

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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WORLD DEBUT EXHIBITION, *ANCIENT ROME & AMERICA*, OPENS TODAY AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

***Never-before-seen collection includes lost remnants of Pompeii,
bust of George Washington in Roman garb, and original gladiator weapons***

Philadelphia, PA (February 19, 2010) – Making its world debut today at the National Constitution Center, and running through August 1, 2010, *Ancient Rome & America* showcases the cultural, political, and social connections between the lost world of ancient Rome and modern America.

The National Constitution Center worked for three years to develop the exhibition, which features a unique and unprecedented collection of rare artifacts and artwork, in partnership with Contemporanea Progetti of Florence, Italy, in collaboration with the Ministero per i Beni e Le Attività Culturali, Rome, Italy.

Rome, like the United States, overcame a monarchy to become a republic. Long after the fall of ancient Rome, its heroes and legends have continued to influence future generations. From the battlefields of the revolution to the chambers of Congress, Rome became a part of America's foundation. Through marble sculptures, paintings, jewelry, coins, and ceramics, *Ancient Rome & America* draws striking comparisons between Roman and American culture, from theories of government to slavery and civil war, to continental expansion and worldwide influence.

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ADD ONE/ANCIENT ROME & AMERICA

“The connections between these two cultures separated by millennia and continents are startling and captivating,” said National Constitution Center President and CEO David Eisner. “Visitors will never think of either the lost world of ancient Rome or the founding values of America in the same way.”

Covering over 8,000 square feet, *Ancient Rome & America* is organized into five galleries: Introduction, Building a Republic, A Classical Revival, Expansion and Empire, and Enduring Legacy.

The exhibition features more than 300 artifacts from Italy's leading archaeological collections in Florence, Naples, and Rome, paired with objects from over 40 lending institutions in the United States. Highlights include:

- Two eagles depicting this classic symbol shared by ancient Rome and America. The American eagle is carved from gilt wood. It was made in 1804 by Samuel McIntire, an important early American architect. Of the Roman eagle, only the bronze head remains. It likely originated from the top of a Roman army military standard.
- Roman busts of Scipio Africanus, Julius Caesar, and Cicero. American busts of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, each portrayed in togas.
- Gladiator/Football helmets. Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver Harold Carmichael's helmet is on display with a gladiator helmet and four original pieces from the gladiator barracks of an amphitheater in Pompeii – a “greave” (shin guard), two spearheads, and a dagger.
- Excavated remnants from Pompeii, including silverware, a preserved piece of a wall fresco, and the cast of a man who did not escape the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.
- A selection of classical works belonging to the Founding Fathers that helped shape their political thought during the early years of the American republic. John Adams' personal copy of Plutarch's *Lives*, John Dickenson's personal copy of the works of Roman historian Tacitus, and John Quincy Adams' personal copy of Cicero's *De Oratore*.

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ADD TWO/ANCIENT ROME & AMERICA

- Two letters from August 1776 exchanged between John and Abigail Adams. In them, Abigail signs her name “Portia” after the wife of the Roman Senator Brutus. The letters are filled with classical references and ideas of republican virtue.
- Slave collars from ancient Rome and the United States. Both ancient Rome and America prior to 1865 were slave societies. Made in the early 1800s, the slave collar from the U.S. is a rare artifact that can be tied to one man’s quest for freedom. Ben, a slave who worked on a farm in Pennsylvania, tried to escape three times, and after the third time, his owner had an iron collar made for him.

The exhibition concludes with a video presentation about Rome’s legacy. Though the Roman Empire declined and fell, it remains a powerful influence on the western world. As visitors depart the exhibition, they will be left to ponder the lessons ancient Rome teaches us about our nation’s future.

“The profound and pervasive legacy of ancient Rome is deeply embedded in the western culture of today; the lasting effects of Roman domination can be found almost anywhere,” said Linda Carioni of Contemporanea Progetti. “They can be seen in our judiciary and monetary systems, in our art and architectural patrimony, in the modern Romance languages, in our alphabet of 26 letters, as well as the calendar of Julius Caesar.”

To augment the exhibition, the Center’s public programming staff in the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach has developed a variety of special programs and family activities. Also in keeping with the Center’s mission to foster discussion and citizen engagement, evening programs about current and historical topics related to the exhibition are planned. In addition, the Center is offering a special iPod audio tour in conjunction with the exhibition.

Admission to *Ancient Rome & America* is \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors ages 65 and up, and \$12 for children ages 4-12. Active military personnel and children ages 3 and under are free. Group rates are also available. Admission to the Center’s main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*, including the award-winning theater production “Freedom Rising,” is included. iPod audio tours cost an additional \$5. For ticket information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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ADD THREE/ANCIENT ROME & AMERICA

CBS 3 and The CW Philly are the official media partners of *Ancient Rome & America*. CBS 3 (KYW-TV) and The CW Philly 57 (WPSG-TV) are part of CBS Television Stations, a division of CBS Corporation.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising." The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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