

LOUVRE

Lens



ROME

LA CITÉ ET L'EMPIRE

EXPOSITION / 6 AVRIL - 25 JUILLET 2022

PRESS KIT

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PRESS RELEASE

How did Rome, a modest city in *Latium*, become the capital of a gigantic empire, unifying the shores of the Mediterranean and of western Europe under the figure of the Emperor? What did it mean to be part of the Empire? How was everyday life organised? During their temporary closure at the Louvre, the museum's Roman rooms are taking up residence in the Louvre-Lens. This is the first time since the Second World War that this many masterpieces from the Roman collections – more than 300 – have been displayed together outside the Louvre.

Featuring more than 400 works, this exhibition offers an exceptional retrospective of Roman civilization, from the middle of the republican era (2nd century BC) to the end of the Roman Empire's zenith (c. 300 AD).

The exhibition offers an opportunity to discover Roman civilization through the principal factors that shaped Rome and contributed to its grandeur. It recounts the history, the city, the Empire and its art.

Few museums outside Italy possess a collection of antiquities that offers such a broad overview of Roman art. In order to situate Rome's influence in the regional context of the Louvre-Lens, the exhibition also features vestiges of cities in Belgian Gaul. And it also draws on the collections of the museums of the Hauts-de-France.

In many regions, the artistic models of Roman civilization mingled with other traditions. In this open society, art was the product both of official commissions and popular manifestations. This artistic heterogeneity reflects the great social, cultural and geographical diversity of an empire that extended from western Europe to the Near East, and whose history spanned more than three centuries.



Septime Sévère
Début du III^e siècle après J.-C.
Ancienne collection Campana
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Thierry Ollivier

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The exhibition is sponsored by Crédit Mutuel Nord Europe

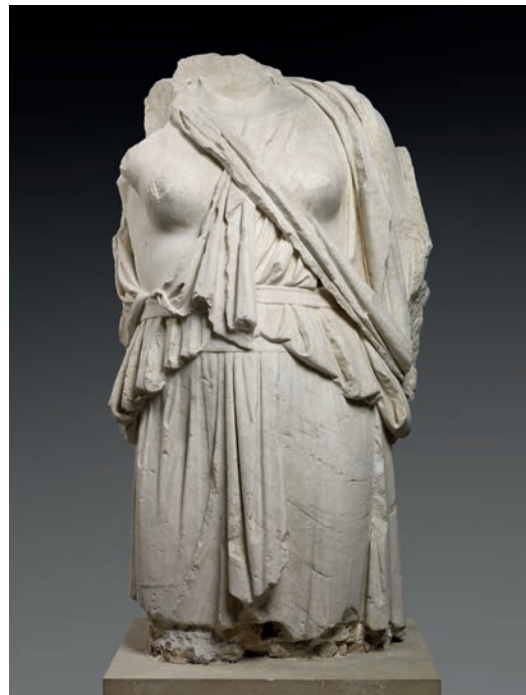
EXHIBITION LAYOUT

INTRODUCTION: ROME, CITY AND EMPIRE

The exhibition begins with a vast introduction that situates the Roman world geographically and chronologically. Through a selection of **leading portraits**, each accompanied by an iconic work from the period, it traces the city's emergence, the Empire's expansion to its fullest extent and the difficulties it faced in the 3rd century.

The exhibition is organised around **two large complementary thematic chapters**, one centred on Rome as a social, political and cultural organism, the other on the Empire. It examines the **new relationship between a city, Rome, and a gigantic territory** that was very diverse politically and culturally. It explores the way in which Roman culture formed the basis for a common civilization, the **Roman Empire**.

The exhibition opens with a large **statue of Rome**. This personification of the city takes the form of a woman in the guise of an Amazon, the mythological warrior, breast bared and sword sheath on her belt. This huge representation – whose iconography dates back to the period when Rome established its supremacy over the Greek world – symbolises the relationship between the city and Greek culture, which supplied it with cultural and artistic models.



Statue de Rome
I^{er} - II^e siècle après J.-C.
Marbre de Thasos
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Thierry Ollivier

FIRST PART: ROMAN IDENTITY

The exhibition's first section sets out to define Roman civilization as an institutional and cultural reality: visitors will discover the Roman identity, **from Roman society to the city itself and the Empire.**

A POLITICAL COMMUNITY

What did it mean to be Roman? How was Roman society structured? What was the role of the official public religion in this identity? What relations did the city have with its gods?

