

# Glenbow Museum

WHERE THE WORLD MEETS THE WEST

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **5,000 Year Old Ancient Mediterranean Artifacts Come to Calgary**

**Calgary, AB (June 1, 2006)** – Glenbow Museum is pleased to announce a major new exhibition: *Egypt, Greece and Rome: Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* which opens on June 30, 2006 for a year-long run. The over 200 works displayed in the exhibition are from the renowned collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston spanning a period from predynastic times in Egypt, over 5,000 years ago, to the Roman late period, about 350 A.D.

*Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* reveals how Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilizations influenced one another throughout their histories. The Mediterranean Sea allowed for interaction of people through travel and trade thereby allowing cultures to interact and become influenced by one another and resulting in new artistic styles. This beautiful exhibition features a wide variety of disciplines including history, archaeology, folklore, geography, religion and art demonstrating how the creative energies of these three cultures set the art and cultural standards that continue today.

Foremost among the artifacts chosen from the prestigious Nagoya/Boston Museum of Fine Arts collections are rare and beautiful pieces from ancient Egypt. Home to the Nile River, the second longest river in the world, the Egyptian civilization, is believed to be the world's oldest, originated in the fifth millennium B.C. It is the culture that created the monumental architecture of the Great pyramid of Giza and the Sphinx, centralized government, writing and religious practices that influenced many others. The Egyptian content of this exhibition begins with the works of the earliest period and traces the development of Egyptian art and features outstanding pieces including a colossus of Rameses II, exhibited for the first time since its excavation in 1912. All of the works were produced with a strong belief in external life created to decorate the tomb chambers of kings, queen and high officials, and for use in funeral context. Accordingly, all of the Egyptian works are powerful, monumental and pertain to the Egyptians' solid faith in eternity.

In contrast, Greek art and culture, which flourished from contact with the Egyptian and Aegean civilizations, illustrates the Greeks' keen interest in human nature and anatomy, and their search for the ideal forms that represent the dynamic power of life. The most popular sculptural motifs of this time include various athletes and goddesses. The Greeks' intense interest in human beauty can be seen in all their works from busts to vase paintings.

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Glenbow will bring these classical cultures to life this summer with a wide range of complementary programs including downtown walking tours examining classical architectural influences, gallery talks and community collaborations with some of Calgary's Mediterranean communities. Further details can be found in this media kit, online or in Glenbow's calendar of events.

*Egypt, Greece and Rome: Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* is on at Glenbow Museum from June 30, 2006 until June 3, 2007. For details on hours, prices and programming details, call (403) 268-4100 or visit [www.glenbow.org](http://www.glenbow.org).

This exhibition is organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in collaboration with the Nagoya/Boston Museum of Fine Arts. This exhibition is presented at Glenbow Museum by Centurion Energy and supported by Calgary Region Arts Foundation, Alberta Lottery Fund, the Calgary Herald, CBC Calgary, GlobalFest and the Calgary Hyatt Regency.

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## **Ancient Egypt** **Organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston** **June 30, 2006 to June 3, 2007**

Egypt, a tract of fertile land flanking the Nile River in northeast Africa, was host to one of the great civilizations of antiquity. One reason for Egypt's success was the Nile. The second largest river in the world, it cuts northward across the desert, eventually forming a fan-like delta that drains into the Mediterranean Sea. The Nile floods annually, making it a life-sustaining artery in a land that is hot and dry. The extremes of landscape deeply influenced the ancients who identified the fertile earth as the Black Land and the seemingly endless desert as the Red Land.

One of Egypt's illustrious achievements was the development of the unified state around 3100 B.C., when the legendary King Menes consolidated Upper and Lower Egypt. Monumental architecture, writing and a centralized government also appeared during this innovative period.

Egyptian towns were constructed of mudbrick, but temples and tombs were typically built from indigenous stone. These structures, monuments to the gods and the dead, were made to last for eternity – a concept that applied to kingship as well as the afterlife. The great pyramids at Giza and the pillared Amen temple at Thebes are among the finest examples of Egyptian architecture.

The Egyptian works make up over 60 percent of the exhibition discovered and documented by archaeologists from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Some of the discoveries were retained by the Egyptian government, while others were shipped to Boston to become part of one of the most distinguished collections of antiquities in North America.

Some of the earliest works include maceheads used by Egyptian soldiers 6000 years ago, and pottery made from clay found on the banks of the Nile about 3500 B.C. Other pieces from the earliest (predynastic) Egyptian period include beautifully wrought vessels in marble, alabaster and breccias. Notable items from the Old Kingdom (2600 – 2100 B.C.) include relief panels and statuary from the tomb of Nekhebu, the great building superintendent for tombs, temples, and irrigation projects for King Pepy I, about 2600 B.C.

Some of the most spectacular pieces in Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World are from the late synasty period (1000 – 600 B.C.). They include the cartonnage (inner coffin) and outer coffin of Pennu, a high official at the Temple of Carnak at Thebes (Luxor).

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Other items featured in the “Tomb Room” of the exhibition are gold and gilded amulets (magical charms to ease a person’s way in the afterlife) that were often folded into the linen wrapping of the mummy, and a set of Canopic jars, made to hold the internal organs of the deceased. A striking gilded Mummy mask dating from Roman times (100 A.D.) shows the continuing influence of traditional Egyptian religious and artistic conventions even at this late period in Egypt’s history.

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## **Ancient Greece Organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston June 30, 2006 – June 3, 2007**

Ancient Greek civilizations have had a tremendous influence on the art, architecture, philosophy and government models that formed most modern cultures. Greece was heavily influenced by the accomplishments of ancient Egypt and these are apparent in Greek artifacts. In fact, some scholars have suggested that the earliest large scale Greek marble figures were directly influenced by Egyptian pharaonic sculptures.

The Greeks though did not simply copy these objects. The art and artifacts through this section of the exhibit illustrate the ancient Greeks' fascination with the human form and the ideal of human beauty. A key concept of reborn Greek culture can be summed up in the words of the Sophist Protagoras (a contemporary of Socrates): "Human beings are the measure of all things." The nude human figure emerged as the principal theme of art, and the perfect human body was used to tell the stories of gods and heroes. The form and content of Greek art became the model and standard for much of later Western art.

The Greeks' keen interest in the human form and the ideal of human beauty are profiled in the exquisite pottery vessels, dramatic bronze sculptures and beautiful marble and terra cotta figures. Highlight from the Greek works in *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* include very fine ceramic works from the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods. Visitors will see first hand the amazing detail in gold jewellery from the Hellenistic Period, coins from the Classical Period and a mirror stand dated to 500 B.C.

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**Ancient Rome**  
**Organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**  
**June 30, 2006 to June 3, 2007**

The key civilizations in the Mediterranean, Egypt, Greece and Rome, were greatly influenced by the art and achievements of one another. The ancient Roman Empire, founded on the banks of Italy's Tiber River was no exception. Its early history was deeply influenced by the Etruscan civilization, but probably the greatest changes in Roman art and culture were caused by the empire's interaction with Ancient Greece. This was a direct result of Roman military actions that led to the conquering of Greece and Asia Minor in the 2nd century B.C.

From that point onward, Greek sculpture and painting were brought back to Rome, first as war trophies, but increasingly as collectibles for individual Romans. These artworks soon influenced Roman sculptural tradition, but over time the Romans altered the emphasis on ideals of human beauty and form to a focus on the moral value of sculpture as realistic portraits of the gods to aid religion and stressing the nobility and moral qualities of prominent athletes and leaders.

The Roman works in the exhibition display the civilization's great artistic debt to the Greeks, and also the artistic contributions they made that were distinctly their own. Outstanding works in the exhibition include wonderful sculptural pieces, some based on earlier Greek models and some with a more distinctly Roman appearance. Roman artists had mastered the art of capturing an individual likeness. Much of their statuary and relief work featured faces that were far from the classical ideal, but which were very evocative in their "warts and all" faithfulness to their subjects. Realistic portraits honoured fine character and great achievements – often in unflattering ways that Greek lovers of beauty would have rejected. This is apparent in the artifacts exhibited in this part of the exhibition; the most striking examples can be seen in the pieces of torso of Apollo, the miniature portrait of Emperor Vespasian, the head of Aphrodite, and the sculptural portrait of a bearded man. In the later centuries of the Empire, when barbarian invasions became a significant threat, Roman Emperors ordered likenesses on coins and other media that showed their maturity, toughness and experience.

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## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### **Egypt, Greece and Rome: Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World June 30, 2006 – June 3, 2007**

#### **Programs included with Museum Admission**

##### **GSI: Ancient Mediterranean**

*Included with museum admission*

*Open daily during regular museum hours*

*Please Note: The GSI lab is closed to the public when booked by groups*

Take on the role of an archeologist and uncover the secrets of the fascinating ancient cultures of Egypt, Greece and Rome. At each artifact station, you'll examine religious items, writing, textiles, coins, trade goods and ceramics to discover clues about the languages, religions, customs and commerce of people who lived over 5,000 years ago.

*GSI: Ancient Mediterranean is supported by TransCanada Pipelines*

##### **Classical Calgary – A Walking Tour**

*Offered daily from July 5 through September 17*

*Tours begin at 2:00 p.m. from Glenbow's main lobby*

*Approximate Length: 45 minutes*

*(Maximum 25 participants)*

*Glenbow reserves the right to cancel due to inclement weather*

*Included with museum admission*

Nearly 2,500 years ago, the ancient Greeks created the "Classical Orders" and a vocabulary for architecture that we still use today. Greatly inspired by Greek art, the Romans developed their own artistic innovations including road engineering and aqueducts as well as extensive use of arches. Enjoy an entertaining and informative guided walking tour of downtown Calgary's historic building and bridges that demonstrate these classical influences and more.

