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The Die Is Cast: Money of the Ancient World Explores the Dawn and Development of Coinage

You can see the impact of the Romans on today's money by the Latin words on U.S. coins and dollar bills. Political leaders featured on currency? Thank the Macedonians for that.

Modern society owes much of its money's design and utility to the coins developed in the ancient world. But in a time before the Internet or even the printing press, these coins provided countless stories about the art, politics, wars, and pastimes of people living more than 2,000 years ago.

These stories are explored in the American Numismatic Association Money Museum's new exhibit, "The Die Is Cast: Money of the Ancient World," opening Nov. 9. The exhibit offers visitors the chance to travel back in time to the great civilizations of Greece and Rome, while viewing coins produced between the 7th Century B.C. and 476 A.D., the year the Roman Empire collapsed. Visitors can learn where and why the first coins were created, the numismatic contributions of Alexander the Great, and what 10 denarii could buy in ancient Rome.

"This exhibit not only shows what ancient coins looked like, but explains how the people that used the coins lived," said Doug Mudd, Curator of Exhibits at the ANA. "The ways they made and used their coins in cities like Athens and Rome are quite similar to our current system. Coins were used to pay taxes and rent, buy clothes, and for entertainment."

Featured rarities in the exhibit include an *Eid Mar* (Ides of March), a coin minted by Brutus to celebrate the assassination of Julius Caesar. Another coin depicts Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. The coin's reverse features an owl, and thus explains why the owl is a symbol of wisdom and knowledge to this day.

"Coinage was one of the best ways to spread ideas and propaganda throughout the ancient world," Mudd said. "Roman Emperors would promote their military prowess, generosity and policies through coins. Some emperors even showcased great buildings constructed during their reign."

The exhibit also will feature a case dedicated to gladiatorial coinage, appropriately guarded by a ferocious (but stuffed) lion. Replica statues of Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus watch over the coinage of Rome, while other artwork includes replica statues of the Venus de Milo and an ancient Olympian, and a painting of the Coliseum, the 50,000-seat Roman arena and inspiration for today's modern sports stadiums.

The Die Is Cast: Money of the Ancient World opens with a free public reception from 5 to 7 p.m. Nov. 9 at the Money Museum, 818 N Cascade Ave. The exhibit is scheduled to close in Sept. 2007.

The Money Museum is open Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Admission is free and group tours are available by calling 719.482.9834.

The American Numismatic Association is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to educating and encouraging people to study and collect money and related items. With nearly 33,000 members, the Association serves the academic community, collectors and the general public with an interest in numismatics.

The ANA helps all people discover and explore the world of money through its vast array of programs including its education and outreach, museum, library, publications, conventions and seminars.

For more information, visit www.money.org, or call 719-632-COIN.