

The scene probably formed part of a larger hunting narrative arranged in superimposed rows, or registers. Adjacent panels from the same room show scenes of the king hunting lions and wild bulls. The missing lower register may have depicted the body of the king's quarry, one of these fearsome creatures. The cuneiform text at the base of the fragment indicates that this relief was positioned high up on a wall, given that the text, as seen in other reliefs in this gallery, ran through the center of the decorative elements.

Critical support for the Assyrian Collection

HEAD OF A BEARDED MAN (Priest?)
Cypro-Greek, from Cyprus, ca. 550–500 BCE
limestone
Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq. H'26
1923.116

This portrait likely depicts a priest and once formed part of a dedication in a religious sanctuary. The island of Cyprus, situated on the crossroads between the cultures of the Near East and those of the Aegean world, became part of the Assyrian Empire at the end of the 8th century BCE (ca. 709), during the reign of Sargon II. Local Cypriot rulers asserted their independence briefly during the 7th century BCE, only to come under Egyptian and then Persian control in the 6th. The portrait's style reflects this multicultural history and the influence from Near Eastern portraiture.

TIMELINE

We invite you to engage with this interactive timeline highlighting the story of the Assyrian relief sculptures at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art. The timeline explores three time periods integral to the reliefs: their ancient creation, modern rediscovery, and contemporary status. The timeline explores the implications of these works as they intersect with political and religious forces past and present.

Timeline created by Brooke Wrubel '21

Take a scroll!

Along the bottom of the screen, you can find specific moments of historical importance.

To learn more about a particular episode: click on the rectangular box that frames the title of that event.

To explore the entirety of the timeline: you can click on the arrow on either side of the screen to move to the next historical event in that direction.

You can also drag your finger from the left to the right to scroll through the timeline.

Northwest Palace, Throne Room (Room B), Panel 14
gypsum (Mosul alabaster), polychromy
Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq. H'26
1906.4

The King Ashurnasirpal II is represented in this fragmentary relief that was once part of a monumental panel from the Throne Room at Nimrud. As recorded in the Standard Inscription, Ashurnasirpal II built his palace for “royal residence and for [his] lordly leisure for eternity.” Its walls were lined with relief carvings painted with bold colors—red, white, yellow, and black—some of which are preserved on this relief fragment. The walls and ceilings were painted with vivid geometric patterns, and the floors were laid with fine woven carpets. Carved wooden doors and furniture were inlaid with precious metals and ivories.

GLAZED TILE FRAGMENT WITH FEMALE HEAD

Neo-Assyrian, ca. 9th–8th centuries BCE
terracotta

Loan by a Friend of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art

This fragment, depicting the head of a female, comes from the uppermost section of a stepped, or

Tripod Bowl

Neo-Assyrian, ca. 8th–7th centuries BCE

from Kalhu (modern Nimrud, Iraq)

ceramic

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art

This bowl is the result of a combination of techniques: a potter created the body on a wheel and allowed it to dry, before forming by hand three legs to attach to the bowl. Such tripod bowls are rare among Assyrian wares and their function is unknown.

Furniture Plaque with Griffins in a Floral Landscape, Phoenician Style

Neo-Assyrian, ca. 8th century BCE

from Kalhu (modern Nimrud, Iraq)

ivory

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art

This carved plaque is a particularly fine example of the Phoenician style of ivory carving, identifiable by the clear Egyptian influences, symmetrical composition, and distinctive technique. This ivory is notable for its extensive use of cloisonné-like recesses in wings of the griffins and in the lotus-filled background that carvers originally decorated with pigmented pastes, glass inlays, or stones. Recent scientific analysis conducted by The Metropolitan Museum of Art confirmed the presence of Egyptian Blue, the world's first synthetic color.

HEAD OF A FEMALE FIGURE, NORTH SYRIAN STYLE

Neo-Assyrian, ca. 8th–7th centuries BCE

from Kalhu (modern Nimrud, Iraq)

Burnt Palace

ivory

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Women figured rarely in other Assyrian courtly arts but were relatively common among the imported ivories. This detailed ivory head of a woman, carved in the round, shows a considerable depth and naturalism and may have originally been part of a chryselephantine statuette (ivory with gold overlay). Stones or glass were likely once set within the hollowed iris, and she wears a beaded necklace and headband that also previously held colorful inlays.