Around the large 'relief of **Domitius Ahenobarbus**', as it is known – the oldest known Roman historical relief – visitors can discover the city's **social, political and religious structure**, which formed the shared foundations on which Roman identity was built.

The relief shows the census, a key moment in the life of the city that determined the social status of all of the citizens. The wealthiest could be elected senators or join the army, but part of the population was excluded, with slaves and women having no or few rights. The work bears witness to the importance of these rituals that put the people centre stage.

From the decoration of a public monument to the portrait in honour of someone, images played an important role in Roman culture. Numerous conventions revealed social affiliation. Its use was restricted to citizens. From the reign of Augustus (27 BC), it became a ceremonial garment reserved for important public occasions, which sculptors rendered by means of monumental folds. The **Statue of Nero as a Child** adopts this principle: the drapery of his tunic features a bulla, a metal amulet attached to a collar, which defines the future citizen.



Relief dit « de Domitius Ahenobarbus »

II^e siècle av. J.-C.

Anciennement au Palazzo Santacroce, à Rome, puis collection du cardinal Fesch

Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques, Etrusques et Romaines

© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

In Roman society, **religion was partly public and helped to define the city**. It was based on communal practices which were an expression of the relationship between men and gods. Each community had its own divinities and religious obligations, as portrayed by certain historical reliefs, in particular **the extispicy¹ scene** from Trajan's Forum in Rome. The scene represents the ceremony preceding the departure for the countryside of the emperor or a person invested by him, with the inspection of the bull stretched out on the ground. Victory, who is flying away, is there to announce the conclusion of the sacrifice: military success.



Relief: une scène d'extispicine (inspection des entrailles)
100-125
Rome, Italie
Musée du Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

The place occupied by particular individuals played a role in the historical dynamic leading from Republic to Empire. The **growing personification of power** by the *inperatores*, members of the aristocracy who conducted public and military affairs, explains the instability experienced by the city in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. It led to the establishment of the imperial regime by Augustus between 30 and 10 BC. This movement was accompanied by the art of the republican portrait, for which a particular aesthetic was developed. The rendering of facial details reflects a concern with suggesting visually such ideas as authority, seriousness and *virtus*, military valour. This evolution can also be seen in the **Statue of Victory Carrying a Trophy**, which uses the motif of the Greek *Nike* and exploits its attributes to create a clearly triumphant image.



Statue de Victoire portant un trophée
Fin du I^{er} siècle avant J.-C. – I^{er} siècle après J.-C.
Marbre
Apollonia d'Illyrie (Albanie)
Musée du Louvre, département des Antiquités grecques,
étrusques et romaines
© Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Daniel Lebée /
Carine Déambrosio

¹Examining the entrails of a sacrificed animal to check the gods' approval of their intended victim or to discover premonitory messages.

THE ROMAN EMPEROR

How did the imperial figure emerge at the end of the civil wars? What did it change in the way power was exercised in Rome? How was his image stage-managed and expressed in imagery?

The victory of Octavian (the future Augustus) during the last of the civil wars at the end of the Republic led to a regime in which power over the *res publica*, the Empire, was exercised by a person. The civil and military authorities were concentrated in the hands of a single man, the **emperor**, creating a new situation in Rome.

Figurative portraits and monuments bore witness each in their own way to this new situation, commemorating in turn the **emperor's monopoly** over the conducting of military affairs, his dominance in the field of religion, his extensive civil powers and the charismatic dimension of his undivided power, which was supposed to guarantee universal peace and open up a new golden age.

Statues and busts portrayed him in accordance with a codified repertoire. The image was not that of a monarch, the toga emphasising the civil dimension of his power and his status as 'first citizen' (*princeps*), which was the germ of his authority. Imagery presenting him as a hero was developed: the imperial cult shows him as Jupiter, god of sovereignty.



Portrait d'Auguste portant la couronne de chêne
Début du I^{er} siècle après J.-C.
Ancienne collection Campana
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)

The reliefs depicting him during the formal events of public life illustrate the virtues attributed to the emperor, such as piety, clemency and military courage. This is the case with the ***suovitaurilia relief***, which shows the sacrifice of three animals – pig (*sus*), sheep (*ovis*) and bull (*taurus*) – a ritual addressed to the god Mars aimed at protecting an army on a military campaign or the civic corps after a census period. Decorated with Roman coins struck with the portrait of the emperor, **rings and other items of jewellery** disseminated the imperial image. This coin jewellery was an affirmation of his power, as were cameos, thin stones engraved with his effigy that were given to high-ranking men.

