



MUSEUM
OF CYCLADIC
ART
NICHOLAS AND DOLLY
GOULANDRIS FOUNDATION

PRESS RELEASE

MUSEUM OF CYCLADIC ART IN ATHENS

Chaeronea, 2 August, 338 BC: A day that changed the world

14 December 2023 to 31 March 2024

**An exhibition about the day that brought Alexander the Great
to the front line of history**

"When after the battle Philip was inspecting the dead, he stood in the place where the three hundred lay dead, drawn up opposite the sarissas [the long spears of the phalanx] and mingled with other bodies, he expressed admiration for them and learnt that it was the company of lovers and beloveds. Then he wept and said: 'May those who suspect that these men may have done or suffered something shameful perish in a bad way.'"

Plutarch, Life of Pelopidas 18, 5

One of the most important historical events of Greek antiquity – the battle of Chaeronea that brought Alexander the Great onto the political stage and laid the foundations for the creation of the modern world – is explored in the new exhibition '**Chaeronea, 2 August, 338 BC: A day that changed the world**' organized by the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens, in collaboration with the Hellenic Ministry of Culture. The exhibition, which will run **from December 14, 2023 to March 31, 2024**, is part of the new series of archaeological exhibitions '**Human Histories**' and is presented at the **Stathatos Mansion** and the **Neophytou Douka Wing**, under the supervision of the Scientific Directors of the Museum **Dr. Panagiotis Iossif**, Professor at the Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands, and **Dr. Ioannis Fappas**, Assistant Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

The exhibition highlights the importance the Battle of Chaeronea had in ancient times, at the transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic period. The latter became an era in which Greek civilization was dominant for centuries and laid the foundations of what we call the Western world. The theme is the battle that opposed the Macedonian army of Philip II against that of the allied Greek cities of southern Greece – and in particular the Sacred Band of Thebes and the army of Athens – a conflict that for the first time brought the eighteen-year-old Alexander to the front line of history: Alexander who was soon to conquer the world with his great campaigns in Asia.

The exhibition includes 240 antiquities and historical documents, drawn from 27 Museums and Institutions from within Greece and four private collections too. Many are exhibited to the public for the first time. Also on display are two marble busts from the Chiaramonti Museum in the Vatican, while an 'Unexpected Visitor' of importance is Andy Warhol's 'Alexander the Great' (1981) loaned from MOMus – the Museum of Contemporary Art.

The starting point of the exhibition is the battle itself, that particular day in August 338 BC, when close to the Boeotian city of Chaeronea the Macedonians under the leadership of Philip II faced the numerically superior allied forces of the Greek cities, under the leadership of Thebes and the political inspiration of the Athenian politician Demosthenes. Philip puts into the hands of the young Alexander the leadership of the cavalry, the body that will face the Theban Sacred Band and eliminate it. The consequences of the battle had an impact on the history of the world: after this battle, the army of Philip and, above all, of Alexander will reach the borders of the known world and bring outstanding wealth to the Greek area from the treasuries of the Persian kings. The Hellenistic period saw the disruption of the traditional political balances of the Greek cities and the redefinition of social structures. City-states are absorbed into a new administrative structure, that of the kingdom, where decisions are no longer made exclusively at the city level. It is a form of administration that closely resembles the member states of the European Union today. This was the period when a 'new man' came to be, one who – as described by Homer – 'knew many states, learned the councils of many people'.

The exhibition allows us to archaeologically 'reach out and touch' Alexander the Great, as has never and nowhere been possible before, at any place or time. Alexander stands out large in History, but not at all in Archaeology. The written sources about him, although composed after his life, are numerous indeed. The archaeological finds that he left behind – items directly or indirectly tied to him – are rare. In Chaeronea, where he was first introduced to the world as the leader of the Macedonian cavalry, one finds the remains of the people who fought alongside him, who accepted his orders that morning of August, even of those who perhaps were killed by Alexander himself. All this evidence is presented in the exhibition for the first time.

In addition to introducing the two worlds that collided, the exhibition presents the burial practices of the two armies: the Polyandron (mass grave) of the 254 Theban members of the Sacred Band with their guardian monument of the Lion of Chaeronea, and the Tumulus of the Macedonians. Special emphasis is placed on the archaeological recovery of the aftermath of battle, highlighting the work of two pioneers of Greek archaeology at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, namely Panagiotis Stamatakis and Georgios Sotiriadis.

As the President and CEO of the Museum, Sandra Marinopoulou, states:

'Why did we decide on the battle of Chaeronea? The one in which the Macedonians of Philip II and the young Alexander confronted Thebes, Athens and their allies? What happened in the middle of that summer of 338 BC in the valley of Boeotia to change the world? The exhibition, although it deals with the battle itself, focuses mainly on its consequences. With this battle, Macedonia was established as a dominant power in Greek affairs and the way was opened for the birth of the Hellenistic world. Democracy and the City State passed into a new era, that of the kingdoms, which laid the foundations for the creation of a way of being that allowed Greek civilization to reach the limits of the then known world. Where matchless wealth, new knowledge and experiences will be offered both to the Greeks and to the other peoples who participated in the new reality born after the victory of Chaeronea. For this exhibition, our two young curators, each holding a different point of view, united their knowledge, creativity and strengths'.

