

Greek sculpture at the Ashmolean

- The classical world was full of large high quality statues of bronze and marble that honoured gods, heroes, rulers, military leaders and ordinary people. The Ashmolean's cast collection, one of the best-preserved collections of casts of Greek and Roman sculpture in the UK, contains some 900 plaster casts of statues, reliefs and architectural sculptures. It is particularly strong in classical sculpture but also includes important Hellenistic and Roman material. Cast collections provided exemplary models for students in art academies to learn to draw and were used for teaching classical archaeology.
- Many of the historical casts, some dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are in better condition than the acid rain-damaged originals from which they were moulded. They are exact plaster replicas made, with piece moulds that leave distinctive seams on the surface of the cast.
- The thematic arrangement of the Cast Gallery presents the contexts in which statues were used in antiquity; sanctuaries, tombs and public spaces.

Other galleries containing Greek sculpture, casts and ancient Greek objects

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

Gallery 21: Greek and Roman Sculpture

Gallery 16: The Greek World

Gallery 7: Money

Gallery 2: Crossing Cultures

1. Cast of early Greek kouros, Delphi, Greece, c570BC



The stocky, heavily muscled naked figure stands in the schematic 'walking' pose copied from Egypt by early Greek sculptors, signifying motion and life. One of a pair excavated in the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. Formerly identified as Kleobis and Biton, but more likely to be heroes or exemplary worshippers of Apollo.

CG B 4

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

2. Cast of 'Peplos kore', from Athenian Acropolis, c530BC



The young woman held an offering in her outstretched left hand (missing) and wears an unusual combination of clothes: a thin under-dress visible at her feet, a thick belted dress or skirt, and a short mantle. The outer clothing would have been brightly patterned and painted.

CG B 46

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

3. Cast of 'Kritian Boy', athlete or hero, from the Athenian Acropolis, 480-470BC



A naked youth stands with the weight shifted more onto one leg, shown for the first time in a statue. The more natural pose and serious expression are marks of the revolutionary style ('early classical') of the period 480-450BC. Probably dedicated to Athena after an athletic victory at the Panathenaic Games. Named after its resemblance to work of the sculptor Kritios.

CG B 68a

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

4. Cast of charioteer from Delphi, c478-470BC



Wearing the long garment (xystis) of a professional charioteer, still holding the reins, presenting his chariot to the spectators after his victory. Found in the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi with an inscription indicating that the monument was dedicated by the owner of a chariot team, Polyzalos, tyrant of Gela in Sicily.

CG B 70

Gallery 16: The Greek World

5. Cast of a bronze statue of a man, about 470BC possibly Zeus/ Poseidon



The original was found in the 1920s at sea near Euboea, Greece. The nude bearded male about to hurl a now-lost object is most commonly identified as Zeus brandishing a thunderbolt, as shown in a similar pose on other sculptures and painted vases. It was probably a votive gift or perhaps a cult statue.

CG B 72A

Gallery 14 : Cast Gallery

6. Casts of four reliefs from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia 470-450BC



The scenes show the labours of Herakles. Clockwise from the right: the fight with the Nemean Lion, the killing of the Stymphalean birds, the cleaning of the Augean stables and the retrieving of apples from the garden of the Hesperides.

CG A67 A66 A69 A70

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

7. Cast of Diskobolos (discus-thrower) of Myron, 460-440BC



An athlete is coiled up in a taut, momentary pose, about to throw the discus- one of the pentathlete's five events. The cast combines a headless statue from Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli and the head of a statue found in Rome. Copied closely from a lost bronze victor statue by the Athenian sculptor, Myron, active c460-440BC.

CG C 25

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

8. Cast of Nike of Paionios, from Olympia, c425-421BC



The winged goddess Nike is flying in to land on top of a tall triangular pillar as an eagle passes beneath her feet. Originally made from Parian marble and found fallen from its base in front of the Temple of Zeus.

CG B 86

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

9. Cast of Diadoumenos (hair- binder) of Polykleitos, from Delos, c100BC



A young athlete ties a fillet around his head after winning a contest. The marble statue is a sensitive Hellenistic version of a bronze victor statue by the famous fifth century sculptor Polykleitos of Argos, made in c430BC. Over forty later copies attest the impact of this statue.

CG C36

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

10. Cast of Apoxyomenos (scraper) from Travestere in Rome, first century AD



The tall, wiry athlete cleans off the oil and dirt from his body after exercise with a metal scraper (strigil). The marble statue copies a bronze by the famous and prolific sculptor Lysippos of Sikyon who introduced taller and leaner proportions for his athletic statues.

CG C 133

Lines of enquiry: Classics

- Explore examples of sculpture in the architecture of Greek public buildings.
- How did the style of Greek architecture and free-standing sculpture change and develop over time?
- What does the composition of sculpture reveal about ancient Greek culture, politics, values and society?
- What was the function of Greek sculpture in its public and religious context?
- Learn about the different techniques used to work in marble and bronze.
- Create and annotate a timeline of Greek sculpture, highlighting key pieces.
- Explore themes represented in sculpture: mythology, gods and goddesses, religion, sport, physical fitness.
- What have been the lasting legacies and influence of Greek sculpture?

Lines of enquiry: Art & Design

- Explore how Greek sculptors represented the human form.
- Consider the representation of the human form across a range of cultures and times. What are the similarities and differences?
- Explore the work of contemporary sculptors working in stone and bronze. Consider the subjects they represent and their working methods. Compare and contrast with ancient Greek examples.
- Develop ideas for a contemporary sculpture of a person in a public place. What subject and pose would you choose to represent values and ideas today?

Cross curricular links

- History: rise and expansion of the Greek empire and its legacy today
- Citizenship: explore the origins of democracy in Greece
- Literacy: explore the legacy of Greek poets, writers and philosophers.

Working with objects: key questions

- Where and when was it made?
- What materials was it made from originally?
- Where was it situated?
- What was it used for? How was it used?
- What stylistic features does it show?
- What does it tell us about Greek culture?
- How might it be interpreted by different people at different times?



The Athenian Tyrannicides, Harmodios, from Tivoli, second century AD CG C5a

Further resources

Cast Gallery

<http://www.ashmolean.org/departments/castgallery/research/>

The Beazley Archive:

<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/tools/default.htm>

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