The emperor would also rely on **members of his family in order to share power** and create the idea that his reign was part of a continuous dynasty, conveyed by **portraits** and **the decoration of large public monuments**. The ***Ara Pacis architectural relief***, an altar created to honour the emperor on his return from a long expedition to Gaul and Hispania (Spain), celebrated the return of the golden age. Several figures are presented in a long procession, including members of his *domus* (home), thereby closing linking Rome's fate with that of the emperor. Different generations rub shoulders with each other in a **large gallery of portraits**, expressing the weight a family now carried in the *res publica*.



Relief architectural de l'Ara Pacis
13-9 avant J.-C.
Marbre, Rome, Italie
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Thierry Ollivier

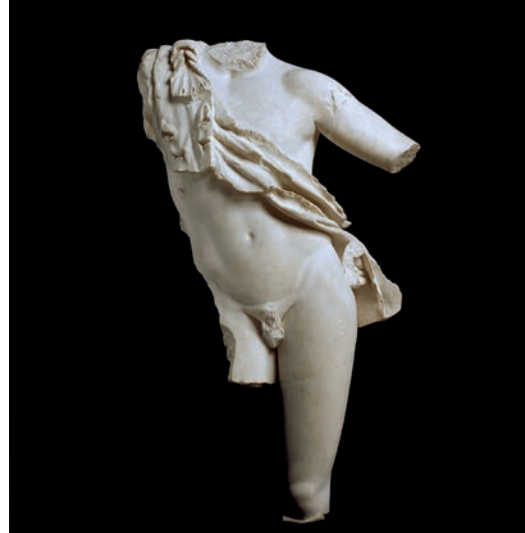
Great care was taken with **the emperor's image**: the creation of models in the imperial palace and their controlled dissemination within the Empire reveal the attention that was devoted to producing a message that accurately reflected imperial ideology. Effigies of the emperor and members of his family – busts and portraits whose form was not left to chance – provided a way of representing power.

AN OPEN CITY

What cultural and artistic impacts did these conquests have in Rome? How were the Empire's cultures received in Rome?

Romans' attachment to their culture did not prevent Rome from being a **city open to outside influences**: the centre of Mediterranean power from the 2nd century BC, Rome was a place of trade and immigration, and also the epicentre of artistic commissions. The city proved to be particularly permeable to outside influences, especially from the Greek and Middle Eastern worlds. It did this without sacrificing its specificity: it is this mixture that is its unique characteristic.

A predilection for Greek art was an essential element shared by many members of the Roman elite. Rome's imperialist dynamic that led it to extend its domination of the Hellenistic world gave rise to a highly important cultural appropriation. Enriched by the importing of objects regarded as veritable works of art and above all by the activity of neo-Attic workshops², this predilection led Romans to adopt Greek models, which provided fertile ground for Roman artistic culture. Motifs were rearranged, styles copied and replicas made of the most highly prized statues, such as the **Resting Satyr**. Many copies were made of the bronze original, by the famous Greek sculptor Praxiteles (4th century BC), to grace imperial palaces and opulent villas. Excellent workshops, often overseen by Greeks, were commissioned to produce copies of great quality.



Satyre au repos
Vers 80 après J.-C.
Marbre de Thasos
Rome, Italie
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Daniel Lebée /
Carine Déambrosio

Foreign religions were also absorbed into Rome's religions, private and public. Throughout the Empire, everyone was free to honour the divinities of their choice, provided they respected public order. Roman polytheism was thus flexible and open, facilitating the inclusion of new gods. The Greek **Apollo** and the Phrygian **Cybele**, foreign gods, were publicly worshiped. The arrival of the Egyptian triad formed by **Isis**, Serapis (her husband) and Harpocrates (their son), and **Mithras**, from the east, also enriched private forms of religion. The many Mithriac representations of **tauroctony** (the sacrifice of a bull, which was thought to be the origin of life) in sculptures, frescoes and reliefs testify to the cult's success and its spread to the Empire's western provinces. These imports enriched Roman polytheism, which would only be rivalled by monotheistic religions, mainly Judaism and Christianity.



