

## Figurine of horse and rider, Cypriot

Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne



Unknown artist (Cypriot)  
**Figurine of horse and rider**, 600–475 BCE  
ceramic  
14.5 × 5.5 cm  
Purchased from the Australian Institute  
of Archaeology, 1987  
Classics and Archaeology Collection  
University of Melbourne Art Collection  
1987.0226

Cyprus is the third-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. Its ancient pottery, which was made both by hand and on the wheel, is known for its high quality and is characterised by regional distinctiveness. During the eighth century BCE, Cyprus was influenced by the Near East and Egypt, influences also manifested in the modelling and decoration of its pottery.

This equestrian figure may come from Agios Iakovos, a village in north-eastern Cyprus, and is decorated with an abstract bichrome (two-colour) pattern. One intriguing aspect of its appeal is the uncertainty of its precise function. Figurines such as this could have been used for a range of purposes: as toys, in death rites or religious ceremonies, or as emblems of social groups. Ceramic items were often placed with the dead in burial chambers, which is how many ancient artefacts survived to the present day.

Australian archaeologist Professor James Stewart (1913–1962) excavated many tombs in Cyprus in the 1930s, 1950s and 1960s. Although this particular figurine was not excavated by him, many of the 850 objects uncovered by Stewart are now held at the Ian Potter Museum of Art.

## Teaching ideas

The University of Melbourne's curriculum is rich and varied, and changes from year to year. For more teaching ideas, [contact a collection manager](#).

### **Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia**

Compare the archaeology of the Nile Valley (Pharaonic Egypt) and the plains of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq and Syria) in terms of their monuments, art, mythology, epic narratives, languages, history and social institutions, to understand the role of ancient Egypt and the East in modern history.

### **Myth, Art and Empire: Greece and Rome**

Study ancient art and society to explore the mythic origins and heroic archetypes of the Greeks and Romans. Think critically about the origins of the Western tradition.

### **Egypt under the Pharaohs**

Handle and study authentic ancient objects in the classroom, such as monuments, reliefs, inscriptions, literature and material remains of the royal rulers of the period covered by the native Egyptian dynasties, from about 2950 to 332 BCE. Communicate interpretations of ancient Egyptian texts and artefacts, both orally and in writing.

### **Egyptian and Near-Eastern Mythology**

Explore some of the mythical stories that emerged from the lands of the Nile and Mesopotamia, which predate those found in classical mythology by several millennia, to demonstrate familiarity with the central patterns and themes.

### **Classical Mythology**

Discover narratives of birth and creation, war and the warrior, fire and flood, animals, gods and humans, in order to identify and articulate the relationships between classical myths and the social, religious and political contexts of their production.

### **Ancient Greece: History and Archaeology**

Gain knowledge of the material culture of Greece and the Mediterranean world from the Bronze Age to the Classical Period, by examining in detail modern scholarship on ethnicity, politics, warfare, colonisation, migration and acculturation.

### **Beyond Babylon**

Compare material culture in the rise and fall of Egyptian, Near-Eastern and Persian civilisations by examining belief systems, daily routines, gender roles, power and authority.

### **Underworld and Afterlife**

Focus on the topics of the afterlife, survival of the bereaved, mummification of the dead, sacrificing virgins, and communicating with ghosts, in considering the literature and material culture of antiquity in order to understand ancient myths and death rituals.

### **Interpreting the Ancient World**

Integrate texts and material remains to understand past cultures, and to interpret textual, symbolic, and archaeological evidence in historic and prehistoric periods.

## Intersecting objects



Unknown artist (Cypriot)  
**Red-polished black-topped incised tulip bowl**, 2300–  
2200 BCE  
ceramic  
12.0 × 13.9 × 11.5 cm  
Cypriot Collection: Melbourne Cyprus Expedition  
Classics and Archaeology Collection  
University of Melbourne Art Collection  
1987.0092



Unknown artist (Cypriot)  
**Bichrome nipple jug with bird motif**, Cypro-Archaic  
period  
ceramic  
32.5 × 26.5 × 21.9 cm  
Purchased from the Australian Institute of  
Archaeology, 1987  
Classics and Archaeology Collection  
University of Melbourne Art Collection  
1987.0297

To learn more, visit the website of the [Ian Potter Museum of Art](https://www.ianpottermuseumofart.com.au/).

## References

Antonio Sagona [Horse and rider figurine, Cypriote], in Chris McAuliffe & Peter Yule (eds), *Treasures: Highlights of the cultural collections of the University of Melbourne*, Melbourne University Publishing, 2003, p. 134.

Sally Salter, *A catalogue of Cypriot antiquities at the University of Melbourne and in the Ian Potter Museum of Art*, Melbourne: Macmillan Art, 2008, p. 117.

Jennifer Webb, exhibition panels in *Ceramic art of ancient Cyprus*, exhibition curated by Andrew Jamieson, Ian Potter Museum of Art, 2012, exhibition item 58.