

apertura  
della  
collezione  
**Magna  
Graecia**

dall'11 luglio 2019

[www.museoarcheologicoinapoli.it](http://www.museoarcheologicoinapoli.it)

press release

**The MANN's Magna Graecia collection reopens to the public  
From 11 July, after more than 20 years, 400 artefacts are visible again  
Recounting cultural integration in Magna Graecia, southern Italy**

*Naples, 11 July 2019.* A silence lasting more than twenty years and a dedication to Professor Enzo Lippolis (Director of the Department of Sciences of Antiquity/La Sapienza University of Rome, who died prematurely in 2018). **Professor Lippolis devised a special exhibition project to recount the historical roots of the culture of southern Italy: on Thursday 11 July the Magna Graecia collection of the National Archaeological Museum of Naples will reopen.** (At 12 noon there will be a press preview and at 5 p.m. the official opening with the authorities and the public).

Closed since 1996, the collection, by the richness and antiquity of the archaeological heritage are unique in the international museum panorama. Over 400 works provide a record of the characteristics of the settlements, socio-political structures and religious and artistic framework of pre-Roman Campania. Hence they cover several thematic cores, with a significant thread running through them: the complexity of coexistence between the communities rooted in the south of the peninsula. (The finds, made between the 18th century and the early decades of the 20th, were added to what at that time was the Royal Bourbon Museum through purchases and donations.)

*"Today we are restoring a fundamental part of its identity to the National Archaeological Museum of Naples,"* declares the Director Paolo Giulierini. *"The reorganization after 20 years of the Magna Graecia collection, among the richest and most famous in the world, is the result of an extensive plan of intervention for the reorganization of the west wing of the building intended to house pre-Roman relics. In the rooms on the first floor hosting the exhibition, a unique experience awaits visitors, who will literally be able to walk through history. They will do so by treading, with the appropriate precautions, on the magnificent mosaic floors from the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum, from buildings in Pompeii and Stabiae and the Imperial Villa of Capri, finally recovered and restored to their magnificence. "In this way the history of the Greeks in the West, and that of the Italic peoples with whom they came into contact, is returning to the MANN. I like to imagine this 'new' section as a fascinating gateway to knowledge that leads from Naples, and will increasingly attract visitors to discover the ancient treasures of Southern Italy."*

On a journey through history, starting from the 8th century BC and continuing until the Roman conquest, the fascinating mosaic that defined the cultural identity of Magna Graecia is reconstructed: it starts with some burials from Pithekoussai (Ischia) and Cumae (datable to between the second half of the 8th and the early 7th centuries BC), bearing witness to the earliest phases of the Greek settlement of Southern Italy. The objects, which were part of the funeral furnishings, represent a first way to define the coexistence, almost *ante litteram*, between the indigenous peoples and the Greeks in Campania.

Proceeding through the next two rooms, the display presents the **mythical and religious universe of the cities of Magna Graecia**. Thanks to the distinctive forms of sacred architecture, capable of meeting ritual needs and votive systems, we can understand just how deeply the culture of Magna Graecia was marked by major migratory phenomena.

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Outstanding among the masterpieces on display to visitors are the evocative and colourful artworks of the **terracotta frieze depicting Heracles wrestling with the sea monster Nereus** and the **Heracleian Tablets**. These comprise a striking inscription (found in 1732), which marked a fundamental step in the discovery of Magna Graecia, fascinating the reformist and Enlightenment 18th century by fixing in bronze a detailed account of the public works related to the reorganization of some lands owned by a religious body.

**The third room deals with the theme of the ideological significance of the banquet, between the individual and social dimensions, in the culture of Greece and Magna Graecia during the archaic and classical periods.**

The exhibition reconstructs a banquet between the 6th and 5th centuries BC. The figured Attic vases reflect an established ritual in which each container (kraters, amphorae, cups and bronze vessels) had a specific function.

Continuing this progressive journey through time, **we pass on to the analysis of the emergence of Italic populations (Campanian, Samnite, Lucan and Apulian) in southern Italy**. It was these populations, in the last decades of the 5th century BC, that replaced the Greeks in the administration of the most important cities, defining new forms of social organization to express a changed ideological and cultural background.