And as the two curators of the exhibition explain in the catalogue: 'Two decisive factors contributed to the selection of this particular topic: it is one of the few cases in the archaeological chronicles where descriptions and information about an event handed down to us by the ancient authors connect with the important archaeological remains of the event itself. An occasion largely beyond the awareness not only of the general public, but also of the archaeological community itself. The second factor is the central theme: the main protagonists of the battle were two of the leading figures of Greek antiquity and world history, Philip II and his son Alexander III of Macedon, whom History has characterized as the Great. In the few square kilometres on the plain of Chaeronea, these two protagonists met one of the most important orators of antiquity, the Athenian Demosthenes... they wrote the fate of the world to come [...]. Our goal was to give the visitor the experience of a modern approach to an ancient event, also examining the way it has lived on in the collective memory of the Greek nation'.

The exhibition 'Chaeronea, 2 August, 338 BC: A day that changed the world' is the first of a new series of exhibitions of the Museum of Cycladic Art with the title 'Human Histories. Stories, that is, about the life, manners and works of mortals, which influenced the life, perceptions and thinking of later generations. This exhibition is going to tell such a story, based on the testimonies of the ancient sources, and the remains left by its protagonists.

EXHIBITS AND SECTIONS

As mentioned, much of the archaeological evidence in the exhibition is presented for the first time. These are objects from the excavations of the Polyandrium of the Thebans and the Tumulus of the Macedonians. Objects that are either not fully published and known to the academic community, or are held in museums in the wider Greek region. Further, many of the exhibits were comprehensively studied for the needs of this exhibition and are being published for the first time, having been held in storerooms of either the local Museum of Chaeronea or the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

Among the artefacts of the exhibition there stand out the unique burial assemblage of the warrior from Igoumenitsa with its unique iron cuirass and silver-plated helmet, the Macedonian shield of exceptional aesthetic and historical importance with the inscription reading "of King Alexander" – an illicit antiquity from an illegal excavation, the golden staters of Philip, Alexander and his Successors, the bones of the members of the Sacred Band and of the fallen Macedonians, and the material from the unique tomb at Tanagra, a tangible symbol of the importance of the battle within the wider region of Boeotia as well.

Regarding the work 'Alexander the Great' (1981) by Andy Warhol loaned from MOMus – the Museum of Contemporary Art, it is a one of the *Alexander the Great* series realized by Warhol after a commission from Alexander Iola. The *Portrait of Alexander the Great* depicts the earliest 'celebrity' that Warhol immortalized and is the only work created to honour an authentic ancient work of art.

An important part of the exhibition is also dedicated to the presentation of the actual historical documents and reports written by those pioneers of Greek archaeological research, Panagiotis Stamatakis and Georgios Sotiriadis, during their excavations at the Theban Polyandrium and the Macedonian Tumulus at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, respectively. This is done to give the fullest possible picture of the way archaeological research brought to light the very battle itself. Also of interest is the evidence on how the modern Greek state handled the battle and its monuments, as well as its reception by the press of the time. The battle, despite its importance, was quite forgotten until travellers mostly from the end of the 18th century begin to gradually discover it, when the marble fragments of the fallen Lion attracted their attention. References in diaries and pictorial representations aroused the interest not only of the academic community, but also of the local population.

The exhibition is structured in nine sections:

1. The protagonists

- a. Philip
- b. Alexander
- c. Demosthenes

2. The opponents

- a. The Macedonians: The Macedonian phalanx
- b. The coalition of Greek cities: The Sacred Band and Athens

3. Managing the memory of the battlefield

- a. The Polyandrion of the Sacred Band
- b. The Tumulus of the Macedonians
- c. Macedonian burial practices

4. Commemorating the battle in Athens

5. Boeotia and Thebes after the battle

- a. Destruction and reconstruction of Thebes

6. The new Hellenistic world after the battle

- a. The wealth of the Hellenistic world
- b. 'Macedonization' of Boeotia

7. The archaeological rediscovery of the battle (P. Stamatakis and G. Sofiriadis)

8. The modern exploitation of the battle

- a. Travellers
- b. Painters
- c. International, national and local press.

9. The battle of Chaeronea...today

In this last section, an innovative approach to the battle using modern means is attempted, targeting young audiences who do not necessarily often frequent museums. In this section one is able to see a diorama of the Battle of Chaeronea using handmade custom Playmobil figures by the collectors Angelos Giakoumatos and Tasos Pantazopoulos created for the exhibition with the support of Playmobil Hellas as well as a brief narration of the story using comics.

Also in this area, visitors can experience for themselves this pivotal moment in the ancient Greek world. Two films created by Ubisoft based on the video games *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* and *Assassin's Creed Origins* illustrate and explain the historical setting before and then after the Battle of Chaeronea. Those two films, created especially for the exhibition, help visitors to imagine what people, cities and lands might have looked like at the time.

