

El brillo de la apariencia

Joyería romana en *Augusta Emerita*



CONSORCIO
CIUDAD MONUMENTAL,
HISTÓRICO-ARTÍSTICA
Y ARQUEOLÓGICA
MÉRIDA

"Now we suffer the ills of a long peace. Luxury has come upon us, more corrosive than weapons, and it takes revenge because we have conquered the world."

JUVENAL, *Satires* VI

THE BRIGHTNESS OF APPEARANCE.

ROMAN JEWELRY IN *AUGUSTA EMERITA*

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The brightness of appearance.

Roman jewelry in *Augusta Emerita*



Presentation

The Mérida Monumental City Consortium commemorates the 25th anniversary of its creation this year, 2021. It has spent 25 years protecting, researching, conserving, and promoting the Historic-Archaeological Complex of Mérida, a World Heritage Site.

To commemorate this anniversary and fulfill our obligation to share knowledge, we thought the best way to do so was to publish this online book, **"The Brilliance of Appearance."**

"The Brilliance of Appearance" showcases the history and unique features of 80 pieces of gold, silver, bronze, amber, jet, and other materials crafted during the Roman era. These outstanding examples of Roman goldsmithing, contextualized, were found during the archaeological excavations the Consortium conducts daily in Mérida, the former *Augusta Emerita*.

These pieces, dating from between the 1st and 4th centuries AD, reflect models that combine the symbolism of metals, the magical and healing power of gems, and a fascination with amulets, among others. In all of them, Roman culture absorbed Greek, Egyptian, and even Celtic influences, producing models that would stand out for their beauty in any modern shop window.

"The Brilliance of Appearance," led by the Outreach team, is the result of the work carried out by all the professionals of the Consortium of the Monumental City of Mérida and those from various institutions who have worked and continue to work at the Mérida Archaeological Site.

Felix Palma Garcia
Director of CCMM

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The brightness of appearance

Introduction

"Those whom you consider fortunate, if you see them not in what they show, but in what they hide, are miserable, sordid, clumsy, painted externally no more than the likeness of the walls of their houses; this is not authentic and solid happiness: it is a crust, and still a thin one."

SENECA, *On Providence*.

The archaeological objects we present here are a select collection of previously unpublished materials from the archaeological excavations carried out at the Mérida site by the Consortium of the Monumental City of Mérida. The first selection included a total of 165 studied pieces, those we felt could best help us tell our story: *the brilliance of appearance*. Although at times our characters, the pieces, forced us to give the narrative unexpected twists.

Of the 165, we selected 80 pieces, the most representative of each model or the most complete, the most unique, and we opted for the largest number of preserved raw materials, from the gleam of gold to the modest piece of bone. Unfortunately, materials such as leather, wood, or the natural fiber threads used to make various objects are not preserved in Mérida.

All the pieces are small objects of personal adornment that tell us, in chronological order, about the tastes and fashions of the men, women, and children who lived in the Roman provincial capital, *Augusta Emerita*. But they also all carry a significant symbolic meaning. They were used for their power as protective amulets against envy, the *fascinum*, or the evil eye. The deeply superstitious Roman people knew how to find protection against witchcraft, spells, the evil eye, and other malignant forces not only in raw materials (gold, silver, iron, amber, jet, precious stones), but also in the colors (gold, red, green, blue), shapes (snake, phallus, crescent moon), and designs of ancient amulets or those used by the people of newly conquered territories (seals depicting the Egyptian god Serapis).

The 80 pieces come from archaeological excavations carried out from 1986 until practically the present day; from the final years of the Board of Trustees to the creation of the Consortium and its 25-year history. The 80 pieces have been documented in archaeological contexts. Some were found in abandoned levels of a small Roman dwelling to the south, on the outskirts of *Augusta Emerita*. Others come from the levels of dumps and garbage dumps, where they were thrown among the waste or rubble of the houses and buildings of a Roman city undergoing constant remodeling and change. But the vast majority of the pieces come from closed contexts: the tombs in which they were deposited between the 1st and 4th centuries AD, following the ritual prescribed by Roman religion and customs. They remained buried and intact beneath the soft earth.

But let's return to the protagonists of *The Brilliance of Appearance*. The objects have told us their own story: when they were made, what material they were made of, their size, their color and shape... But as archaeological pieces, they have described much more to us. They have told us who made them and why, where they came from and where they ended up, the tastes of the people who used them for their economic or emotional value, and what objects they needed to be happy or feel protected and accompanied, both in their daily lives and in their afterlife. The narrative of some pieces has been overwhelming, that of others so terse that we have been forced to ask for help from classical authors, Greek and Roman writers.

By reading and rereading his works, we have found answers that have allowed us to present a truthful explanation of his story.

The taste for brilliance and the cultivation of appearance in the society of *Augusta Emerita*, as throughout the Roman Empire, went beyond personal adornment to reach the adornment and appearance of private buildings: tombs and houses, imitating the richness of the materials that decorated public buildings.

Although the entire Roman imperial population held very similar beliefs and superstitions, the social, legal, and economic status of men, women, and children, free and slave, was not the same for everyone. Not everyone could acquire or wear amulets and symbols transformed into beautiful, highly valuable jewelry. And then, as now, even in private construction, imitation, deception, and the display of what appears to be something other than reality were used.

I. The brightness of appearance in Roman objects of personal adornment

1

Hoop earrings with pendant

Chronology:

1st century

Material:

gold

Dimensions: 1.3

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2007

The ancient Romans reserved gold to reward military victories, and in early times, austerity in personal adornment was encouraged as a symbol of the essence of Roman customs.

In the words of the poet Juvenal (1st century): *"Luxury is worse even than weapons and constitutes nothing more and nothing less than the revenge of the world subjected to Rome."*

From the reign of Emperor Octavius Augustus,
(between the year 27 BC and the year 14 AD),

Thanks to peace in the conquered countries and contact with other cultures, an excessive taste for luxury became widespread and grew throughout the 1st century.

If you look at these simple closed hoops, created with knotted gold threads,

You will see that they have several turns around the closure.

This type of jewelry was intended to be worn permanently.

One of the rings retains part of a spiral gold wire pendant that was used to hold some type of ornament that has now disappeared.

The earrings belonged to a girl buried by the rite of inhumation in a grave dug in the ground.

As the only funerary object to accompany her on her journey to the afterlife, she carried a ceramic vessel made in *Augusta Emerita*.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Juan Antonio Aranda Cisneros.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Aranda Cisneros, JA, 2017: New burials belonging to the eastern funerary area of *Augusta Emerita*.

Archaeological survey of a trench on Safo Street (Mérida), *Mérida archaeological excavations. 2006-2008*, 12, 787-800.



2

Decorated hoop earring

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

gold

Dimensions: 2.5

cm in length

Year of discovery:

2008

This gold wire hoop, sealed with several turns around the clasp, was made with a gem, now lost, that fit into the quadrangular box soldered to the hoop.

It hangs from a stem decorated with three gold balls that would end with some inserted beads.

For the Romans, gems could be precious stones, semiprecious stones, or glass imitations. Their widespread use was due to the attributes they attributed to these materials as amulets and therapeutic objects, and to the influence of Etruscan, Greek, and Egyptian models.

The piece you are observing appeared accompanying the deceased whose ashes were deposited in a simple grave dug in the ground.

The other objects placed inside the tomb

There were six needles and a coin, all of them made of bronze.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Carmen Pérez Maestro.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



3

Hook earrings

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

3.1 cm in length

Year of discovery:

2012

In imperial Rome, owning gold jewelry was a symbol of prestige, as desired as owning land.

It was customary to display them, in the greatest possible abundance, when attending all types of social events, except funerals.

This is reflected in the words of the historian Titus Livy (1st century):

"What else do women do without in mourning, except purple and gold?"

Notice the hook on these earrings made in the shape of an "S", so that they can be put on or taken off easily.

The hemispherical case, with a decorated edge, contained a gem, now lost.

The piece is completed with a stem decorated with three gold balls, the end of which once housed a bead.

These earrings, two rings and a chain with a pendant, all made of gold, were the jewels that their owner continued to wear in the afterlife.

His ashes were placed in a brick box with several glass and ceramic containers and a bronze coin.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Félix Palma García.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Palma García, F., (ep): A Roman road and funerary area linked to the villa of Araya. Archaeological intervention at Km 57 of the Mérida-Esparragalejo road, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 2012-2014*, 14.



4

Garnet earrings

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

gold and garnet

Dimensions: 2.7

cm in length

Year of discovery:

2012

This pair of earrings was part of a cremation burial, which included a pot, a small jug, and a common ceramic bowl.

They are made from a ring of gold wire knotted several times around the clasp. They retain a circular box containing a garnet, worked in a conical shape, a type of carving common in Roman times.

Garnet was widely used in jewelry in its various shades ranging from orange-red to reddish brown, and there were even yellow and green garnets.

The “piropo” variety stands out, with an intense red hue that resembles a ruby.

For the Romans, garnet, like all red stones,

It had healing properties against blood diseases.

Used as an amulet, it increased the courage and security of the person who wore it.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Félix

Palma García.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Palma García, F., (ep): A Roman road and funerary area linked to the villa of Araya. Archaeological intervention at Km 57 of the Mérida-Esparragalejo road, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 2012-2014*, 14.

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5

Double-clasped earrings

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century to
the middle of the 2nd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

1.2 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2014

The Romans did not contribute any major innovations in gold working, and followed Greek and Etruscan models in the production of their pieces. Due to the scarcity of this metal, in early Roman times, women could only possess half an ounce of gold (13.7 grams). The *Oppia* Law (3rd century BC) repealed the prohibition.

The simplest earrings were hoops: closed ones, which were difficult to remove once worn, and open ones, which had a loop and a hook to open them and easily remove them from the ear hole.

These simple closed hoop earrings are made with gold wire. Note the detail of the closure.

It is complicated by a double turn of the thread around it. They were found in a cremation burial, inside a brick box, along with glass and ceramic containers.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Eulalia Gijón Gabriel.