Relief mithriaque
II^e - III^e siècle après J.-C.
Collection Comte-Offenbach
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

²Neo-Attic: inspired by the classical Greek tradition.

SECOND PART: IMPERIUM: BEING ROMAN IN THE EMPIRE

The second part of the exhibition immerses visitors in the **everyday lives of the Empire's inhabitants**, revealing what it was like to be Roman in the Empire. They will discover how about it was organised administratively, the place of the army, its urbanisation and its practices.

THE EMPIRE'S STRUCTURES

How was the Roman state manifested throughout the Empire? Given that the political structure was based mainly on the autonomy of cities, what fell directly under the control of the central authority? How was the Emperor's image disseminated?

The Emperor was the figure of reference for all of the Empire's inhabitants. His presence, sporadic and limited to imperial voyages, was ensured above all through monuments, notably **statues of the emperor and his family**. Although they were conceived and defined by the imperial entourage, these effigies were often erected at the instigation of local communities. The emperor left his mark on the urban landscape: these sculptures were installed at key locations in the city, notably the *forum*, its political heart. Cities also proudly display their correspondence with him in public spaces, as at **Naryka** in Thessaly.

This presence was not solely the product of a one-way movement, from the centre out towards the periphery, but arose from the initiative of communities and their members that had been incorporated into the Empire. This is illustrated by the bronze effigies of Livia and Augustus found at **Neuilly-le-Réal**, in the Allier. These two busts, offered to a divinity, testify to a religious attachment that was reflected in local artistic forms.



Table de bronze : lettre d'Hadrien à la cité de Naryka
Naryka (Grèce)
Vers 138 après J.-C.
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

After the figure of the emperor, it was **the imperial administration and the army** that formed the main structure that gave the Empire a tangible dimension. Present in numerous provinces, the legions helped ensure the internal stability of the Roman territory by preserving the *pax romana* (Roman peace), but also served as an **element of integration**. The *diplomata* (military diplomas) issued by the emperor to ‘auxiliaries’ in the army – who were mostly recruited in distant countries – entitled them to Roman citizenship after several years of service. Similarly, the administration’s increasing weight contributed to the gradual unification of regulations and legal norms within the Empire, while ensuring that the territory would be exploited for the emperor’s benefit.

A WORLD OF CITIES

What changes in urban living conditions were brought about by being part of the Empire? How did urban monumentality become characteristic of Roman civilization?

In an empire whose political structures were, throughout Rome’s history, far from being unified, the **Roman model of the city** was an essential vehicle for acculturation. The communities that previously lacked them – in Italy, Gaul and North Africa – acquired rules of collective organisation (laws, social statutes, community rituals) that were based on the Roman example. This phenomenon of municipalisation was accompanied by a vast **movement of urbanisation and, above all, monumentalisation** of the centres, which can today be seen as one of **the most typical signs of Roman domination**.



Coupe de Césarée
4^e siècle après J.-C.
Découverte en Palestine (?)
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

It was marked by the adoption of the same architectural models: amphitheatres, civil basilicas, aqueducts and temples, centred around the *forum*, the public square. The materials – in particular brick – and construction styles – marble colonnades and ornamental facades – were part of an urban aesthetic that attached great importance to decoration and décor.

In the exhibition, an ensemble of remains from various regions provide a glimpse of this richness visible in the cities of the Empire, such as the **pillar decorated with scrolls, birds and fruit**, inspired by the decoration of the *Ara Pacis* (Altar of Peace) in Rome, from Cherchell in Numidia (present-day Algeria), and the **monumental inscriptions** in bronze, from a public building in Amiens, which contrasted chromatically with the marble and endowed the urban space with opulence and solemnity. Statues of the imperial family and important local figures also dotted this monumental space, whose role was to express the community's dignity within the Empire.



Pilier
Césarée de Maurétanie (aujourd'hui Cherchell), Algérie
I^{er} siècle avant J.-C.
Marbre
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)

TRADE AND TRAVEL

How did everyday life in the Empire foster exchanges throughout the Mediterranean region?