**Significant in this respect is the substantial group of materials from Ruvo, Canosa and Paestum**: once again, from the funerary rituals, we can see the changes that took place in a community that became strongly hierarchical. Outstanding in the collection are **the famous painted slabs found in the Tomb of the Dancers**, discovered at Ruvo on 15 November 1833: the funeral dance scene, which unfolds around the walls of the tomb (dated to the late 5th and early 4th centuries BC), is still one of the supreme examples of ancient painting in Southern Italy.

Also among the major acquisitions that the Bourbon government secured for the Museum are the **pairs of frontals and pectorals** for horses, from the burial of a knight of princely rank at Ruvo, as well as the **two Apulian masked kraters from the Hypogeum of the Darius Vase at Canosa**. These colossal vases had the sole function of serving as very costly status symbols.

Refined testimonies to the fashions of the time are the **jewels** exhibited in Room CXXXV. Necklaces, bracelets, earrings and other items of personal ornament a record of the precious jewellery worn to show off their owner's power. On display in this same room is the extraordinary **Altamura Krater (mid 4th century BC)**, **one of the most monumental Apulian vases from antiquity**. Recently restored by the staff of the Getty Museum, it is decorated with a rare and emblematic depiction of the dwelling of Hades and Persephone in the underworld and numerous mythological figures associated with the afterlife.

**The Magna Graecia collection finds its ideal culmination in the gaze turned on inland Campania and the most significant contexts from Nola to Cales (today Calvi Risorta in the Caserta area)**. From the first millennium BC, the rural areas, by its morphological configuration, a crucial hub for connecting central and southern Italy, as well as the Tyrrhenian coast, the Apennine belt and the Adriatic side of the peninsula.

Epitomizing the works included in the exhibition is the **Vivenzio Hydria**, one of the most celebrated vases that the ancient world has restored to us. Purchased in 1818 for the then incredible figure of 10,000 ducats (a quantity in gold corresponding to about 170,000 euros), the work is attributed to the Kleophrades Painter (490-480 BC).

On the shoulder of the vase appear scenes of the taking of Troy (including the rape of Cassandra and the bloody death of Priam), fascinating the moderns by the contrast between the compositional harmony and the violence in the rendering of details.

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Paralleling the themes of contact cultures and integration, conceived as the basis for the construction of an eclectic Mediterranean society, the layout of the Magna Graecia collection is also intended to evoke the most important archaeological discoveries made in the 19th and 20th centuries.

**Through the figures of scholars such as Paolo Orsi, Umberto Zanotti Bianco and Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, the history of the MANN's Magna Graecia collections is entwined with an important part of the cultural history of united Italy and enlightened scholars of Southern Italy, which interpreted the revival of the heritage of Magna Graecia as a potential path to redemption for the South.**

The marvels within the marvels are the **14 rooms of the Museum adjacent to the Salone del Meridiano** in which the collection is housed. These rooms contained the **precious *pavimenta sectilia* decorated with geometric motifs and mosaics from the Roman period**, installed in the first half of the 19th century. In recent years they have been cleaned and restored, which renewing their surfaces with the brilliant colouring of the different types of marble. The circular floor in *opus sectile* from the Belvedere of the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum (Room CXXXIX) is remarkable for its very modern interplay of perspective illusionism. It should be noted that the mosaic floors of the rooms that house the collection require certain precautions. These include special footwear (at a cost of 1.50 euros) and the admission of a carefully regulated and limited number of visitors to the exhibition spaces.

The newly opened project of the "Magna Graecia" collection was carried out with 2014-2020 FSC funds under the Excerpt Plan for Culture and Tourism—Resolution C.I.P.E. n° 3/2016. The collection was the first, at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, to be conceived for access by all kinds of visitors, including those with special needs.

Finally, a **catalogue guide** edited by Paolo Giulierini and Marialucia Giacco, has been **published by Electa**.

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