Archaeological excavation published

in: Gijón Gabriel, E., (ep): Archaeological intervention on the site of the former “Hernán Cortés” barracks in Mérida (Campaign 2012-2013), *Mérida excav. arqueol. 2012-2014*, 14.

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6

Clip-on earring

Chronology:

between the end of the 1st century
and the beginning of the 2nd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions: 2

cm in length

Year of discovery:

2007

This S-shaped hook earring features a circular box containing a small garnet.

At the bottom of the box hangs a gold thread adorned with three balls.

This piece, in the style of today's clip-on earrings,

It was worn without piercing the ear.

It was found along with glass containers, ceramics and a bronze mirror,
accompanying the ashes of a grave dug in the ground.

Earrings found in Roman-era burials are associated with women and girls.

It was not common for men to wear this adornment, as it was
considered a manifestation of foreign peoples.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Ana
Belén Olmedo Grajera.

Published archaeological intervention: Heras

Mora, F.J., Olmedo Grajera, A.B. and C. Pérez Maestro, 2007: Urban dynamics in the northern suburb of
Augusta Emerita. Diachronic synthesis of the excavations in the so-called Corralón de los Blanes, *Mérida*.
Archaeological excav. 2006-2008, 12, 707-745.

The brightness of appearance



7

Earring with amulet

Chronology: 1st
and 2nd centuries

Material:
gold

Dimensions:
1.4 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:
2000

Roman jewels were sometimes powerful talismans.

This piece, found in the grave of a young child, was considered one of the best antidotes against the evil eye.

Representations of a phallus, known as *fascinum* in Latin, They were used as a powerful protection against the fascinating gaze that caused evils and misfortunes.

The *fascinum* had no erotic connotations for the Romans. They associated it with fertility and renewal, while also granting it the power to attract good luck. It was very common to find them decorating rings and pendants.

In this case, the schematic representation of the phallus appears suspended, by means of a simple ring, on a ring of gold wire sealed with several turns around the clasp.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Ana
María Bejarano Osorio.

Archaeological intervention published in:
Bejarano Osorio, AM, 2003: New data on the Early Imperial period funerary area located on the former Campsa site. Archaeological intervention carried out on the site of the former Campsa s/n, *Mérida excav. arqueol.* 2000, 6, 217-240.



8

Double charm earring

Chronology: 1st
and 2nd centuries

Material:
gold

Dimensions: 1.6
cm in length

Year of discovery:
2008

If the representation of a phallus had protective power against evil spells, its union with the fig or immodest hand made it doubly effective.

So widespread was its use as a preventive object among the Romans, which were made of gold, silver, bronze, glass and even iron.

Note how this amulet, which hangs from a gold ring by means of a ring, represents a hand on the far left and a male member on the right.

The piece appeared as part of a cremation burial in a pit that belonged to a young individual.

Along with the earring were placed several glass and rock crystal beads, a bone bracelet, a glass ointment jar, and a bronze rattle.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:
Carmen Pérez Maestro.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

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9

Earring with glass paste

Chronology:

late 2nd century

and the beginning of the 3rd century

Material:

gold and yellow vitreous paste

Dimensions: 1

cm in length

Year of discovery:

2007

The square box stands out in this gold earring, closed at its edges to house the glass that served as decoration.

Notice, on one side, the start of a looped thread where another ornament would hang that is no longer preserved.

During the 3rd century, this model was very popular.

The boxes could be square, round or oval.

The filling was often made of glass paste, imitating authentic gems.

The presence of a single earring in the graves is interpreted by some researchers as a sharing between the family and the deceased, thus preserving a memory of the ornament most used by her.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Ana Belén Olmedo Grajera.

Archaeological Excavation published in:

Heras Mora FJ, Olmedo Grajera AB and Pérez Maestro, C., 2017: Urban dynamics in the northern suburb of *Augusta Emerita*. Diachronic synthesis of the excavations in the so-called Corralón de los Blanes, *Mérida. Archaeological excav. 2006-2008*, 12, 707-745.



10

Ringling earrings (*crotalia*)

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

gold and glass

Dimensions: 3

cm in length

Year of discovery:

1989

Earrings with two or more suspended beads produced a characteristic sound when they collided.

For this reason, Roman writers described them as heralding the arrival of wealthy women.

Sometimes its weight was such that it deformed the ears.

The most prized ones had several pearls hanging from them, but due to their high cost, it was common to make them with other materials.

Our specimen is made with glass paste beads and appeared, along with an important gold trousseau, accompanying the burial of a woman placed inside a lead sarcophagus.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

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11

Simple hoop earrings

Chronology:

late 3rd century
and early 4th century

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

1.2 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2007

The taste for earrings continued throughout the Roman Empire, so much so that, in the 4th century, the Fathers of the Christian Church
They wrote against the madness that these jewels unleashed.
However, not all models had to be exaggerated.

These simple earrings base their peculiarity
in the robustness of the gold thread with which they are made.
They were found inside the grave of a three-year-old girl.

Placed on her right arm were two silver bracelets and several glass beads, of various sizes
and colors, joined by a thread, which would form a bracelet.

Notice the difference in size and thickness of this pair of earrings.
Due to the high price of gold, when a piece was lost,
It could be replaced with another that only resembled it.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Ana
Belén Olmedo Grajera.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Heras Mora FJ; Olmedo Grajera AB and Pérez Maestro, C., 2017: Urban dynamics in the northern suburb of *Augusta Emerita*. Diachronic summary of the excavations at the so-called Corralón de los Blanes, *Mérida. Archaeological excav. 2006-2008*, 12, 707-745.



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Twisted thread earrings

12

The Romans considered that behind gold,
The second madness of men was silver.
This mineral was found in almost all the Roman provinces
but the most beautiful came from *Hispania*.

Look at this silver object. It has been interpreted as an earring.
It is made from a twisted silver wire
which has been folded into a loop and the ends intertwined.
The loop was decorated with smooth, coiled threads that lost their ends.

This earring was documented in a cremation grave
in a simple pit next to several glass containers, a circular
bronze mirror and a writing instrument (*stylus*).

Chronology:

1st century

Material:

silver

Dimensions:

2.5 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1996

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Rocío Ayerbe Vélez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Ayerbe Vélez, R. and Márquez Pérez, J., 1998: Archaeological intervention at the Cabo Verde
Street site. Funerary space at the Disco Site, *Mérida archaeological excavations*. 1996, 2,
135-166.

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Closed hoop earrings

13

With the conquest of new lands, they arrived in Rome gold and the taste for showing it off in the form of jewelry. Silver was used more for making tableware and religious objects. However, in archaeological excavations Some personal adornment objects in silver are also identified.

Look at these two silver hoops.
They were found next to a woman's head buried in a grave, with no other object to accompany her to the afterlife. This is one of the simplest types of earrings. The silver thread or wire was bent into a circular shape and its ends curled up on themselves.

Chronology:

2nd century

Material:

silver

Dimensions:

2.3 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2011

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Rocío Ayerbe Vélez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Ayerbe Vélez, R., (ep): New data for the study of the eastern outskirts of *Augusta Emerita*. Archaeological intervention in the former barracks of Hernán Cortés (Mérida), *Mérida archaeological excavations. 2012-2014*, 14.

The brightness of appearance



Hoop earring decorated with molding

14

Bronze has been obtained, since the most remote antiquity, mixing other metals.

Copper and tin are essential, Lead and other minerals in various proportions depending on hardness, strength and color that was intended to be given to the manufactured object.

Look at this closed bronze ring.

One end ends in a blunt point, the other end in double molding.

These earrings were located next to the head in a pit burial and covered with bricks.

These were the only documented objects. They provide a late date. The movement of goods and people at the end of the Roman Empire favored the arrival of objects from the northern peoples to capitals as far away as *Augusta Emerita*.

Chronology:

4th century

Material:

bronze

Dimensions:

3.2 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1996

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Pedro Dámaso Sánchez Barrero.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Sánchez Barrero, P.D. and Alba Calzado, M., 1998: Archaeological intervention on the Anas street road.

Remains of an agricultural and industrial facility in the suburban area of *Augusta Emerita, Mérida*. *Archaeological excavation*. 1996, 2, 211-236.

15

Ring with the head of Athena

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

gold and carnelian

Dimensions:

1.4 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1995

The ancient Romans used only one iron ring, in the left hand, which symbolized his warrior virtue, with the gold reserved for his ambassadors.

Over time, gold rings became recognized on the hands of aristocrats, senators and some powerful men.

Notice the ring in the image. The head of the goddess Athena, wearing a helmet, was engraved on the carnelian stone.

The piece was found alongside other jewelry, amulets and glass containers.

These objects were placed in a cremation burial, in a brick box, excavated within a large funerary building.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Inmaculada Casillas Moreno.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Casillas Moreno, I., 1997: Intervention in the "El Prado" Industrial Estate, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 1994-1995*, 1, 104-114.

The brightness of appearance



16

Ring with running dog

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

gold and carnelian

Dimensions: 1.6

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1995

The Roman emperors granted the gold ring first as a social privilege, then as an economic one, until its use was authorized for all free citizens.

Freedmen could only wear silver ones and slaves could wear iron ones.

The ring in the image formed a pair with the previous one.

The gem, also carnelian, is carved with a running dog.

The Romans wore the ring on only one finger, the ring finger, but over time the whole hand became loaded, until you have three pieces together on your little finger.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Inmaculada Casillas Moreno.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Casillas Moreno, I., 1997: Intervention in the "El Prado" Industrial Estate, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 1994-1995*, 1, 104-114.



17

Hollow ring

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

gold and gem

Dimensions:

2.6 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2009

The Romans, knowing the value of gold,

They were supplied by the ancient mines of Egypt, *Britain* and *Gaul*.

The imperial administration organized the exploitation of the precious metal which was also extracted in *Dacia* and *Hispania*.

Pliny described it as a metal that was difficult to melt.

but could be expanded and stretched.

Notice the striking wide hoop ring in the photograph.

It's just a gold leaf folded over itself, hollow, in which a notch was fitted, now lost.

This type of ring is often found in the funerary deposits of cremation tombs documented in *Augusta Emerita*.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Raquel Rodríguez del Mazo.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Rodríguez del Mazo, R., 2019: Report of the archaeological excavation carried out in the urban development works of SUP-SE-02/202 "Bodegones Sur" (Mérida). A funerary area and a peri-urban *domus* in the southern area of *Augusta Emerita*, *Mérida excav. arqueol.* 2009-2011, 13, 593-624.

The brightness of appearance



18

Ring with owl and olive tree

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

gold and carnelian

Dimensions: 2

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2012

A myth told that Zeus gave Prometheus the first ring with a stone.

The ring was forged from the metal of the ties
who chained him to the Caucasus Mountains.

The gem was a fragment of the rock that deprived him of his freedom.

The simplest shape for an earring or a ring is the circle,
but these jewels were also made following complex shapes.
This ring, now deformed, had eight faces or facets.
A carved gem was inlaid into the chaton.

Two ceramic containers and two glass containers
They accompanied the ashes of a woman buried
with two earrings, a necklace and this gold ring,
confident that she will continue to wear her jewelry in the afterlife.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Félix
Palma García.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Palma García, F., (ep): A Roman road and funerary area linked to the villa of Araya. Archaeological
intervention at Km 57 of the Mérida-Esparragalejo road, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 2012-2014*,
14.

The brightness of appearance



19

Snake-shaped ring

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

gold

Dimensions: 6

cm in length

Year of discovery:

2012

The Romans acquired jewelry not only for its beauty, but also for the magical value they placed on the material from which it was made, the gems, and the design itself.

Notice this ring found next to the previous one.

It is a snake with a flat, triangular head and a cylindrical body with scales.

The snake in ancient times symbolized life and death, eternity, fertility, fecundity and marital fidelity.

Pre-Roman peoples used images of snakes to represent local goddesses such as Ataecina, whom the Romans later identified with their goddesses Proserpina and Ceres.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Félix Palma García.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Palma García, F., (ep): A Roman road and funerary area linked to the villa of Araya. Archaeological intervention at Km 57 of the Mérida-Esparragalejo road, *Mérida archaeological excavations. 2012-2014*, 14.



20

Ring with cabochon

Chronology:

from the end of the 1st century

at the beginning of the 2nd century

Material:

gold and carnelian

Dimensions:

1.85 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2004

The most complete preserved ancient treatise on gems and jewelry

It was written by Pliny the Elder in 1st century Rome.

From him we know that carnelian was called *sarda* or *sardius*,

It was almost transparent and its color ranged from orange-red to red-brown.

The most beautiful stones came from Sardis (Türkiye), Armenia, Arabia, Egypt and India.

In *Augusta Emerita* it is common to find carnelian

in the notches of the different types of gold rings.

Look at this ring. Its band was made with gold wires ending in a

molding that was soldered to the circular box.

Look for the little chaton.

It contains a polished stone with convex or cabochon shapes.

The gem is a brilliant orange-red carnelian.

This jewel was part of an abundant funerary deposit

associated with a single-grave cremation burial.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Juana Márquez Pérez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Márquez Pérez, J., 2017: Documentation of a new section of the Roman road identified as path 7 and the early funerary area generated around its route.

Archaeological intervention carried out on the former site of the Guadiana Hydrographic Confederation, Reina Sofía Avenue, Mérida, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 2006-2008*, 12, 187-203.

The brightness of appearance



21

Ring with satyr

Chronology:

late 1st century

at the beginning of the 2nd century

Material:

gold and jet

Dimensions:

2.7 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2004

Roman jewels, like those of today, were valuable and beautiful.

Sometimes its appeal lay in the contrast of materials.

We prove it in this black jet and yellow gold ring
of which one of the appliquéés with the face of a satyr is preserved.

This ring and the previous one were deposited in the pit
from a cremation grave, possibly double,
next to a bronze mirror, several ceramic and glass containers
and a spinning spindle made of amber.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Juana Márquez Pérez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Márquez Pérez, J., 2017: Documentation of a new section of the Roman road identified as path 7 and the early funerary area generated around its route.

Archaeological intervention carried out on the former site of the Guadiana Hydrographic Confederation, Reina Sofía Avenue, Mérida, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 2006-2008*, 12, 187-203.

The brightness of appearance



22

Ring with decorated hoop

Chronology:

late 1st century to
early 2nd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

1.6 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2002

The Romans sometimes decorated the rim of their rings,
adding beauty and value to the adornment of your fingers.

This ring is made with a simple gold band,
but it shows a rich geometric incised decoration.
The same motif is repeated on both sides of the chaton
creating the false sensation of being soaked.

The jewel was found along with a small silver ring, several glass
objects and a bronze coin,
inside a brick box cremation tomb.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Andrés Silva Cordero.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Silva Cordero, AF, 2005: Specific archaeological discoveries in the Albarregas Valley (Mérida).
Archaeological monitoring of the Albarregas River channeling works. *Mérida, Excav. arqueol.* 2002, 8,
418-430.

The brightness of appearance



23

Children's ring

Chronology:

late 2nd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions: 1.2

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2004

The manufacture of objects with simple design and easy use

It has been repeated throughout history.

The ring you see in the photograph was found among the rubble of a Roman-era landfill. dated to the end of the 2nd century.

Models similar to this one, with a slight thickening that flattens at the top,

We can see them today adorning our children's fingers.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Francisco Javier Heras Mora.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Heras Mora, FJ, 2017: The suburban area of the Roman Circus. Archaeological intervention for the construction of the headquarters of the Guadiana Hydrographic Confederation (Mérida), *Mérida archaeological excavations. 2006-2008*, 12, 171-185.

The brightness of appearance



24

Protective ring

Chronology:

late 2nd century

at the beginning of the 3rd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions: 1.1

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1992

The Roman ring had an important value as a protective object against diseases and spells.

According to Pliny, gold objects intended for children

They prevented against spells and poisons.

This ring was part of a funerary deposit full of children's charms.

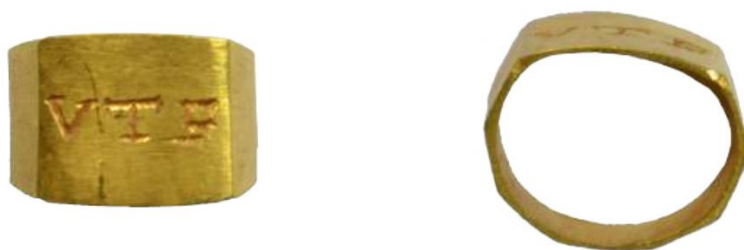
On the wider and more visible side it retains a protective formula.

The letters VT F, *vt(ere) f(elix)*, "use it happy" were engraved wishing its owner that its use would only bring him happiness.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



25

Engraved children's ring

Chronology:

from the 3rd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

1.2 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2003

This ring was the only object who accompanied a young child on his journey to the afterlife. It was found inside the brick box, next to his left hand.

The piece is not circular, it has eight faces and in one of them it was engraved with clumsy strokes and fine handwriting VF, *v(tere) f(elix)*, "use it happily."

In Roman popular beliefs there were numerous ghosts of infertile women or those who lost their children, eager to take other people's babies.

Any protection was insufficient against this ancestral fear.

These rings, with all their symbolism, continued to be used for centuries, adapting the text to Christianity to ask God for happiness.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Guadalupe Méndez Grande.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Méndez Grande, G., 2006: Development of an agricultural and funerary space in the southern part of the city. Archaeological intervention carried out between Tomás Romero de Castilla and Antonio Hernández Gil Streets (Mérida), *Mérida archaeological excavations*. 2003, 9, 313-356.

The brightness of appearance



26

Ring with personal seal

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

1.7 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1991

The main Roman male jewel was the ring,
symbol of the social status and economic power of its owner.
But women also made use of this ornament.

This piece of gold belonged to a woman,
Norbana Severa, born in Lancia (Portugal)
and buried in *Augusta Emerita* at the age of 55.
His body was placed in a lead sarcophagus, and a marble
inscription marked the place of his burial.

Note the details of the decorated ring and the gold chaton.
This design was fashionable throughout the empire during the 3rd century.
Its owner used it as a personal seal.
The letters are engraved in negative, so they
can be read correctly on the wax.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.



27

Ring decorated with gems

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

gold, garnet and blue gem

Dimensions: 2.1

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1991

*"You can see luxury in jewelry, in its different forms,
Some have incorporated stones of exquisite brilliance" (Pliny).*

This gold ring has a small garnet in the setting,
and on each side, on the shoulders, in the shape of a teardrop,
a delicate blue gem.

The previous seal, two gold bracelets, earrings and the ring
These were the objects with which *Norbana* 's most pious mother buried her.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: María
José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.



The brightness of appearance



Bronze and gold ring

28

Look at the image.

A thin gold band spiraled
over a bronze hoop, creating the illusion of a gold ring.

It was found in a cremation grave
next to a mirror and two bronze coins,
several glass containers, a needle and two silver coins.

In *Hispania* there are other examples of rings like this one,
which were also part of funerary deposits.
Gold was a very expensive metal
and jewelry, luxury items that were not within everyone's reach.

Chronology:

1st century

Material:

bronze and gold

Dimensions:

1.6 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2004

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Ana
María Bejarano Osorio.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Bejarano Osorio, AM, 2007: A funerary space generated in the surroundings of the Roman circus of
Augusta Emerita. Archaeological intervention carried out in an area located in the gardens of
the Hipódromo s/n, Mérida *excav. arqueol.* 2004, 10, 131-152.

The brightness of appearance



Silver and carnelian ring

29

The ancient Romans imposed on the defeated peoples the payment of the loot in silver. The silver was lighter and more like daylight, which is why they preferred it for military insignia and, in the form of bracelets, as a reward to illustrious citizens.

Silver jewelry was made, but it could never compete with the shine and luminosity of gold, which does not darken over time.

Look at this silver ring with a carnelian inset. A female figure in profile has been engraved on the stone. Dressed in a tunic and cloak, which covers her to her feet, He carries in his right hand the cornucopia of abundance and in the left, an ear of wheat. A rudder rests on the ground. Represents the goddesses Fortuna and Ceres. This union of goddesses became very fashionable during the Empire.

