

Objects from Knossos and Crete at the Ashmolean

- Most of the objects linked to Crete and The Palace at Knossos are on display in Gallery 20: Aegean World.
- Displays cover finds from the excavations of Arthur Evans from the early 1900s of the Palace at Knossos, and also explore his interpretation of the site.
- Other displays include Mycenaean objects and ancient objects from the Cyclades, including carved Cycladic figures from cist graves.
- The gallery can also be used to explore objects related to Crete's most famous myth: Theseus and the Minotaur

Other galleries containing ancient Greek objects:

Gallery 16 : The Greek World

Gallery 18 : Ancient Cyprus

Gallery 14 : Cast Gallery

Gallery 7 : Money

Gallery 21: Greek and Roman Sculpture

Gallery 20: Aegean World

1. Attic red-figure pottery cup, attributed to the Apollodoros Painter, Chiusi, Italy c500 BC



The illustration shows Crete's most famous myth. Confined by King Minos in the labyrinth, the Minotaur, half- man, half-bull, survived by devouring youths and maidens sent as tribute from Athens until it was finally slain by Theseus.

AN1896.1908.G.261

Gallery 20: Aegean World

2. Octopus jar, 1450-1400 BC



This partially restored jar is from the Palace at Knossos, Crete. It is decorated with a six tentacled octopus, using purple red dye from murex shells, a popular colourant for murals across the east Mediterranean. The design reflects a society with a close relationship to the sea. AN1911.608

Gallery 20: Aegean World

3. Ancient Greek coin (stater) 300-200 BC



The coin shows a labyrinth with a tiny Minotaur inside, illustrating the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Found at the Palace at Knossos. Gods, heroes, famous people and myths were often depicted on ancient coins. The labyrinth was depicted on coins minted at Knossos.

HCR 4579

Gallery 20: Aegean World

4. Pithos, Palace at Knossos, 1700-1400 BC



Storage jar from one of eighteen store rooms in the west wing of the Palace at Knossos, revealing the grand scale of life at the Palace. The site was once known as 'The Jars' from the many similar pots found there during early excavations.

AN1896.1908.AE1126

Gallery 20: Aegean World

5. Clay drain pipe, Palace at Knossos, 1800-1400 BC



The control of water resources and the provision of sanitation are often associated with power and administration. The Knossos drainage system still remains the most expensive and elaborate known from a Minoan site. It consists of clay pipes of various types and stone channels.

AN1910.280

Gallery 20: Aegean World

6. Linear B tablet, c 1375 BC



This burnt clay tablet records women workers and children. These clay tablets were only used for administration, bureaucracy, book keeping, land tenure, agricultural production or craftsmen. They give a voice to people living and working at the time. Around 100 scribes wrote the surviving over 4,000 tablets.

AN1910.218

Gallery 20: Aegean World

7. Marble figurine of a woman. Early Cycladic II period c2800-2300 BC



One of the largest intact marble figures of the early Cyclades. It represents a pregnant woman with her arms folded, perhaps cradling her future baby. The eyes were originally painted and some pigment remains. Figures like these were found in shallow graves, their significance and meaning is not fully known. AN1896-1908 AE.176

Gallery 20: Aegean World

8. Lentoid seal, Gythion, mainland Greece 1400-1300 BC



The seal made from lapis lazuli, shows a man leaping over a bull which is attacked by a dog. Bull leaping was a popular sport in ancient Crete and is illustrated on a range of objects. There are many examples of votive figures representing bulls on display.

AN1938.10741908 AE.176

Gallery 20: Aegean World

9. Kamares Ware, Old Palace Period, 1800-1700BC



Premier table ware, found in the Room of Olive Press, Palace at Knossos. This vase, with its extremely thin walls appears to imitate a metal bowl. Its elegantly bent edge and two pouring lips make it both rare and valuable.

AN1930.645

Gallery 20: Aegean World

10. 'Throne', Palace at Knossos 1450-1375 BC (original). Plaster cast, 1902



Full size replica of the so called 'Throne of Minos' as named by Arthur Evans during his excavations in the early 1900s. Where the throne was excavated there was some wall plaster still intact which has been recreated in the gallery display.

AE.2396

Lines of enquiry: Classics

- Palaces, with special emphasis on the Palace at Knossos: their function and use
- Tombs and and burial practices
- Materials and technology: frescoes, pottery, jewellery, metalwork
- Building and engineering: waterworks, palaces, building materials
- Minoan culture and its significance for trade
- Economy and society: Linear B tablets, content, discovery, interpretation and significance
- Early Cretan hieroglyph and Linear A
- The myth of Theseus and the Minotaur
- Excavation and archaeological methods: compare and contrast with approaches today
- Explore the styles of pottery from different palace 'phases' from the Palace at Knossos. Learn about how they were used to date excavations.

Working with objects: key questions

- Who made it?
- Where and when was it made?
- What materials is it made from?
- How was it made?
- What was it used for? How was it used?
- Who used / owned it?
- How might it be interpreted by different people? at different times?



Chest shaped Larnax (coffin) cemetery at Knossos, 1375-1300BC
AN1896.1908 AE583

Lines of enquiry: Art & Design

- Explore different design motifs from ancient Cretan pottery and create new designs to reflect Minoan culture.
- Research how myth and legend have been represented in art across different times and cultures through objects and artworks.

Further resources

Further information about Arthur Evans and the Palace at Knossos is available at:

www.odl.ox.ac.uk/collections/evansknossos.htm

sirarthurevans.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/collection/

Cross curricular links

- History: rise and expansion of the Minoan culture and its influence in the Mediterranean
- English: explore myths and legends
- Maths: currency and coinage in the ancient world

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