



מוזיאון ישראל, ירושלים  
the israel museum, jerusalem  
متحف إسرائيل، أورشليم القدس

## **Major Antiquities Collection of Over 350 Works Including Ancient Glass and Greco-Roman Art and Archaeology Donated to Israel Museum by Robert and Renée Belfer**

**Unprecedented Gift Transforms Museum's Collection  
into One of Most Important Public Holdings of Ancient Glass Worldwide**



Roman bronze statue of a young god or athlete, dated to *circa* 50 BCE

**Jerusalem,** (February 18, 2015) —The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, today announced a transformative gift of more than 350 works of art and artifacts from antiquity by Robert and Renée Belfer, New York. Considered among the most significant private holdings of antiquities in the world, the Belfer Collection features hundreds of ancient Greco-Roman and Near-Eastern glass vessels—recognized as some of the most impressive specimens of their kind—as well as important early examples of Greco-Roman sculpture in bronze, marble, and mosaic. Select objects from the collection will be on view at the Museum, beginning in June 2015, in a special exhibition exploring the culture of collecting and connoisseurship in ancient Rome. *A Roman Villa—The Belfer Collection* will be a centerpiece of the Museum's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, which, throughout 2015, will highlight gifts across all of the Museum's collections on the occasion of this milestone year.

“The donation of this unparalleled collection enables us to extend the rich narrative of ancient civilizations as told through the Museum's holdings in archaeology,” said James S. Snyder, Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Museum. “Our focus in archaeology is the story of the ancient Land of Israel, and the Belfer Collection notably enhances our ability to broaden our story to the critically important history of ancient Israel's neighboring cultures and the foundational role that Greco-Roman civilization played in the history that then extends to our own time. We are profoundly grateful to the Belfers for this outstanding generosity and for the message that it sends, at the start of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year, about the worldwide support that has contributed to the growth of the Museum and its collections since its founding.”

The Belfers have been prominent art world patrons and longtime supporters of the Israel Museum, and Renée Belfer currently serves as Chair of the Executive Committee of the American Friends of the Israel Museum. The Belfer Collection, notable for its exceptional holdings in ancient glass, includes:



Fine glass vessels, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE  
– early 1<sup>st</sup> century CE

- Approximately **300 ancient glass works** from the earliest stages of glass production in the Late Bronze Age through the Islamic period, including rare, exquisitely preserved core-formed and cast vessels, early blown glass and extremely rare blown Roman glass, and sumptuous masterpieces of mold-blown and mosaic glass.
- **Greek, Southern Italian, and Etruscan pottery**, including an outstanding Attic black amphora depicting mythological scenes of the Greek heroes Heracles and Theseus with a lid, attributed to Group E and dated to *circa* 540 BCE.
- Approximately **50 Greek and Roman sculptures and reliefs**, among them a 1<sup>st</sup>-century CE marble head of a youth, a Roman copy of a Greek original (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE), by the renowned sculptor Polycleus; and an important Roman bronze statue of a young god or athlete, dated to *circa* 50 BCE.
- **Mosaics**, including a unique 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE Roman example with a bird's-eye view of a city with an amphitheater, Poseidon and Amphitrite, and two ships with sailors.

“When deciding on an ideal home for our collection, we could not think of a more fitting venue than the Israel Museum, especially for its emphasis on the foundational narrative of humankind that is so relevant to us all today,” said Renée Belfer. “Our collection represents an important chapter in the history of civilization, and we are delighted to bestow the Israel Museum with this gift on the occasion of its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary so that it may preserve and share the story of these ancient objects in perpetuity from Jerusalem, one of the central sites of that long history.”

From June to November 2015, a selection of works from the Belfer Collection will be presented together for the first time at the Museum in a special exhibition. Curated by Dr. Silvia Rozenberg, the Rodney E. Soher Senior Curator of Classical Archaeology, and Natasha Katsenelson, Curator of Ancient Glass, *A Roman Villa* will feature highlights from the Belfer Collection in a display designed to illustrate the lifestyle of powerful Roman aristocrats from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE through the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, when Rome was first transformed into a major cultural and artistic center. The exhibition will examine how Rome's elite class decorated their homes with the finest examples of Greco-Roman sculpture and magnificent Hellenistic and Roman glass objects and mosaics to demonstrate their standing in public and social life.

### The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The Israel Museum is the largest cultural institution in the State of Israel and is ranked among the leading art and archaeology museums in the world. Founded in 1965, the Museum houses encyclopedic collections ranging from prehistory through contemporary art and includes the most extensive holdings of Biblical and Holy Land archaeology in the world, among them the Dead Sea Scrolls. Over its first 50 years, the Museum has built a far-ranging collection of nearly 500,000 objects through an unparalleled legacy of gifts and support from its circle of patrons worldwide.

The Museum's 20-acre campus, which underwent comprehensive renewal in 2010 designed by James Carpenter Design Associates and Efrat-Kowalsky Architects, features the Billy Rose Art Garden, the Shrine of the Book, and more than 225,000 square feet of collection gallery and temporary exhibition space. The Museum also organizes programming at its off-site locations in Jerusalem at the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum, where it presents archaeological artifacts from the Land of Israel; and at its historic Ticho House, a venue for exhibitions of contemporary Israeli art.

The Museum is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout 2015, with a year-long program devoted to an exploration of Israel's aesthetic culture in the 50 years before and after its founding.

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