

## SPRING 2001 GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

### A JOURNEY THROUGH IMPERIAL ROME

FEBRUARY 8–28, 2001

The exhibition is notable for its display of twenty objects never shown in public before. Some are small and everyday, but together they offer testimony to the kinds of objects that may still be recovered from one of the most excavated and damaged sites of ancient Rome within a very short campaign of excavation.

None of these works and fragments have ever been shown before. Although the Imperial Fora surely count amongst the most excavated sites in Rome -- and also amongst those most damaged by misconceived projects for urban renewal -- the exhibition provides eloquent testimony to the kinds of objects that may still come to light, even in the course of a few years. All but the two medieval fragments, excavated in the Forum of Nerva in 1995, were found between the end of 1998 and 1999. Some of the objects on display are indeed humble and quotidian, such as the lamps, the little weights, the spoon and the stylus, but others convey a sense of the monumental decoration of the Fora, most notably the magnificent statue and head of a Dacian prisoner from Trajan's Forum. Both these and the other smaller busts and fragments are still able to evoke the extraordinarily high quality of Roman imperial sculpture, while the three marble slabs, incised with portions of an ancient map of the city, are landmarks in the history of cartography and urban planning.

As testimony to the quality of earlier finds made elsewhere in the city, two further works, perhaps the most beautiful in the exhibition, have also been lent by the Roman Soprintendenza. First comes the beautiful well-kerb (puteal) of pentelic marble, with its lovely low-relief carvings of dancing satyrs and maenads, and then the base of a candelabra, with its graceful relief sculptures of Apollo, Latona, and Minerva adorning three of its sides. Both works come from the Augustan period, and provide evidence of the subtlety, elegance and high classicism of sculptural reliefs at the time.