

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART



Bit of a variety here, let's start with the Assyrian ivory carving of the Eye of Horus. Originally, this piece was probably used as a blinker to protect a horse's right eye. Two drilled holes suggest that it was fastened to another material, perhaps a textile or leather backing that has disintegrated. Ivory pieces like this one may have been used ceremonially, as votive dedications or as processional regalia, rather than in battle.

Again, honorable mentions go to the bit with horse cheek-pieces and the vessel in the shape of a horse's head. If anyone has seen 300, particularly the scene where the Persians ride into Sparta on the most beautiful and imposing horses I have ever seen, the vessel is from that place and time. Maybe one of them carried it with him. We'll never know! The Iranian bit is about the same age as the snaffle bit in the Greek and Roman section. It's interesting to see how much more ornament there is on this one, though maybe it was not meant for everyday use.



1



2



3

1

Title: Vessel in the form of a horse's head

Period: Achaemenid

Date: ca. 5th century B.C.

Geography: Iran

Culture: Achaemenid

Medium: Silver, gilding

Accession Number: 47.100.87

On View: Gallery 405

2

Title: Horse blinker carved in relief with a wedjat eye

Period: Neo-Assyrian

Date: ca. 8th century B.C.

Geography: Mesopotamia, Nimrud (ancient Kalhu)

Culture: Assyrian

Medium: Ivory

Accession Number: 60.145.4

On View: Gallery 404

3

Title: Horse bit with cheekpieces in form of a horse

Period: Iron Age

Date: ca. 8th–7th century B.C.

Geography: Iran, probably from Luristan

Culture: Iran

Medium: Bronze

Accession Number: 57.51.40a–c

On View: Gallery 404