Chronology:
second half of the 1st century

Material:
silver and carnelian

Dimensions:
1.95 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:
2009

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:
Raquel Rodríguez del Mazo.

Archaeological intervention published in:
Rodríguez del Mazo, R., 2019: Report of the archaeological excavation carried out during the urban development works of SUP-SE-02/202 "Bodegones Sur" (Mérida). A funerary area and a peri-urban *domus* in the southern area of *Augusta Emerita, Mérida*. *archaeological excavation. 2009-2011*, 13, 593-624.

The brightness of appearance



Bronze and blue glass ring

30

Bronze is obtained by combining copper and tin. It was used among peoples before the Romans by melting at a low temperature, being resistant to corrosion and aging, and be harder than wrought iron.

The Romans made large statues of gods in bronze. even small instruments and objects, like this ring with a glass cut that imitates a precious stone. Gems made with this blue glass paste, imitating onyx, They were very fashionable throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

This piece was documented in a rock-cut tomb. Its owner kept it between his fingers from his left hand, next to a bronze coin.

Chronology:

2nd-3rd century

Material:

bronze and blue glass

Dimensions:

2.1 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1993

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



Key ring

31

This curious bronze object is a key ring.
On the ring, at a right angle, an appendage is fixed,
which, following a wide variety of models, acts as a key.

Some researchers propose that they were carried hanging,
by means of a cord, around the neck or belt,
and not placed on the fingers because it would make them difficult to handle.
These rings are found throughout
from all over the Roman Empire in various metals, including gold.

Double burials have been identified in *Augusta Emerita* .
In one of them this ring was documented
along with three ceramic containers and a bone pin.

Chronology:

late 2nd century

at the beginning of the 3rd century

Material:

bronze

Dimensions:

1.9 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1995

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Juana Márquez Pérez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Márquez Pérez, J. 1997: Intervention in the interior of the football stadium, *Mérida*
archaeological excavation. 1994-1995, 1, 80-93.

The brightness of appearance



Bronze signet ring

32

The seal on the Roman ring could be carved into a gem, in vitreous paste or in the same metal as the ring. The signature was represented with figures of gods, heroes, mythological beings, portraits, animals and letters.

This bronze seal consists of two parts: a hoop and a rectangular plate that acts as the bezel. A figurative motif was engraved on it. Its owner was carrying it in his left hand when he was buried, along with two ceramic containers placed at the feet. These types of rings are included in the group called *signacula*, which were to be a sign of legal identity with which public and private documents were sealed.

The Romans believed that a nerve originated from the heart, which was directed directly at the finger "closest to the little finger" on the left hand, hence the custom of wearing the ring on the ring finger.

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

bronze

Dimensions:

2.7 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1999

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Rocío Ayerbe Vélez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Ayerbe Vélez, R., 2001: Excavation of a 3rd-century funerary site near the Vía de la Plata. Archaeological survey carried out on Avenida Vía de la Plata s/n, Mérida. *Archaeological excavation*. 1999, 5, 21-47.

The brightness of appearance



Bronze ring with archer's seal

33

This bronze ring with a seal on the chaton was found among the remains of abandonment of a large artisanal complex related to the production and oil storage.

The seal represents the schematic figure of an archer with the gun on the right and the arrow on the left.

Augusta Emerita, as the provincial capital, There must have been bronze craft workshops.

They would be identified as small facilities divided into two work sectors:

one with the oven to melt the few grams of metal and the stove for annealing.

The other, more visible and closer to the street,

He was dedicated to hammering and finishing the piece.

Behind a small counter, the manufactured objects would be sold.

Chronology:

4th century

Material:

bronze

Dimensions: 2.4

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2005

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Carmen Pérez Maestro.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Pérez Maestro, C. and Chamizo de Castro, J.J., 2015: A developed industrial area outside the city walls and close to the Vía de la Plata. Archaeological intervention carried out on the site of Avenida de los Milagros s/n, Mérida. *Archaeological excavation. 2005, 11* , 111–129.

The brightness of appearance



Iron ring with gem

34

Iron was the most abundant metal in Roman times, according to Pliny, who tells us that on the coast of Cantabria There was a very high mountain full of iron. But there were iron mines “almost everywhere” in the Empire and a great variety of irons due to the difference in soils and climates.

The fragmented iron ring in the picture only the bezel area is preserved, embellished with a carnelian inset.

It represents a hen and a rooster on the ground line.

This ring along with another bronze ring and a ceramic container were the only objects that were deposited in an incineration in a simple pit dug in the ground.

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

iron and carnelian

Dimensions:

2.1 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1997

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Gilberto Sánchez Sánchez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Sánchez Sánchez, G., 1998: Archaeological intervention at the PERI site (formerly Corchera Extremeña). New contributions to the knowledge of the northern necropolis of the city, *Mérida archaeological excavations*. 1998, 2, 167-191.

The brightness of appearance



Bone ring

35

In Roman times there must have been many materials with which to make personal adornment objects. We preserve pieces of gold, silver, bronze, iron, precious and semi-precious stones, amber, jet, and the glass paste, which can imitate everything. Ornaments and amulets made of wood, leather and fabrics have disintegrated over time.

The worked bone has been better preserved. This closed hoop ring without any decoration was found among the levels of abandonment from a small Roman dwelling on the outskirts of *Augusta Emerita*.

Chronology:

1st-2nd centuries

Material:

animal bone

Dimensions: 2.1

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2003

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Guadalupe Méndez Grande.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Méndez Grande, G., 2006: Origin, development and functional changes produced in a site outside the city walls from the 1st century AD to the 5th century AD. Archaeological intervention carried out on a site located between José Echegaray Street, Barcelona, and Lusitania Avenue (Mérida), *Mérida archaeological excavation*. 2003, 9, 357-382.

36

***Bulla*, the children's amulet**

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

2.4 cm in length

Year of discovery:

2004

Bulla means drop of water in Latin, the usual form of amulets that free Roman parents gave to their sons when they were born.

The children carried it with them until they came of age.

Bullae have been found throughout the Roman Empire, made of gold, silver, bronze, ivory, and amber, as well as simple leather bags, cloth bags, or knotted cord bags.

Check out this gold pendant in the shape of a case with five holes inside.

It was found together with 129 pieces, including ceramic objects, glass, bronze, iron, worked bone, mother-of-pearl and amber.

They formed the deposit of a double cremation burial.

They were an adult and a child buried in a large brick box.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Juana Márquez Pérez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Márquez Pérez, J., 2007: Archaeological monitoring of a site located on Tomás Romero de Castilla Street, Mérida. *Archaeological excavation*. 2004, 10, 425-429.

The brightness of appearance



37

A golden *bulla*

Chronology:

end of the 2nd century

at the beginning of the 3rd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions: 2.1

cm in length

Year of discovery:

1992

The *bullae* contained small stones, fruit seeds and even tiny figurines.

to serve as talismans against any harmful effects of magical or supernatural origin.

This hollow, spherical gold amulet,

It was worn around the neck of a child who died prematurely.

The piece accompanied him in the afterlife, along with a gold ring. engraved with the formula *VTF* (*utere felix* in Latin, "use it happily" in Spanish).

In addition to these, other amulets were added to his ashes.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



38

Ball for everyone

Chronology:

4th century

Material:

gold

Dimensions: 1

cm in length

Year of discovery:

2007

Plutarch, a first-century author, questions the origin of the *bulla*, proposing curious answers such as its relationship with the Moon.

This tiny, globular piece of gold was found among the fillings of a large 4th-century pit.

Over time, this amulet was not only used by free children but it extended to all age groups and all social classes: free men, freedmen and slaves. *Bullae* have even been documented in female burials.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Francisco Javier Heras Mora.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Heras Mora, F.J.; Olmedo Grajera, A.B.; and Pérez Maestro, C., 2017: Urban dynamics in the northern suburb of *Augusta Emerita*. A diachronic summary of the excavations at the so-called Corralón de los Blanes, *Mérida. Archaeological Excav. 12*, 707–745.



The brightness of appearance



Ancient coin as a pendant

39

In ancient Rome, coins were made of silver due to the scarcity of gold.
The first silver coin was minted in the 3rd century BC.

This coin shows a circular hole through which it would be hung.
If we divide the coin like the dial of a clock,
The piercing would be at 11 o'clock on the face and at 12 o'clock on the cross.
They would look great either way.

On the face we see the head of Rome with a winged helmet,
On the cross, the goddess Victoria driving a two-horse chariot.
It was minted by the *Marcia* family who claimed descent from the fourth king of Rome,
although it could never be proven.

It was documented inside a child's grave.
A large number of amulets were placed next to the ashes.
and glass containers dated between the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century.

Chronology:
year 134 BC

Material:
silver

Dimensions: 1
cm in diameter

Year of discovery:
1992

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:
María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



Silver coin with gold setting

40

From the 2nd century onwards, the Romans set coins in gold, like gems, turning them into jewelry, a fashion that spread throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries.

This silver coin with a decorated gold setting represents the god Apollo on the face and on the cross some riders giving water to their horses.

It was minted by the *Postumia*

family, one of the oldest lineages in Rome.

It was documented in a child cremation grave,

dated between the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century.

Chronology:

year 96 before
our era.

Material:

silver and gold

Dimensions: 1.9

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1992

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

María José Ferreira López

Unprecedented archaeological intervention

The brightness of appearance



Bronze coins that ring

41

Several coins together were used as pendants and amulets.
by the sound and clinking they made when they collided with each other.

The first coin, with the head of Empress Faustina and the crescent moon
with seven stars, has a quadrangular hole.

Hanging the coin would clearly show the crescent moon.

The second coin depicts the Emperor Marcus Aurelius,
On the cross he appears dressed as a soldier mounted on a horse.

Neither the Emperor nor his wife the Empress,
They would look straight when hung on a chain or cord.

These two coins were found next to the previous ones,
forming part of the personal trousseau of a child cremation
dated between the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century.

Chronology:

- a) years 141 onwards
- b) year 170

Material:

bronze

Dimensions: a)

2.5 cm in diameter

b) 2.5 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1992

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: María
José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



Silver crescent moon

42

The ancient Romans associated the Moon with fertility and healing.
 The crescent moon or *lunula* symbolized femininity.
 It hung from a chain or cord around the girls' necks.
 and protected them from the evil eye or *fascinum*.
 This amulet was associated with girls and women.
 They carried it until their wedding day.
 From the 1st century onwards, its use spread among soldiers,
 in need of any protective object.

Look at this silver crescent moon.
 It was part of the objects that accompanied the ashes
 from its owner, along with several ceramic containers and a bronze
 coin.

Chronology:

2nd century

Material:

silver

Dimensions: 1.7

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2007

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: José
 Vargas Calderón.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Vargas Calderón, J., 2017: New data for the study of the funerary area of "Los Bodegones".
 Archaeological intervention on Urbano González Serrano Street, Mérida. *Archaeological
 excavations. 2006-2008*, 12, 437-450.

The brightness of appearance



Bronze Moon

43

For the Romans, Selene, the Moon, invented the craft of weaving.
and spun the destiny of men and women.

This crescent-shaped amulet

It was made from a thin sheet of bronze.

It was documented in a child burial in a brick box
along with several ceramic containers and a bronze coin.

A circular bone plaque carved with the face of a woman,
four greenish glass beads and this *lunula*
hung from an iron ring.

The relatives, when burying the baby,

They wanted to accompany it with amulets,
also protecting their life in the afterlife.

Chronology:

first half of the 1st century

Material:

bronze

Dimensions: 4

cm in length

Year of discovery:

2004

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Francisco Javier Heras Mora.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Heras Mora, FJ, 2017: The suburban area of the Roman Circus. Archaeological intervention for the construction of the headquarters of the Guadiana Hydrographic Confederation (Mérida), *Mérida archaeological excavations. 2006-2008*, 12, 171-185.

The brightness of appearance



Silver and bronze *bullae*

44

In the images you can see that the materials and shapes with which these amulets were made were diverse.

The first one was made of silver, the ring for hanging it was added, and it was closed by sealing the smooth edges, which are now open.

The second was made with a single sheet of bronze, both the suspension ring and the two sides of the sphere.

To ensure the closure, a star-shaped edge was cut.

Both pieces were documented in cremation burials.

Chronology:

late 1st century

at the beginning of the 2nd century

Material:

a) silver

b) bronze

Dimensions: a)

1.7 cm in length

b) 2.1 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1995

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Juana Márquez Pérez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Márquez Pérez, J., 1997: Intervention in the interior of the football stadium, *Mérida archaeological excavation*. 1994-1995, 1, 80-93.

The brightness of appearance



Shell amulet

45

The pendant of the image was made, in Roman times, from one of the two shells of a marine mollusc. The exterior was worn and polished, inserting a cord through the hole to hang it.

This type of personal adornment is frequently documented in Roman burials.

The one you see was found at the feet of an adult individual next to several ceramic containers and a large quantity of small iron tacks, which prevented the soles of their shoes from slipping.

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

seashell

Dimensions:

4.5 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1999

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Rocío Ayerbe Vélez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Ayerbe Vélez, R., 2001: Excavation of a 3rd-century funerary site near the Vía de la Plata. Archaeological intervention carried out on Avenida Vía de la Plata s/n, Mérida. *Archaeological excavation*. 1999, 5, 21-47.

The brightness of appearance



Seashell pendant

46

In the same funerary area as the previous piece,
This small pendant was documented
made from the shell of a sea snail.

It was found together with a carnelian ball
around the neck of a very young individual,
placed in a coffin and buried in a simple grave
dug into the ground.

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

spiral sea shell

Dimensions:

2 cm long

Year of discovery:

1999

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Rocío Ayerbe Vélez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Ayerbe Vélez, R., 2001: Excavation of a 3rd-century funerary site near the Vía de la Plata. Archaeological intervention carried out on Avenida Vía de la Plata s/n, Mérida. *Archaeological excavation*. 1999, 5, 21-47.

47

Chain with gold moon

Chronology:

late 1st century

at the beginning of the 2nd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions: 35

cm long

Year of discovery:

2012

In *Augusta Emerita* several female burials have been recorded containing a complete set of jewelry. Take a look at this necklace.

It was part of the funeral trousseau that accompanied the ashes of its owner. along with some rings and a pair of earrings, all of gold.

The chain is made with small circular links hooked together. It has a simple "S" clasp, embellished with a decorated plate.

A crescent-shaped pendant adds protective value to this jewel.

In the 6th century pagan amulets were still in use, The Christian Church punished with several years of penance to believers who followed this custom.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Félix Palma García.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Palma García, F., (ep): A Roman road and funerary area linked to the villa of Araya. Archaeological intervention at Km 57 of the Mérida-Esparragalejo road, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 2012-2014*, 14.

The brightness of appearance



48

Gold and garnet necklace

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

gold and garnet

Dimensions:

33.8 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1991

According to Pliny, women in Rome wore gold on their fingers, the neck and ears; braided through their hair, and, on chains or straps, around their waists.

This necklace consists of a loop chain in gold thread and 26 garnet beads carved into disc shapes. In the closure, both the "S" hook and the loop They are decorated with a double spiral.

We know that its owner, *Norbana Severa* It was buried with a very complete dressing. Among the jewels we find two *mills*, name that the Romans gave to necklaces intertwined with gold thread and glass paste beads, pearls and precious or semi-precious stones.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



49

Gold necklace with glass beads

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

gold and green vitreous paste

Dimensions:

34.6 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1991

This spectacular gold loop chain necklace and 32 octagonal green glass beads matched some earrings.

The vitreous paste, which could take on any shape and color, replaced precious stones of a much higher cost. The effect of brightness, color and sound was the same, but the price of the jewel was lower.

This necklace along with other pieces formed the personal adornment of *Norbana Severa*.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



50

Gold chain bracelet

Chronology:

1st-2nd centuries

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

12.1 cm in length

Year of discovery:

2007

The Romans made a clear difference among the bracelets that adorned the wrists and the bracelets that were fixed on the forearms. Both ornaments were part of women's jewelry. Some men might wear a specific type of bracelet, In these cases, these were military decorations.

This gold bracelet, which is preserved complete, It was identified among rubble and some bones in a layer of orange earth over a sewer.

This type of “simple shape multi-chain” bracelet It became fashionable among Roman women in the 1st century.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Francisco Javier Heras Mora.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Heras Mora, FJ, Olmedo Grajera, AB and Pérez Maestro, C., 2017:

Urban dynamics in the northern suburb of *Augusta Emerita*. Diachronic summary of the excavations at the so-called Corralón de los Blanes.

Mérida archaeological excavation. 2006-2008, 12, 707-745.



51

Rigid gold bracelets

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

4.8 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1991

In Roman times, bracelets were made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, bone, glass and jet.

They used to be worn on the wrists, but some They adorned the ankles, like today's anklets.

These jewels are made using a gold band with two closed rings, welded at each end.

Their weight and robustness allow them to be identified as bracelets.

They are part of a woman's personal trousseau placed inside a lead sarcophagus, which we have identified by its seal ring.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



52

Gold and glass bracelet

Chronology:

1st-4th centuries

Material:

gold and blue glass

Dimensions:

14.5 cm in length

Year of discovery:

2012

Observe this loop chain, of gold thread, in which globular beads of different sizes were inserted made of blue glass.

The piece is incomplete and has lost its clasp. It could have been part of a choker, a necklace or a bracelet.

It was found in an archaeological excavation out of its original context.

From the materials and the type of jewel, we can tell that it was manufactured in Roman times.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Eulalia Gijón Gabriel.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Gijón Gabriel, E., (ep): Archaeological intervention on the site of the former "Hernán Cortés" barracks in Mérida, *Mérida archaeological excavations. 2012-2014*, 14.

The brightness of appearance



The brightness of appearance



Glass bracelet with gold pendant

53

Look at these 9 glass paste beads, all octagonal in shape, but of different thickness and size. They have been interpreted as a bracelet. The golden ball would hang from the threads that inserted the beads.

The pieces were found inside a brick box where a total of 61 objects were deposited along with the ashes.

Glass and ceramic vessels, game tokens and dice, bone pins, iron and bronze tools, and a silver amulet are some of the most notable pieces.

Glass, like amber, degrades over time.

It loses its transparency and shine, becomes opaque and whitish, It exfoliates, making it difficult to see its original color.

Chronology:

1st century

Material:

glass and gold

Dimensions:

beads: 0.6/0.9 cm

pendant: 0.65 cm

Year of discovery:

2007

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Juan José Chamizo de Castro.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Chamizo de Castro, JJ, 2021: San Agustín funeral area, a hierarchical space in a northeastern suburb of *Augusta Emerita*, *Anas*, 31-32, 129-153.

The brightness of appearance



Rigid bronze bracelet

54

The snake, in Roman times, represented death, but also eternal youth and the regenerative capacity of nature.

Look at this bracelet.

It was made with a thick bronze wire circular section that narrows towards the ends, where they end with a snake head. They are represented very schematically and with their mouths open.

A ceramic container and two glass ones, Along with the bracelet, they were the only objects found inside a child's grave.

Chronology:
second half of the 1st century

Material:
bronze

Dimensions:
4.3 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:
2005

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:
Pedro Dámaso Sánchez Barrero.

Archaeological intervention published in:
Sánchez Barrero, PD, 2015: Monitoring of Works carried out in 2005, *Mérida archaeological excavations*. 2005, 11, 433-444.

The brightness of appearance



Bronze hoop bracelet

55

This bracelet, made with a fine bronze thread,
It was closed at the ends with a triple loop
and could be opened or closed to fit the wrist.

It belonged to a girl,
whose ashes were placed in a glass urn.
22 clay figurines representing women
of different ages and with different hairstyles,
several ceramic toys similar to our "kitchens" and two bronze
writing tools
were buried next to the urn.

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

bronze

Dimensions:

5.8 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1998

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Eulalia Gijón Gabriel.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Gijón Gabriel, E., 2000: Archaeological Intervention in the Albarregas Valley. New data for the understanding of the Northern Necropolis, *Mérida archaeological excavations*. 1998, 4, 137-159.

