

Ave, Ceasar! The Most Famous Leader from Ancient Rome Returns to the Eternal City

Nicoletta Vincoli (July 07, 2008)



This Fall Julius Caesar will finally get the show he deserves, appropriately set in Rome. An expansive exhibit dedicated to the leader boasts everything Caesar-related, from Ancient Roman artifacts to the artworks he inspired

The most famous political and military leader from Ancient Rome will be celebrated in the Eternal City, at the Chiostro del Bramante, from October 24 to April 5 2009. For the first time an exhibit will focus entirely on Julius Caesar (100-44 BC). His military campaigns, his literary works, his ascent to power and his brutal murder will be examined, as well as all historic aspects of his rule.

About 180 archaeological, artistic and cultural items will be brought together from all over the world.



There will be several busts of Caesar, including those from museums in Berlin and the Vatican. Jewelry, manuscripts, mosaics and paintings from a variety of sources will help transport visitors to the time and age of the first Roman dictator. Of particular interest, a sculpture of Venus Genetrix from the Louvre recalling Caesar's claim that he is descended from the Trojan prince Aeneas.

Only confirmed portraits will be on display, a decision that effectively excludes some interesting pieces spread around the world, such as the famous unconfirmed bust recently discovered in Arles. On the other hand, portraits of people that were part of Caesar's life and political career will be displayed in the exhibition. Those include busts of Pompey on loan from Venice, Crassus from the Louvre, Marc Anthony and Cicero from Rome, and Cleopatra from museums in the Vatican, Turin and Berlin. A number of rare artifacts will open the exhibit, not least of which a silver goblet discovered by Emperor Napoleon III.

The myth surrounding Julius Caesar is something that has never quite faded in the history of the Western world. Napoleon Bonaparte was fascinated by the Roman dictator, and many works of art were inspired by him. Indeed this year's exhibition will feature an entire section on the development of the myth of Caesar in later centuries, with paintings by masters such as Rubens, Guercino, Pietro da Cortona and Guido Reni. For the first time since the 19th century, massive canvases of Caesar by Giambattista Tiepolo, sold to the Russian tsar in 1800, will return to Italy.

Finally, Caesar's myth in the world of cinema will be explored, with screenings of a chronology of works, from early silent black and white movies to the 1963 blockbuster Cleopatra.

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