



Creative Freedom A Perspective from Ancient Rome

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Glass perfume bottle, 1st century CE
height: 9.2cm depth: 4.6cm (rim 1.6cm)
Metropolitan Museum, New York, 17.194.164





Hylke de Boer



Friederike
Brunzema



Laura
Burema



David Lettink



Aymon
Cutileiro

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Roman Making and its Meanings:
Representations of Manual
Creation in the Literature and
Art of Imperial Rome

An ancient poem about glassblowing



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... building for men ...

He first heated the very point (of the iron), then snatched from nearby an idle lump of (glass?), (which he) expertly laid inside the hollow furnace. As it tasted the strong fire, the crystal melted like wax under the blows of Hephaestus. And as he blew in the liquid air from his mouth, the man modulated its breath, as if trying out the pleasurable art of the pipe. The glass received ... arched (into a circle?) in front of him, taking the shape of a sphere. It would then receive another impulse of divine (breath?), for repeatedly he would blow air in, whirling it like a shepherd does with his crook ...

(translation: Perale)



Sequence of actions of the glassblower

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Collaborating with (the god of) fire

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Glassblower as divine creator

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Glassblowing compared to flute-playing

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Terracotta oil lamp from
Asseria (Dalmatia), ca. 70 CE.
Archaeological Museum Split,
Fc 1094-30



glassblower



furnace



glassblower



furnace

glassblower

colleague
(working
the
bellows?)



Fragment of ancient papyrus with handwritten text in a cursive script, likely Demotic or Hieroglyphic.