56

Golden threads

Chronology:

late 1st century

Material:

gold

Weight: 1.46 gr

Year of discovery:

1991

The Romans had known for a long time the decoration of gold threads on the fabrics, They were called "Athalic fabrics" after the name of the Syrian king Attalus who was said to have invented them.

The use of woven gold spread in the Roman Empire throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

These delicate and fine gold threads were documented in a brick box tomb where the ashes and funerary objects were deposited of two relatives: an adult and a child.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.



57

Gold pin

Chronology:

1st-2nd centuries

Material:

gold

Dimensions:

1.9 cm in length

Year of discovery:

2007

The ancient Romans wore simple clothes, both men and women.

With the entry into Rome of the spoils of war, True treasures of gold, silver, precious stones arrived, luxurious fabrics and attire never before seen by the Roman people.

People with greater economic capacity acquired these items and imposed a fashion full of excesses and appearances despite the laws enacted against such waste.

Note the small gold pin with a hemispherical head and a circular shank that is missing part of its point.

It was found in a layer of orange earth, with rubble, fragments of ceramic vessels, lime, bone and charcoal, that covered a sewer.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Francisco Javier Heras Mora.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Heras Mora . F. J .; Olmedo Grajera, A. B. and Pérez Maestro C., 2017: Urban dynamics in the northern suburb of *Augusta Emerita*. Diachronic synthesis of the excavations in the so-called Corralón de los Blanes, *Mérida excav. arqueol.* 2006-2008, 12, 707-745.

The brightness of appearance



The brightness of appearance



Bone pin

58

This Roman period piece, made of bone,
It is a pin with a circular stem ending in a point and a decorated head.
Look closely at the half-naked female figure.
It represents the goddess Venus coming out of the bath and gathering her hair.
His head has not been preserved, but we recognize the figure
because it appears frequently in other Roman pieces.

The Venus was carved to be seen from the front, the reverse is very rough,
so we believe it was used as a clothes pin
more than a hairpin.

Two pins, a hand spindle, a bone spoon,
several glass containers, a mirror and some bronze tongs,
and a ceramic lamp made up the funerary deposit
which was placed next to the ashes of a simple grave burial.

Chronology:

late 1st century

Material:

bone

Dimensions:

16.7 cm in length

Year of discovery:

2000

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Ana
María Hernández Carretero.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Hernández Carretero, AM, 2003: Excavation of a section of the Cornalvo hydraulic conduit and new contributions to the knowledge of the occupational sequence in the Bodegones area. Archaeological intervention on the site of Lusitania Avenue s/n, *Mérida excav. arqueol.* 2000, 6, 37-56.

I. 1. Amber, shine and magic

59

Amber “trinkets”

Chronology:

1st century

Material:

amber

Dimensions: a)

2.25 cm

b) 5 cm

c) 2.1 cm

d) 1.85 cm

Year of discovery:

1992

In ancient times there were numerous myths about amber, although the Romans already knew that it was the juice of a tree. They called it *succino*, and it came to Rome from India and *Germania*.

Its liquid origin was demonstrated by ants, flies and lizards. which were transparent in many of the amber objects.

It is common to find pieces carved as vegetables simulating chestnuts, dates, figs, acorns, pears, pomegranates, walnuts and almonds.

They were placed in the tombs as offerings to the divinities of the afterlife.

This set of fruits was found in a brick tomb, inside a basket, along with two nuts and an egg.

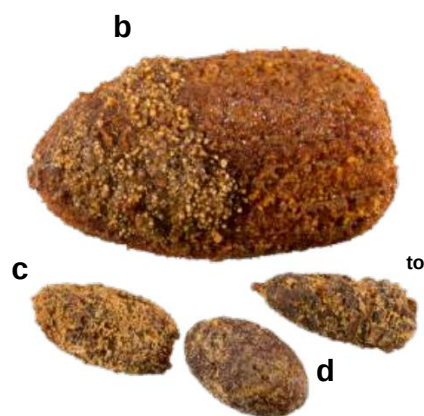
A small rock crystal amphora, a bronze mirror and several toys made up the rest of the funerary treasure.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



60

Amber ring

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

amber and glass

Dimensions:

2.4 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2008

The transparency, beauty and variety of colors, between honey and wine red, They made amber a highly prized material for making jewelry.

This specimen was part of an abundant funerary trousseau composed of numerous glass and ceramic containers.

The set was completed with several bronze objects, a silver pendant and several amber objects, which were placed next to the ashes.

The ring was paired with another identical ring, which was found very fragmented. Its ring is decorated on the outside with very close spiral incisions, which widen towards the chaton embellished with a small piece, white, rectangular, with beveled edges.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Juan José Chamizo de Castro.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Chamizo de Castro, JJ, 2021: San Agustín funeral area, a hierarchical space in a northeastern suburb of *Augusta Emerita*, *Anas*, 31-32, 129-153.



61

Amber ring with a woman's face

Chronology:

second half of the 1st century

Material:

amber

Dimensions:

9.2 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2008

Among the Romans, there was a custom, for therapeutic purposes, of covering the fingers of the hands with amber rings. They were even used as offerings or talismans to promote sleep.

This ring, along with the previous two, are part of the objects deposited at the bottom of a brick box.

On the marble cover were found several ceramic, glass, and bronze containers, as well as game pieces and bone dice.

Look at this gem.

The ring incisions are shallower and farther apart.

The face of a woman has been carved into the chaton.

The lines of the eyes, the shape of the nose and the lips can be seen in it.

This type of ring is a Roman creation, typical of northern Italy.

The face is interpreted as the genius (soul) of the deceased.

Some were true portraits.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Juan José Chamizo de Castro.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Chamizo de Castro, JJ, 2021: San Agustín funeral area, a hierarchical space in a northeastern suburb of *Augusta Emerita*, *Anas*, 31-32, 129-153.



62

Amber figurine

Chronology:

late 1st century

at the beginning of the 2nd century

Material:

amber

Dimensions:

8.2 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1997

The Romans considered amber one of the most valuable gems.

Pliny the Elder, Roman historian (1st century), says of it: *"It fetches exorbitant prices as a luxury item, a small human effigy is more expensive than a living, strong man."*

This small statuette represents a standing child figure, reminiscent of the Erotes or Cupids.

It is incomplete, missing much of its legs and arms.

The piece appeared next to another very similar one, its partner, in a cremation tomb accompanying the deceased. already a copious deposit of pieces of glass, bronze, ceramics and bone. The god Eros represented sleep and death, which is why it is very common to find it in Roman burials.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Gilberto Sánchez Sánchez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Sánchez Sánchez, G., 1998: Archaeological intervention at the PERI site (formerly Corchera Extremeña). New contributions to the knowledge of the northern necropolis of the city, *Mérida archaeological excavations*. 1996, 2, 167-191.



63

Amber beads

Chronology:

late 1st century

to the 2nd century

Material:

amber

Dimensions:

1.9 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1999

Amber was worked by expert craftsmen and masters

in the production of gems, bone and ivory.

Being a softer material, it was easy to carve and decorate.

and polish, producing everything from simple beads to perfect sculptures.

Look at these four oval-shaped pieces.

They all have a longitudinal perforation for insertion.

They were deposited next to an incineration pit, in a pit dug in the clay.

The cache contained ceramic and glass vessels, several bronze needles, bone, and a shell.

In Roman times, amber jewelry, toys and amulets

They were used almost exclusively by women and children

who needed greater protection against curses.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Ana María Bejarano Osorio.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Bejarano Osorio, AM, 2001: Funerary space from the early Imperial period. Archaeological intervention located in the ancient Campsa, Mérida. *Archaeological excavation*. 1999, 5, 243-253.



64

Amber ring with plant decoration

Chronology:

late 2nd century

at the beginning of the 3rd century

Material:

amber

Dimensions:

4.6 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1992

Look at this ring carved from a single piece.

The thick hoop is decorated with plant motifs.

These sumptuous jewels were also made from rock crystal and jet.

This object was part of the personal belongings of a very young child, buried following the cremation rite in a pit dug into the rock.

Along with several glass containers, a

large number of amulets made of bronze, mother-of-pearl, silver, gold and amber were placed as a last attempt to protect the baby from any evil spell.

Amber rings from the *Augusta Emerita* deposit have been documented only in cremation burials.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



65

Hare-shaped pendant

Chronology:

late 2nd century

at the beginning of the 3rd century

Material:

amber

Dimensions: 3

cm in length

Year of discovery:

1992

The representation of rabbits and hares became a protective amulet for Roman children.

Because of their nocturnal habits, they were associated with the Moon.

and they symbolized vigilance, by sleeping with their eyes open.

It is very common to find them represented in profile, on children's graves, as pendants or toys.

This amber pendant in the shape of a hare, with its ears back and crouching, it retains its snout, the incision of its eye and its bent legs.

It was part of a rich collection of bronze and glass containers, and silver, gold, amber, and mother-of-pearl amulets deposited alongside the ashes of a baby.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Maria Jose Ferreira Lopez.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.

The brightness of appearance



66

Knotted beads

Chronology:

late 3rd century

Material:

amber

Dimensions:

between 2.5 cm/ 1.2 cm

Year of discovery:

2003

To make necklaces made up of numerous pieces

the use of a complicated system of knots was necessary.

Both the pendants and the ties were essential for the use of the piece.

Notice the numerous pieces that would make up this complex necklace.

210 amber beads, in the shape of teardrops, have been preserved.

crossed by a hole in the narrowest area.

They were recovered as part of the deposit from a cremation grave.

along with glass containers, bone needles and a bronze coin,

all of this inside a brick box.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Guadalupe Méndez Grande.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Méndez Grande, G., 2006: Development of an agricultural and funerary space in the southern part of the city. Archaeological intervention carried out between Tomás Romero de Castilla Street and Antonio Hernández Gil Street, *Mérida archaeological excavation*. 2003, 9, 313-356.