ANCIENT IVORIES FROM NIMRUD

In antiquity, ivory was a luxury material, costly and widely prized for its exotic and precious qualities. The site of Nimrud was especially rich in ivory objects as Ashurnasirpal II and his successors acquired a taste for ivory inlaid furnishings. Assyrian ivories were imported and

Cuneiform Foundation Cone
Neo-Sumerian, 2200–2100 BCE
from Girsu (modern Tell Teloh, Iraq)
baked clay
Lent by the Harvard Semitic Museum

This inscribed ceramic cone and similar objects were commonly driven i 1006.763.bte Heryy orin nrsnd

Mesopotamia was a land of firsts: the founding of the first cities, the cradle of first civilizations, the emergence of the first agriculture, and the invention of the first writing systems. Pictographic writing emerged in Mesopotamia around 3400 BCE and developed over time into a system of wedge-shaped signs with phonetic values known as cuneiform (Latin for “wedge-shaped”).

Cuneiform was inscribed on a variety of mediums, but baked clay tablets were most common. Over half a million tablets survive today. The tablets and other inscribed artifacts in this case attest to the diverse applications of cuneiform: among them, historical accounts, royal propaganda, bills of sale and transfers of land, civil affairs and marriages, lawsuits, long-distance trade, and personal letters.

FOUR TABLETS FROM THE ARCHIVE OF TULPANNAYA

Hurrian, Mittani period (1500–1350 BCE)

from Nuzi (modern Yorghana Tepe, Iraq)

unbaked clay

Lent by the Harvard Semitic Museum

The four tablets arranged here come from a private family archive and detail the legal affairs of a woman named Tulpanaya, a well-off inhabitant of Nuzi in 15th century BCE. Tulpanaya owned land, traded in goods and people, and sued her neighbors regularly. As court records, the tablets are signed by scribes and “sealed” by witnesses or, in the case of civil suits, judges. Tablets A-D record a marriage, two adoptions, and a lawsuit, respectively.

Clay Tablet with Archaic CUNEIFORM LIST OF COMMODITIES (A)

Jemdet Nasr period, 3200–3000 BCE

Southern Mesopotamia

unbaked clay

Lent by the Harvard Semitic Museum

This clay tablet documents the very early development of the cuneiform script. At this stage, the cuneiform system of signs employed on this tablet is rudimentary, still bearing a close resemblance to the pictographic systems that preceded it.

Clay tablets were often enclosed in an outer layer of unbaked clay, forming an ancient envelope. Envelopes were often rolled with a cylinder seal for authentication, preventing intermediaries from manipulating the tablet. The recipient would then break the dried envelope to extract the contents, here a receipt for agricultural products.

Clay Tablet With old-Assyrian cuneiform letter (C)
Old Assyrian Empire, 1950–1850 BCE
from Kanesh, Anatolia (modern Kültepe, Turkey)
unbaked clay
Lent by the Harvard Semitic Museum

Cuneiform tablets were used for correspondence within and beyond the Assyrian empire. This tablet, dating to the Old Assyrian empire (2025–1378 BCE), comes from Kanesh, a site in Anatolia. A colony of Assyrian traders thrived at the town between 21st and 18th centuries BCE, trading in tin and textiles.