The movement of goods, people and ideas made possible by the unified space controlled by Rome made the Empire, not a homogeneous space, but a vast **network** of exchanges that extended notably as far as northern Gaul. Marble and coloured stones, precious fabrics, prized produce such as certain wines and oil olive, exported in large quantities from Spain and Africa, as well as essentials such as wheat from Egypt, North Africa and Sicily, flowed towards Rome and were distributed throughout the Empire. This movement of goods was facilitated by the development of a large network of roads, marked by milestones.³

Objects found on the large sites in the **Hauts-de-France region** give a sense of the scales of movement: region, province, several provinces, Empire. The ensemble of **Aretino tableware** (from Arezzo, in Tuscany), the glass **bowl and jug** from Cologne and the **metallic ceramic** produced on the right bank of the Rhine, all found during archaeological excavations in the Somme and the Pas-de-Calais, reveal how extensive it was.



Flacon
100-200
Découvert à Famars (Nord)
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

³Stone marker marking main roads in ancient Rome.

The discoveries made at the site of **Gesoriacum (Boulogne-sur-Mer)**, the home base of the *classis Britannica* (British fleet) and point of transit between Gaul and the province of Brittany, bear witness to this port's position as an intersection. A cult of the **Dioscuri** ('sons of God'), Castor and Pollux, is attested, because they were particularly effective at protecting sea voyages.



Dioscure de Boulogne
II^e - III^e siècle après J.-C.
Boulogne-sur-Mer, Château-musée
© service archéologique de Boulogne-sur-Mer

A COMMON CIVILISATION

The dynamics of Romanisation were shaped above all by the adoption of Roman practices. What were these? What were the driving forces behind this Romanisation and how was it expressed visually?

The dynamic of Romanisation involved particular **social practices** which were adopted, at differing speeds and to differing degrees, by the populations that made up the Empire. The material evidence left behind reveals the way in which the **Empire's peoples and cities** shared a common civilization.

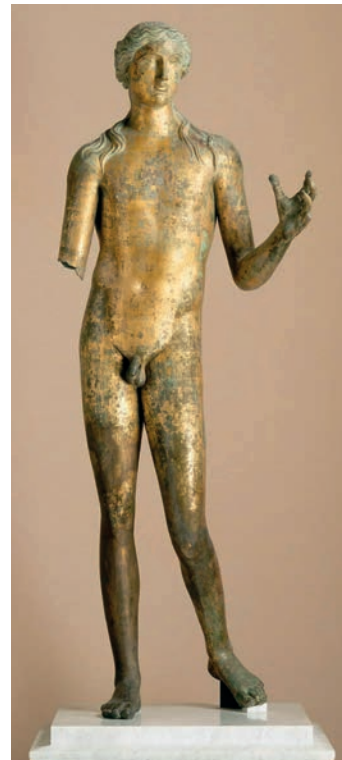
At the intersection of Greek and Roman traditions, the **portrait** represented a first important dimension. It was part of the creation of a common language for the Empire's elites. It was distinguished by an individualised approach to physiognomy, in which the facial features were the main focus of attention. Rome also invented formats such as the **bust**, which had specific functions. It could serve to honour someone, it could have a funerary purpose and it could even be part of worship. The models developed in the capital often set the tone in the provinces. The **Bust of a Young Man**, which came from a villa on the edge of Reims, illustrates the intermingling of traditions. The tunic and toga identify him as a Roman citizen, although certain conventional markers recall his Gallic origins, notably the treatment of his hair, with its long and exaggeratedly thick locks.



Portrait de jeune homme en buste
Début du III^e siècle, Reims
Musée du Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Thierry Ollivier

In Rome, **spectacles** – gladiatorial combats and hunts in the **amphitheatre**, chariot races in the **circus** – were an essential element in the festivities reserved for the gods, and also a second powerful indicator of the Romanisation of the provinces. Important figures in cities competed with each other to produce these highly popular games and constructed buildings to host them. They became another expression of the imperial cult. An iconography was developed to illustrate these communal events in the life of the city on everyday objects and furniture, such as **knife handles** and **oil lamps**.

Material vestiges also reveal the deep influence of the public Roman cult in religious **practices and representations** in the Empire's western provinces. Subjected to a process of assimilation to Roman gods, the local gods assumed a classical form and became the focus of Roman religious acts, such as offerings and sacrifices. The **Apollo of Lillebonne** (Seine-Maritime), at 1.94 cm high, is one of the largest bronze statues to be found in Gaul. Whatever the associated divinity, it is striking to observe the large-scale adoption of styles of Greco-Roman origin by provincial communities.