The brightness of appearance



I. 2. Jet objects, the power of the color black

67

Jet bracelet

Chronology:

1st-3rd centuries

Material:

jet

Dimensions:

5.8 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2006

For the Romans, the word *gagates* defined a type of hard, compact, black coal that was used as an ornament and amulet.

The name was reminiscent of

Gages, the Turkish city where it was extracted in large quantities.

Pliny the Elder (1st century) includes it among the gems and describes it:

"black, flat, porous, not unlike wood, light and fragile."

It was also known as *succino niger* or black amber.

Notice this large fragment of an undecorated rigid bracelet.

It was found next to a small dove-shaped whistle.

Both were deposited in a simple incineration pit.

It was the Arabs who called this material jet.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

José Vargas Calderón.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Vargas Calderón, J. and Plasencia Sánchez, M^a. D., 2015: New contributions to the archaeological knowledge of the surroundings of the Basilica of Santa Eulalia.

Archaeological intervention on the site of Cardero Street, No. 3, *Mérida Excav. arqueol.* 2005, 11, 157-17



68

Black stone bracelet

Chronology:

3rd-4th centuries

Material:

slate or schist

Dimensions:

6 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2004

During ancient times, jet was a select and rare material. that the luxury trade reached the entire Empire. Sometimes glass and black stones were also used. to produce the same items at lower prices.

Like all Roman gems, jet had a medicinal/magical value that it still retains. It was used primarily to protect children and women, although jet objects have been found in male tombs.

We do not know who the owner of this bracelet could have been. It was found among the last layers of ashy soils thrown into a Roman landfill, dated between the 3rd and 4th centuries.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Ana María Bejarano Osorio.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Bejarano Osorio, AM, 2007: *A domus extramuros* on the city limits: new aspects of urban planning and the layout of the *Augusta Emerita* wall in the eastern zone.

Archaeological intervention carried out at Hernán Cortés Street, No. 37, *Mérida archaeological excavation*. 2004, 10, 233-256.



The brightness of appearance



Black bone bracelets

69

These three bracelets, almost circular, closed and rigid, They still retain the incised lines of their manufacture. They were found inside a burial tomb next to a ceramic container and a glass container.

These black bone pieces could be the cheap version. which imitated the much more expensive jet bracelets.

Chronology:

2nd century

Material:

bone

Dimensions: 7.5

cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1996

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Juana Márquez Pérez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Ayerbe Vélez, R. and Márquez Pérez, J., 1998: Archaeological intervention at the Cabo Verde Street site. Funerary space at the Disco Site, *Mérida archaeological excavations*. 1996, 2, 135-166.

I. 3. Gems and precious stones, and how they were falsified

70

A tiny green notch

Chronology:

1st century

Material:

gold and green stone

Dimensions:

0.65 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1992

The Romans distinguished gems by their color and brilliance, due to its hardness for carving, its application in medicine and also for its protective capacity against evil spells.

The notch you are seeing is a small green stone. called *smaragdus* in Roman times.

A tiny male figure was carved on it.

who carries a knife in his left hand

with which he has just cut a bunch of grapes,

which he will leave in the basket at his feet.

This piece was deposited together with a large set of amulets that accompanied the ashes of a young child.

Today we would call emerald, green chalcedony and green jasper stones *smaragdus* .

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.



71

Rock crystal pendant

Chronology:

late 1st century

Material:

rock crystal

Dimensions:

1.25 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1995

The Romans believed that rock crystal came from ice.

The finest rock crystal minerals were mined in India, and in various regions of present-day Türkiye and Cyprus.

Cornelio Boccho, chief officer of military engineering and a trusted official of the governor of the province of *Lusitania*, He told Pliny that in this region of Roman *Hispania* There were blocks of rock crystal of extraordinary weight.

Look at this polished stone in the shape of a sphere.

It has a hole that runs through it lengthwise.

and two radial incisions at the base, preventing it from rotating.

It was part of the funerary deposit of a cremation tomb next to several glass containers, two gold rings with insets, a carnelian ball and 34 game pieces.

The best Roman doctors cauterized the wounds with balls of this mineral that received the light.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Inmaculada Casillas Moreno.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Casillas Moreno, I., 1997: Intervention in the "El Prado" Industrial Estate, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 1994-1995*, 1, 104-114.



72

An agate gem

Chronology:

1st-4th centuries

Material:

agate

Dimensions: 2.5

cm in length

Year of discovery:

1996

The Romans improved the difference between light and dark tones of stones with layers of various colors, soaking them in hot honey for several weeks.

This technique allowed for the production of jewelry with greater contrast.

Look at the gem in the photograph.

It shows from dark brown, almost black tones, to light browns, reaching almost white beige.

The light layers were carved with figures on the dark background.

This agate was found among levels of abandonment and destruction dated to the 4th century.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Teresa Barrientos Vera.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Barrientos Vera, T., 1998: Archaeological intervention on the site of San Salvador Street No. 32.

Example of the evolution of urban roads, *Mérida archaeological excavation*. 1997, 2, 103-133.



73

Teardrop pendant

Chronology:

late 1st century

Material:

carnelian and gold

Dimensions: 1

cm in length

Year of discovery:

2000

This teardrop-shaped gem was set in gold.

As a pendant, it was part of the funeral deposit.

from a cremation burial in a pit,

along with numerous bone, glass and bronze objects.

Sardo was the Latin name given by the Romans

to the brown carnelian.

Stones like this, along with agate, onyx, jasper,

and rare gems at the time such as sapphires and aquamarines,

adorned Roman jewelry throughout the 1st century.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Ana María Bejarano Osorio.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Bejarano Osorio, AM, 2003: New data on the Early Imperial period funerary area located on the former site of Campsa. Archaeological intervention carried out on the site of the former Campsa s/n, *Mérida excav. arqueol.* 2000, 6, 217-240.



74

Carnelian beads

Chronology:

late 1st century

at the beginning of the 2nd century

Material:

carnelian

Dimensions: a)

2 cm in length

b) 0.8 cm in length

c) 0.7 cm in length

Year of discovery:

2004

These three carnelian beads, of different shapes and sizes, were inserted into one or more threads

along with some glass beads.

They were found between the feet of a burial, in a tomb dug in a simple pit.

A mother-of-pearl bead and a ceramic jug completed the funeral deposit.

This burial took place among the rubble from a Roman dump where they went to "rest" the least fortunate in Roman society.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Carmen Pérez Maestro.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Pérez Maestro, C., 2007: A landfill/puticulum area from the High Imperial period located outside the city walls in the northeast of the city. Archaeological intervention carried out on the site located at Cabo Verde Street, Mérida. *Excav. arqueol.* 2007, 10, 153-170.

The brightness of appearance



75

Carnelian amulet

Chronology:

late 2nd century

at the beginning of the 2nd century

Material:

carnelian and silver

Dimensions: a)

1.8 cm in diameter

b) 1.5 cm in diameter

c) 1.8 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

1992

Observe these three almost spherical beads made of carnelian of different shades, from the lightest orange to brown.

All three have a central hole where a silver wire was inserted to hang them together as a single piece.

They were part of the rich funerary deposit of a child cremation filled with amulets.

The Romans were very superstitious and protected children from possible curses.

Little amber balls were hung on the girls that used worn parts

or orange beads that were reminiscent of this material.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

María José Ferreira López.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.



76

Carving of Serapis

Chronology:

1st century-3rd century

Material:

carnelian

Dimensions: 1

cm in length

Year of discovery:

2004

For a long time, scholars of Roman gems

They identified the Latin name of the precious stones
with the current names they resembled.

Today we know that many of those terms
They have no translation.

This carving is made of carnelian, a stone that
can vary in color from dark orange
the most translucent orange, which Pliny called *sarda rubra*
or red sardonyx stone.

In Roman times carnelians came from Egypt,
northern Greece, Arabia and India.

It was widely used to make stamps
since the wax where the document was "signed"
It came off very well from this stone.

The profile of Serapis, an Egyptian god, was carved on this piece.
represented with a beard and abundant hair,
in the manner of the Roman gods.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Miguel Alba Calzado.

Unprecedented archaeological intervention.



The brightness of appearance



White glass gem

77

The Romans made glass gems from baked clay molds on which the figures had been printed from an original, previously cut gem. The hot paste of the chosen color was poured into the mold to imitate the precious stone. Outside the mold, the piece was retouched if necessary.

This high-relief glass carving would imitate the *leuchoachates*, name given by Pliny to white agate. The figures represent the fight between Hercules and Antaeus. An ancient myth tells that Antaeus was a giant, who forced travelers to fight him. As the son of gods he had a power: become invisible as soon as it touches the ground. Hercules lifted him into the air to defeat him.

Chronology:
late 1st century

Material:
white glass

Dimensions:
1.95 cm in length

Year of discovery:
2004

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Juana Márquez Pérez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Márquez Pérez, J., 2017: Documentation of a new section of the Roman road identified as path 7 and the early funerary area generated around its route.

Archaeological intervention carried out on the former site of the Guadiana Hydrographic Confederation, Reina Sofía Avenue, Mérida, *Mérida archaeological excavation. 2006-2008*, 12,187-203.

The brightness of appearance



Blue glass gem

78

Look at this blue detail.

"Sometimes they have little bubbles,"

Pliny warns, already in the first century of our era,
on counterfeit precious stones.

Did they try to imitate a sapphire, scarce in Roman jewelry,
with this cobalt blue tinted glass paste?

This small, blemished, lentil-shaped gem,
It was deposited together with four amber beads,
various glass and ceramic containers, bronze needles
and a shell in a cremation grave.

Chronology:

late 1st century

at the beginning of the 2nd century

Material:

blue glass

Dimensions:

1.2 cm in length

Year of discovery:

1999

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Ana
María Bejarano Osorio.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Bejarano Osorio, AM, 2001: Funerary Space from the Early Imperial Period. Archaeological Intervention
on a Site Located in the Former Campsa Street, Mérida. *Archaeological Excavation*. 1999, 5, 243-253.

The brightness of appearance



Snail cover

79

These two small pieces, known as abalone,
They are called opercula and are the covers
with which sea snails protect and close themselves.

On one side, concentric circles show its growth.