The museographic research for the exhibition was undertaken by the two curators. For the architectural design, the curators worked closely with architects Katerina Apostolou and Despoina Tsafou, following an innovative approach that emphasizes both the way the narrative is set out and the sensory experience of the visitor. The section 'The Battle of Chaeronea... today' was conceived in collaboration between the curators and the architect Chara Marantidou.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue as well as an e-book with scholarly essays. The catalogue consists of 450 pages and presents all the objects of the exhibition section by section. The e-book, available at Cycladic.gr, will include all the academic essays about the exhibition, recent research, and future perspectives. The contributors are some of the leading researchers in the field. In addition, with the aim of promoting research on Chaeronea, an international academic conference will be organized at the end of February 2024.

Finally, as part of the exhibition, there will be organized guided tours for the public, while the Department of Education and Social Programs of the Museum will offer educational tours for Secondary Education students as well as guided tours in sign language.

THE LENDERS OF THE OBJECTS

- Archaeological Museum of Thebes
 - Archaeological Museum of Chaeronea
 - Archaeological Museum of Schimatari
 - Archaeological Museum of Piraeus
 - Archaeological Museum of Delphi
 - Acropolis Museum
 - Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa
 - Archaeological Museum of Veroia
 - Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki
 - Archaeological Museum of Pella
 - Archaeological Museum of Kilkis
 - Archaeological Museum of Florina
 - Archaeological Museum of Ioannina
 - Archaeological Museum of Komotini
 - National Archaeological Museum, Athens
 - Archaeological Museum of the Kerameikos
 - Epigraphic Museum, Athens
 - Numismatic Museum, Athens
 - Kanellopoulos Museum
 - National Historical Museum
 - Academy of Athens
 - Museum of Philhellenism
 - The Greek Parliament
 - MOMus-Museum of Contemporary Art – Collections of the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art and the State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki
 - Gennadios Library
 - Laskaridis Foundation
 - Folklore Museum of Arachova
 - Chiaramonti Museum, Vatican
- And four private collections

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF CYCLADIC ART

The Museum of Cycladic Art is a non-profit legal entity under private law, supervised by the Ministry of Culture. It receives no state funding, and its collections belong to the Greek State. Its mission is to promote Aegean civilization (from 4000 BC) and to disseminate its art, both locally and internationally, highlighting the evolution of art and its different manifestations,

including contemporary art exhibitions revealing the outstanding ways in which antiquity has influenced the present.

In particular, the Museum focuses on promoting the ancient cultures of the Aegean and Cyprus, with particular emphasis on Cycladic art of the third millennium BC. It was founded in 1986 to house the figurines it is renowned for, which have inspired artists of the 20th century, such as Brancusi, Modigliani, Giacometti, Hepworth and Moore. The Museum's permanent collections include more than 3,000 Cycladic, ancient Greek, and ancient Cypriot artefacts, witnesses to the cultures that flourished in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean from the fourth millennium BC to approximately the sixth century AD. Exhibits from the Museum's permanent collections have been hosted at some of the greatest museums worldwide, like Tokyo (National Museum of Western Art), Kyoto (National Museum), Houston (The Museum of Fine Arts), Brussels (Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire), London (The British Museum), Paris (Galeries nationales du Grand Palais), New York (Onassis Foundation), Madrid (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia), Rome (Musei Capitolini), Beijing (Beijing Art Museum of Imperial City), and Istanbul (Sakip Sabanci Museum).

The temporary exhibitions of the Museum of Cycladic Art focus on archaeology, modern and contemporary art, aiming to introduce the public not only to antiquity but also to important 20th and 21st century artists and explore the links between ancient cultures and modern and contemporary artistic creation. The Museum has invited artists and curators from all over the world to study and get inspired by its collections, creating a dialogue between ancient artefacts and the creations of our times. So far, the Museum has hosted exhibitions on Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, Thomas Struth, Louise Bourgeois, Sarah Lucas, Ugo Rondinone, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Ai Weiwei, Cy Twombly, George Condo and Brice Marden, among others.

'Chaeronea, August 2, 338 BC: A day that changed the world'

December 14, 2023 until March 31, 2024

Stathatos Mansion

Ticket prices: €15 & €12 reduced
Guided tour ticket: €18 (€15 reduced)
The guided tour ticket is only available online.

Link: <https://cycladic.gr/en/ektheseis/chaeronea/>

Guided tours:

From 28/12 and every Thursday, 18:30 – 19:30 and every Saturday and Sunday, 13:00 – 14:00
Max capacity: 20 persons per tour

Opening hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Saturday: 10:00-17:00
Thursday, Friday: 10:00-20:00
Sunday: 11:00-17:00
Tuesday: Closed

Festive Opening Hours from 19/12

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday: 10:00-17:00

Thursday, Friday: 10:00-20:00

Sunday: 11:00-17:00

*Closed during the national holidays 25/12, 26/12 and 1/1.

Holiday hours are valid until 5/1.

Museum of Cycladic Art

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