Statue d'Apollon lyricine
200-300, Découverte à Lillebonne,
antique *Julio-bona*,
Normandie (France)
Musée du Louvre, département des
Antiquités Grecques, Étrusques et
Romaines
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Hervé Lewandowski

The Empire's territory also saw the spread, in the realm of the family, of ways of paying homage to the deceased that originated in Rome. The altar, commemorating them in monumental form, was the main site for rituals. Two of the most remarkable Roman sarcophagi found in Gaul were discovered in **Saint-Médard-d'Eyrans**, in Gironde, and feature a **detailed mythological decoration** showing the Dionysiac procession. This rich repertoire helped to celebrate the memory of the deceased, and was probably a response to a commission from a Roman workshop, accessible only to a provincial elite.

The social practice of **the banquet**, a shared meal attended primarily by men, was an essential feature of the Roman lifestyle. The *domus* (Roman house) assigned a particular space to it, the *triclinium*. Its importance is clear from the considerable effort that went into decorating this room and, above all, in the luxurious tableware. This can be seen in the **Bosccoreale Treasure**, an ensemble of more than one hundred items mostly made out of silver, discovered in the 19th century in the remains of an ancient villa near Pompeii.



Gobelets aux squelettes
I^{er} siècle après J.-C.
Villa de la Pisanella, Bosccoreale (Italie)
Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,
Étrusques et Romaines
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)

In the centre of this exhibition space, the **Judgement of Paris mosaic** – from Antioch, at the time capital of the province of Syria – evokes the large decorative panels that adorned the Roman dining room and enabled guests to appreciate their hosts' culture and wealth.



Mosaïque du Jugement de Paris

115-150

Antioche-sur-l'Oronte (aujourd'hui Antakya), Turquie

Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,

Étrusques et Romaines

© Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Thierry Ollivier

MAKING THE WORLD BEAUTIFUL

How did luxury and opulence develop in the domestic realm? How did the Roman home become characteristic of a lifestyle?

Roman domination and the prosperity brought about by the *pax romana* went hand in hand with the increased attention devoted to the **beautification** of the built environment. Cities fostered a lifestyle in which **beauty** was a key aspect of civilization. This can be seen in the refined execution and décor of certain public establishments such as baths – a place for relaxation and socialising. This rich flourishing of art also penetrated the **domestic sphere**. In the urban residences of the civic elites, reception spaces and more intimate rooms were given a sophisticated décor. In the country, villas and their sometimes luxuriant gardens were an extension of this urban lifestyle.

The exhibition displays some of the most evocative elements of this, foremost among which are the examples of wall decoration, as well as less well known, equally valuable types of objects in the form of tableware and furniture. The Louvre has numerous examples from excavations carried out in the 18th century in the cities of Campania, in Italy, destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. Room is also reserved for grand formal statues, in bronze and marble, which are so characteristic of the dissemination of Roman culture in the provinces.



La muse Uranie

60-79 après J.-C., Pompéi (Campanie)

Louvre, département des Antiquités Grecques,

Étrusques et Romaines

© RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

EPILOGUE: A CHANGING WORLD

The final part of the exhibition opens with the **dislocation** of the Roman world. The founding of a new capital, Constantinople, in AD 330, marked the disjunction between city and empire. In the 4th century, the rise of Christianity, elevated to state religion, **disrupted the ancient city's subtle balance**. It upended values and marginalised the old civic elites, who were replaced by new figures, foremost among which were the bishops. In the West, which was shaken by the migrations of so-called barbarian peoples, vast territories came under the control of German kings, who governed them in the name of the Empire but were, in fact, independent. Public life, which the Empire had nurtured as the ideal of existence, died out. The city as a model community of people came to an end. Medieval Europe was appearing on the horizon.



*Sarcophage de la
Traditio Legis*
390-400,
Rome, Italie
Musée du Louvre,
département
des Antiquités
Grecques,
Étrusques et
Romaines
© RMN-GP
(musée du
Louvre) / Hervé
Lewandowski

The Louvre-Lens has programmed a cultural season that explores and extends the exhibition's theme: a programme of performances, talks, tours and unusual activities awaits visitors from April to July 2022.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Rome: city and empire exhibition from 6 April to 25 July 2022

Open daily from 10am to 6pm, except Tuesday
Free for under -18s / 18-25 years: 5 € / full price: 11 €

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Check out #LouvreLens and #expoRomeLL on social media    

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