Clay Tablet WITH HELLENISTIC CUNEIFORM Record of property sale (D)
Seleucid period, 300–125 BCE
from Uruk (modern Warka, Iraq)
unbaked clay
Lent by the Harvard Semitic Museum

This tablet reflects a late phase of cuneiform's development with its miniscule and ca06.763 -72 (t) 0.2 o (hi) 0.2

material: clay

date: 1900–64BC

description: Clay cuneiform tablet on the Emergency Red List of Syria

status: unknown

ISIS capitalized on a pre-existing illegal trade in antiquities, which began during the turmoil in 2012, first charging a 20% tax on “licensed” excava.2 (i) 0 0 50 3 5k-0.2 (e) 0ax tc0.2 (gi) 50 3 5he gi

In

It's not safe to be open, but we are working inside. We are preparing the museum. We are preparing everything. In fact, I can tell you that the storerooms – I have steel padlocks on them. I have welded all the storerooms, because we're afraid that there might be another attack to the museum. In fact, we do have attacks by, you know, shooting on our guards, because the Haifa Street is just behind the museum. So the museum actually is a hot spot in Baghdad. We are working there, but I think it's not the time now to open the museum.

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-Dr. Donny George

museum number: IM61891

excavation number: ND8003

provenience: Nimrud (SW 37)

dimension(s) (in cm): height: 14.5; width: at top 3.1; width (at base): 3.7; thickness: 0.8

material: ivory

date

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_____ : ivory

date: Iron Age (8th cm 111.3ontury BC)

des Oription Ivory plyWomy the Window”

syus_72 4.74Ty ris

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thm 111.3 coun*

-Robin Yassin-Kassab

museum number: IM65353

excavation number: ND10485

provenience: Nimrud (SW 37)

dimension(s) (in cm): height: 7.5; width: at top 3.4; width: at bas 4.8; thickness: 0.8; diam. ca. 13.0

material: ivory

date: Neo Assyrian (ca. 800 BC)

description: Short-haired male, facing right, sitting on a flower, left hand at his mouth; wears a belt around his waist.

status: unknown

Without provenance an object loses its point of reference, its history, and its context.

-Selma Al-Radi

museum number: unknown

excavation number: ND13496

provenience: Nimrud (SW 37)

dimension(s) (in cm): height: 2.1, width: 2.7, thickness: 0.5

material: ivory

date: Neo Assyrian (ca. 800 BC)

description

museum number: unknown

excavation number: ND13398

provenience: Nimrud (SW 37)

dimension(s) (in cm): height: 6.0; width: 2.1; thickness: 0.7

material: ivory

date: Neo Assyrian (ca. 800 BC)

description

dimeriptsn (w)-0

solid-cast bronze

Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq. H'26

1927.14

The horse figured prominently in ancient Mediterranean culture and art and was among the earliest and most commonly depicted subjects explored by Greek artists. Horses symbolized wealth, power, and prestige but also were treasured companions of humans and the gods. Early sculptures, in profile, closely mimicked painted silhouettes of the animals.

TRE-FOIL OINOCHOE WITH HORSE

Greek (Attica), Geometric Period, ca. 750–700 BCE

clay

Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq. H'26

1915.42

PYXIS WITH CHARIOTS (above)

Greek (Attica), Geometric Period, late 8th century BCE

clay

Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq. H'26

1913.6

Pyxides, frequently found in Greek burials, may have served as containers for small objects or perishable offerings during the owner's lifetime. In 8th century BCE, figural representations became more common. The main frieze of this pyxis depicts a procession of warriors driving chariots, separated by geometric panels, possibly referring to the deceased's military exploits.

PLAQUETTE OF A WINGED SPHINX

Greek (Melian), ca. 470 BCE

terracotta

Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq. H'26

1923.7

The Greek sphinx is a composite typically represented with the body of a lion, wings, and a human head. Winged versions are typically found in Near Eastern contexts. As[(c) 0.2n75n c

This Iranian-made goblet shares formal similarities with the shapes of Assyrian palace wares and illustrates the cross-cultural influences in the region. Though undecorated and fashioned from coarse clay, the ancient potter endeavored to emulate more elegant cups used by near-eastern elites.

POMEGRANATE MODEL (Rattle?)

Greek (Attica), Geometric Period, ca. 750–735 BCE

clay

Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq. H'26

1915.15

This pomegranate-shaped artifact likely came from a funerary context. The vase's shape is formed from a hollow clay shell, covered with painted geometric and figural decoration. Images of pomegranates, a symbol of fertility, frequently appear in ancient art, clothing, and jewelry throughout the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean.