

In the ancient world, terracotta sculpture was ubiquitous. Readily available and economical—unlike stone suitable for carving—clay allowed artisans to craft figures of remarkable variety and expressiveness. Terracottas from South Italy and Sicily attest to the prolific coroplastic workshops that supplied sacred and decorative images for sanctuaries, settlements, and cemeteries. Sixty terracottas are investigated here by noted scholar Maria Lucia Ferruzza, comprising a selection of significant types from the Getty's larger collection—life-size sculptures, statuettes, heads and busts, altars, and decorative appliqués.

Director's Foreword

Introduction

Highlights from the Catalogue



Cat 1. Statue of a Seated Poet (Orpheus?)

A life-size figure of a seated poet playing the kithara, identified as Orpheus, is flanked by two half-bird, half-woman Sirens, who sing to mourn the dead and escort them to the Underworld. The unique group likely belonged to a funeral monument erected for a mortal musician from the region of Taranto.



Cat 48. Pair of Altars with the Myth of Adonis

On a pair of altars connected with the mystery cult of Adonis in Magna Graecia, reliefs show the beautiful youth seated between by his rival lovers Aphrodite and Persephone and dancing female attendants. Fated to die and be reborn each year, Adonis was associated with the life cycle of fertility and regeneration.



Cat 51. Head of a Woman

Votive female heads were dedicated by the hundreds as ritual offerings in Sicilian sanctuaries. Wearing a tall crown denoting divinity, this serene visage may represent the mother goddess Demeter, her daughter Kore, or a young bride on the eve of marriage and procreation.

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