**Torso of Aphrodite**  
Unknown Roman  

Roman, Roman Republic-Roman Empire, 100 BC - 100 AD  
Marble: 47 x 23 x 12 in. (119.4 x 58.4 x 30.5 cm)  
base: 34 x 21 x 21 in. (86.4 x 53.3 x 53.3 cm)  

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The first monumental female nude of antiquity was carved by the great sculptor Praxiteles in the 4th century B.C. The image of Aphrodite, goddess of beauty and love, was enshrined on the Aegean island of Knidos in a circular temple so that it could be admired by worshippers from all sides. The statue was so renowned that people sailed to the island just to see it.

The original statue by Praxiteles was destroyed in a fire of A.D. 476, but a small number of fine copies of Aphrodite survived. This goddess dates from the 1st century B.C. to the 1st century A.D., the late Greek Hellenistic to early Roman period. Aphrodite was portrayed in the act of bathing, her full figure modeled in realistic detail and rendered in white marble, polished to give the appearance of glistening flesh. On her left arm she wears a bracelet that imitates metal set with a gem.

**Online Resources:**

Hirsch Library Online Catalog  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

**Articles:** (full-text access available on-site; off-site access available through your school library or Houston Public Library)


**Print Resources:**

Roman Portraits in Context  
Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture  
Hellenistic Sculpture II  
The Ancient Middle Classes  
The Art of Praxiteles
Bibliography

General Surveys of Roman Art


Inspiration: Praxiteles and the Aphrodite of Cnidus


Greek and Roman Art and Sculpture


Nudes in Ancient Art


Mythology


Roman Culture


Marble Sculpture


This reference guide is just the tip of the iceberg on helpful resources in the library’s holdings. Many of the suggested resources above have their own bibliographies. Each of these may lead you to another resource that would also be helpful in your research here in the museum or in another library. To find additional resources, use keywords such as “Roman sculpture” and “Aphrodite” in the online catalog and in periodical indexes. Once you find a few relevant titles, pay attention to the subject headings to identify similar materials. Examples of useful subject headings are:

Marble sculpture, Roman
Nude in art
Human figure in art
Mythology, Roman, in Art
Art, Classical

For guidelines about writing it may be helpful to look at Sylvan Barnet’s A Short Guide to Writing about Art, which includes tips for looking, reading, and writing about art. Ask for it at the reference desk. At every stage of your work, please allow the library staff to help you. Contact us at 713-639-7325 or hirsch@mfah.org