



## Out of the Archives

Dozens of Centrale Montemartini's previously archived antiquities see the light of day. **Tiffany Parks** takes a look.

It's one of the most extraordinary and underrated museums in Rome, and it's just gotten even better. **Centrale Montemartini** is a fascinating mix of old and new, of ancient splendor and industrial heft. It was born in 1997 when the Capitoline Museums (arguably the most important museum in the city outside the Vatican) ran out of space to display their overwhelming collection of antiquities. An abandoned turn-of-the-century thermo-electric power plant located in the industrial neighborhood of Ostiense provided a convenient receptacle for the collections' overflow. It may at first seem an unlikely pairing, but the behemoth black turbines and engines provide a stunning backdrop for the Greek and Roman statuary, intricate mosaics, bronze sculptures, Egyptian icons, and sarcophagi displayed there. Located just far enough from center to be decidedly off the well-trod tourist track, Centrale Montemartini is pleasantly quiet and nearly deserted most times of day.

Ironically, or perhaps inevitably, Centrale Montemartini's own collection has continued to grow to the point that hundreds of rich artifacts have been

resigned to the museums' archives to languish in obscurity, or at most, to make an appearance during a temporary exhibition. But thanks to a new rearrangement of the collection, several important and rarely seen pieces have now been integrated into the permanent collection starting this summer. One of the most stunning is the funerary "trousseau" of Crepereia Tryphaena, a young girl who died just before her wedding and brought into her grave a series of fine jewelry in gold and precious stones, valuable ancient toiletries, and, most remarkably, a delicate ivory doll with jointed limbs, a true work of art dating to the 2nd century AD. Three Republican-era polychrome mosaics are on display for the first time, one of them a highly unusual depiction of a maze inside a city wall, dated between 100 and 80 BC. Another exquisite work is the floor mosaic depicting The Abduction of Persephone. In addition, the celebrated basanite bust of Agrippina the Younger—on loan from the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen—is on temporary display beside the body to which it was originally attached, part of the original Montemartini collection.

RITRATTO DI AGRIPPINA MINORE. COPENAGHEN, NY CARLSBERG GLYPTOTEK INV. IN 753; BASANITE MOSAICO CON LEONE E AMORINI. ANT. COM. INV. 32361; TESSERE DI MARMO E PASTE VITREE MOSAICO CON SCENA NILOTICA. ANT. COM. INV. 4956; TESSERE DI MARMO E PASTE VITREE