoid body, usually resting on a small distinct ring foot. This type first appeared in Cyprus around the turn of the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE and may have originated in the Near East. It was in use for several centuries and later examples have very slender profiles. In contrast, the piriform unguentarium is characterised by a long neck on a footless body that is rounded or pear-shaped. They began to appear in the second half of the 1st century BCE and are characteristic of the 1st century CE of the Roman era during which they were regularly associated with graves. They were only in use for around one hundred years and did not replace the fusiform type.



Female head from statuette
400 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Peter Chaldjian, 1995
1995.0096



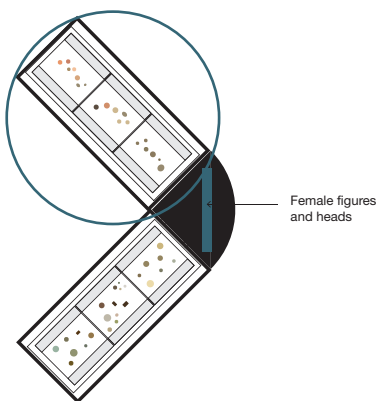
Unguentarium, fusiform
325–50 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased from Australian Institute of Archaeology, 1987
1987.0184



Female head
3rd century BCE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009
2009.0231



Unguentarium, piriform
c. 44 BCE–50 CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0267



Unguentarium, biconical fusiform
325–50 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased from Australian Institute of Archaeology, 1987
1987.0323



Unguentarium, globular fusiform
325–50 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased from Australian Institute of Archaeology, 1987
1987.0102



Unguentarium, piriform
45 BCE–100 CE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased from Australian Institute of Archaeology, 1987
1987.0106



Unguentarium
globular fusiform, 330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0321



Unguentarium, fusiform
330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0779



Unguentarium, fusiform
325–50 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Purchased from Australian Institute of Archaeology, 1987
1987.0082



Unguentarium
c. 330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection
0000.0870



Unguentarium, globular fusiform
330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
0000.0778



Female head
1st century BCE–3rd century CE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Peter Joseph, Marilyn Sharpe and Susan
Rubenstein in honour of their parents Keith
and Zara Joseph, 2009
2009.0332



Unguentarium, fusiform
330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
0000.0324



Unguentarium, fusiform
330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection, the
University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Peter Chaldjian, 1995
1995.0090



Female head
6th century BCE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of David and Marion Adams, 2009
2009.0227



Unguentarium, fusiform
330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Peter Chaldjian, 1995
1995.0092



Unguentarium, slender fusiform
330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Peter Chaldjian, 1995
1995.0088



Unguentarium, fusiform
330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Peter Chaldjian, 1995
1995.0091



Unguentarium, globular fusiform
330–30 BCE

Classics and Archaeology Collection,
the University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Peter Chaldjian, 1995
1995.0089



Female figurine
330–30 BCE

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Peter Joseph, Marilyn Sharpe and Susan
Rubenstein in honour of their parents Keith
and Zara Joseph, 2009
2009.0342