*Classical Calgary is supported by Alberta Museums Association*

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**Face to Face with History: Classic Rock**

*Saturdays and Sundays from July 1 to October 8*

*10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Discovery Theatre*

*Included with museum admission*

The ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece and Rome were all known for their devotion to the arts, religion, philosophy and politics. Join Glenbow interpreter Sean Bowie for a presentation to explore how these three cultures gave birth to some of the greatest works of art, leaders, philosophical thoughts and political systems that the world has ever known.

*Face to Face with History: Classic Rock is supported by Petro-Canada*

**The Arc Discovery Room**

*Included with museum admission*

*Open daily during regular museum hours*

Visit our art-based studio to learn about the daily life of Egyptians, Romans and Greeks during *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World*. Try your hand at weaving on our tabletop loom or design your own Roman basket. Scratch your own story into a Grecian amphora (or vase) while you explore the different languages found on the Rosetta Stone. Stamp your way to a message using hieroglyphics and try etching into tin to create your own Egyptian pendant. The *Discovery Room* has activities for all ages and interests.

The *ARC Discovery Room* is supported by ARC Financial Resources & ARC Financial Group

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**Ticketed Programs - Call 268-4110 to book these programs.**

**Ab Urbe Condita – From the Foundation of the City**

**Walking Tour**

*Offered on the first Thursday of the month: July 6, August 3, September 7*

*6:00 p.m.*

*Approximate length: 2 hours*

*Members \$16, Non-members \$20*

*Also available upon request to groups of 10-25 people (subject to availability)*

The ingeniousness and beauty of Roman and Greek architecture and engineering has not been lost on us in the 2,000 years since it was at its apex. Go on an entertaining and informative walking tour of downtown Calgary to explore classical architectural and engineering influences on a number of historic downtown buildings and bridges and the more recent history of who built them and of, how, when and why they were built.

**Up Close and Personal – From Ramses to Zeus**

*Presentation and tour of Egypt, Greece and Rome: Art of Ancient Mediterranean World*

*Offered on the second Thursday of the month: July 13, August 10, September 14*

*7:00 p.m.*

*Approximate length: 2 hours*

*Members \$16, Non-members \$20*

*Also available upon request to groups of 15-30 people (subject to availability)*

Three of the most influential ancient cultures in history were spread across the Mediterranean. Trace the rise and fall of Egyptian, Greco, and Roman civilizations and discover how they influenced one another in history, archaeology, folklore, culture and more. Join a knowledgeable and engaging museum interpreter for a visual, cultural and historic journey through the pivotal events in classical history and the treasured artifacts that tell those tales.

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## Fact Sheet

### **Egypt, Greece and Rome: Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World Glenbow Museum**

**June 30, 2006 - June 3, 2007**

**Travelling Exhibition Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in collaboration  
with Nagoya/Boston Museum of Fine Arts**

#### **OVERVIEW**

**Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World** features beautiful works of art from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston's renowned collections of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Comprised of more than 200 objects, some dating as far back as 4300 B.C., the exhibition traces the development of each civilization and its cultural interconnections over 5,000 years. The artistic achievements of ancient Mediterranean civilizations formed the foundation for European and American art.

#### **EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS**

**Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World** presents works of art and objects of daily life, including:

- a powerful red granite sculpture of the *Head and Shoulders from a Colossus of Ramesses II* (1279-1212 B.C.)
- a beautifully decorated *Mummy Mask* (an idealized portrait of the deceased) with a gold gilded face and blue wig (ca. 100 A.D.)
- an exquisite bronze *Mirror Stand* featuring a serene and peaceful Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, and two sprightly winged Eros figures (about 500 B.C.)
- one of the most outstanding examples of Early Classical vase painting—a *Red-Figure Lekythos*, or perfumed oil flask, featuring a young hunter and his dog eyeing their prey (about 470 B.C.)

#### **COLLECTIONS**

This exhibition is drawn from the collections of Classical Art and Ancient Egyptian, Nubian and Near Eastern Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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**Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World** *fact sheet, p. 2*

**PROGRAMS**

Glenbow has developed a wide range of programs and events to further enhance the visitor experience including downtown walking tours highlighting Calgary's historic buildings and bridges that demonstrate the classical influences of Greece and Rome; a hands-on archaeology station; and interpreter-led tours recalling the pivotal events in classical history. Full program details can be found at [www.glenbow.org](http://www.glenbow.org).

*In fall 2006, Glenbow will launch its 2006/07 signature programs and events including a lecture series, film series, wine tastings and live performances with community collaborators all inspired by the ancient Mediterranean cultures.*

**CATALOGUE**

An exhibition catalogue focuses on the cultures of Egypt, Greece and Rome and on related works of art from the Museum of Fine Art, Boston's collections. The book contains curatorial essays, a detailed chronology, an illustration of each object in the exhibition as well as didactic information (in Japanese and English). It is available at the Glenbow Museum Shop.