The other side resembles a human ear.

Its beauty, peculiarity and its meaning, as an
amulet against the evil eye for children,
explains its use as a jewel in Roman times.

These two opercula were part of the funerary deposit
which accompanied a cremation burial
in a brick box along with 26 other objects.

In *Augusta Emerita* it has been documented in children's graves
and often as a couple.

Chronology:

late 1st century

Material:

shell

Dimensions: a)

2.2 cm in diameter

b) 1.4 cm in diameter

Year of discovery:

2003

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: Juan
José Chamizo de Castro.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Chamizo de Castro, JJ, 2003: The Silver Route: New data on the northern exit of *Augusta Emerita*.

Archaeological intervention on the site located at the corner of Via de la Plata Avenue and Albañiles Street,
Mérida. Archaeological excavation. 2003, 9, 15-35.

I. 4. A final touch

The brightness of appearance



Dolphin-shaped brooch

80

Look at this little brooch, in the shape of a dolphin, which must have adorned the clothes of its owner. The result of the goldsmith's work is very attractive, but it is likely that he had never seen this animal. The body is very rough and schematic, and the number of fins is reminiscent of a fish. The dolphin's tail is shaped like a crescent moon.

In Roman tales of sea stories, Dolphins helped sailors and shipwrecked sailors, and they saved the children with special care.

This brooch was documented in a cremation grave, destroyed by old times.

Chronology:

1st-2nd centuries

Material:

silver and gold

Dimensions:

2.9 cm in length

Year of discovery:

2007

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Pedro Dámaso Sánchez Barrero.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Sánchez Barrero, PD, 2019: The fourth aqueduct of *Augusta Emerita*: the foundation of the *arches* and the funerary area next to a secondary road in the northern area of Mérida, *Mérida excav. arqueol.* 2009-2011, 13, 547-556.

II. The brilliance of appearance

In Roman architecture, some examples

81

Marble floor of the *Sacred Hall*

Chronology:

late 1st century

Material:

ornamental rocks
imported from the East
and North Africa, and
local rocks

Year of discovery:

1934-1936

The word marble comes from the Latin *marmora*, name that the Romans gave to any polished stone had a fine, shiny finish and great value.

In ancient Rome, marble decorated houses as a reflection of the economic and social power of its owner. Emperor Augustus beautified temples and public buildings, turning marble into a symbol of imperial power.

Observe the different colored plates of this soil which still decorates a room known as *the Aula Sacra*, located on the central axis of the Portico of the Roman Theatre. Yellow, orange and blackish marble and white alabaster were used, stones of beautiful colors, from Greece and North Africa.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Antonio Floriano Cumbreño.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Floriano Cumbreño, A., 1944: Excavations in Mérida (Campaigns of 1934 and 1936), *Spanish Archaeological Archive*, LV, 151-186.

The brightness of appearance



82

The white marble of the Stage Front

Chronology:

1st century

Material:

Estremoz marble

(Portugal)

Year of discovery:

1910-1915

Augustus found a Rome of bricks

and turned it into a city of marble.

The elites of the great capitals of the Roman Empire
built in the image and likeness of the capital.

Augusta Emerita, capital of the province of *Lusitania*,
It was supplied with marble from large local quarries
that produced a good quality stone.

This carved plaque decorates the top of the first floor
from the stage front of the Roman Theatre.

Look for the palmette leaves, open like a fan.

From below rise some sinuous stems with the end twisted
where two bell-shaped flowers
hang on one side, one inside the other.

On the other side of the palmette hangs an acanthus leaf.

These three elements would be repeated throughout the entire frieze.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Maximiliano Macías Liáñez and José Ramón Mérida Alinari.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Mérida, JR, 1915: The Roman theatre of Mérida, *Journal of Archives, Libraries and Museums*, 1-38.



83

Colored marbles in the *Curia*

Chronology:

1st-2nd centuries

Material:

marble

Year of discovery:

2003

Look at these marble fragments of various colors.

They are the remains of the plundering of the thin plates with which the floor of the *Curia* building was decorated or Municipal Plenary Hall from the Colonial Forum of *Augusta Emerita*.

Most of these marbles come from the eastern Mediterranean.

Fragments a, b, and c originate from imperial quarries in Türkiye and the Greek islands.

The remaining two, d and e, resemble marbles from Greece and Algeria.

The beauty and high price of these imported materials favored the search for similar marble in nearby regions.

Each color came to have its own meaning who used imperial power for his propaganda.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Rocío Ayerbe Vélez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Ayerbe Vélez, R.; Barrientos Vera, T. and Palma García, F., 2009: The Forum of *Augusta Emerita*. Genesis and evolution of its monumental enclosures, *Annexes of the Spanish Archaeological Archive*, LIII, Mérida.

The brightness of appearance



The brightness of appearance



The jewel of Maria Voconio

84

This standing female figure, dressed in a tunic and cloak,
It represents Maria Voconio, whose
ashes were placed in a ceramic urn.
at the foot of the painting.
It is in its original place, inside the Columbariums,
the *Voconio* family funeral building .

Mary was painted on a pedestal, with the same posture and gesture
that the marble sculptures of Roman women
belonging to families of high economic and social position.

This woman is depicted wearing a luxurious necklace.
tarnished by the passage of time.

Chronology:
early 2nd century

Material:
wall paint

Year of discovery:
1926-1927

Responsible for the archaeological intervention: José
Ramón Mélida Alinari and Maximiliano Macías Liáñez.

Archaeological intervention published in:
Mélida, JR and Macías M., 1929: Excavations at Mérida. The Circus. The Columbariums. The Baths.
Sculpture. Miscellaneous Finds. Report on the Work Carried Out in 1926 and 1927, *Higher Board of
Excavations and Antiquities*, 6, Madrid.

The brightness of appearance



Imitation marble on the walls

85

The fashion of decorating houses with expensive marble
It reached the most remote provinces of the Roman Empire,
where the owners of the houses lacked assets
with which to pay for materials with such high prices.
The solution was found by covering the walls
with paintings that imitated the valuable *marmora*.

This is a hallway in the so-called House of the Mithraeum.
Look for the large rectangles that rest on their longer side.
They have a central circle inscribed in a rhombus.
The narrow rectangles, interspersed, rest on their shorter side
and they also have inscribed rhombuses and circles.
All figures, rhombuses, circles, rectangles and triangles,
They imitate veined marble slabs by means of the interweaving of lines.

In *Augusta Emerita*, capital of the Roman province of *Lusitania*,
This type of paint only covers the baseboard of the wall.

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

wall paint

Year of discovery:

1964

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Eugenio García Sandoval.

Archaeological intervention published in:

García Sandoval, E., 1970: The cosmogonic mosaic of Mérida, *XI National Congress of Archaeology*,
Zaragoza, 743-768.

The brightness of appearance



Column that looks like marble

86

Before the Roman Empire had its own quarries,
There were already prominent figures from the city of Rome
who decorated their houses with marble columns
brought from distant lands.

We know from Valerius Maximus, a historian of the 1st century,
that in the year 92 BC Lucius Crassus
He paid 60,000 sesterces for the 10 marble columns
that beautified the patio of his house.

Look at this column, which still adorns one of the
courtyards of the so-called House of the Mithraeum.
Its solid interior is made of grey granite,
which was hidden under a molded lime mortar and painted to look like
marble.
The red color covers the lower, smooth part.
White covers the moldings that imitate a fluted shaft.

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

wall paint

Year of discovery:

1964

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Eugenio García Sandoval.

Archaeological intervention published in:

García Sandoval, E., 1970: The cosmogonic mosaic of Mérida, *XI National Congress of Archaeology*,
Zaragoza, 743-768.

87

The Jewels of Venus

Chronology:

3rd century

Material:

colored stones

Year of discovery:

1962

The Romans adorned the images of their gods with jewels,
as is still done in some current religions.

Look at the figure, it is part of the floor decoration
from one of the rooms of the so-called Amphitheater House.

It was made with small colored square stones, drawing an almost
naked female model.

It is Venus, the Roman goddess of love and beauty.

Here its natural attractiveness was enhanced
with a golden diadem covering her head.

A bracelet adorns each arm and a

cloak, trimmed with gold thread, covers his back.

He treads the earth with the same sandals as mortals.

In the scene he is accompanied by the god Eros, a winged child,
who helps him by offering him the objects he takes out of the basket.

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

Eugenio García Sandoval.

Archaeological intervention published in:

García Sandoval, E., 1964: Archaeological excavations in the Mérida area: the House of the Amphitheater,
VIII National Congress of Archaeology, Zaragoza, 469-477.

García Sandoval, E., 1966: Report on the Roman houses of Mérida and excavations in the "House of the
Amphitheatre", *Archaeological Excavations in Spain*, 49, 13-45.

The brightness of appearance



88

Richly dressed woman

Chronology:

late 4th century

Material:

mural

Year of discovery:

1916

Look at this painted figure, now incomplete.

It still preserves traces of its rich Roman clothing.

He wears a tunic adorned with gold on the lower band
on which large oval medallions have been embroidered.

As accessories she wears a gold necklace with emeralds,
adorns her right wrist with a gold bracelet.

They adjust the anklets of the rich metal
on the cord that ties together simple leather sandals
that are still in fashion.

This painting would represent the owner of the house
or his daughter, richly dressed, presiding over the main room
where friends and clients would be received.

He is still waiting for you at the "House of the Theater."

Responsible for the archaeological intervention:

José Ramón Mélida Alinari and Maximiliano Macías Liáñez.

Archaeological intervention published in:

Mélida, JR, 1917: Excavations at Mérida. Report on the work carried out. A Roman-Christian basilica house, *Higher Board of Excavations and Antiquities*, 4. Madrid.

The brightness of appearance



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Abbreviations for periodical journals:

AEspA = Spanish Archaeological Archive.

Annexes of AEspA = Annexes of the Spanish Archaeological Archive.

BSAA = Bulletin of the Art and Archaeology Seminar.

DDM = Fashion Design. Theory and history of clothing.

Mérida archaeological excavations = Mérida Archaeological Excavations.

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Conjunto arqueológico de Mérida
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