

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

FOR RELEASE:

WEDNESDAY A.M.

February 20, 1980

ALEXANDER SHOW PREMIERES

AT NATIONAL GALLERY IN NOVEMBER

Artifacts Discovered in Royal Tomb at Vergina in 1977 to be Included

WASHINGTON, D. C. February 15, 1980. The Search for Alexander, a major exhibition of 4th century B. C. Macedonian metalwork and sculpture from Greek museums, will begin a four-city U. S. tour at the National Gallery of Art on November 16, 1980, and will be on view until April 5, 1981.

The objects selected for this exhibition--over ninety--offer the first opportunity in the U. S. to examine the extraordinary art from the time of Alexander the Great of Macedon (356-323 B. C.). The work is less familiar than that of the preceding classic age and the following Hellenistic period but is as sophisticated and beautiful as any work before or since.

Included will be gold, silver and gilded objects--a wreath of oak leaves, a diadem, armor, among others--from the royal tomb at Vergina discovered in 1977 by Greek archaeologist Professor Manolis Andronicos. This tomb is thought to be that of Philip II of Macedon,

(more)

Alexander's father. Other important pieces are small ivory portraits of Philip and Alexander, also from the Vergina site, and the enormous Derveni krater from the same area now in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki.

The exhibition will be on view this summer in Thessaloniki. After its premiere at the National Gallery of Art, it will make a nationwide tour with showings at the Art Institute of Chicago (May 14 through September 7, 1981), the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (October 23, 1981 through January 10, 1982) and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (February 19 through May 16, 1982).

This tour was announced in Athens in December by Greek Minister of Culture, Demetrios Nianias.

The selection of objects was made by Professor Nicholas Yalouris, Inspector General of Antiquities in Greece, with the approval of the Central Archeological Council in Athens and in consultation with American specialists. The National Gallery of Art is coordinating the exhibition in this country.

The exhibition is sponsored both in Greece and the U. S. by the National Bank of Greece and Time Incorporated, in cooperation with the Greek Government.

The catalogue accompanying the exhibition contains an essay by Professor Yalouris and contributions by several Greek and American art historians and archaeologists, including Professor Andronicos, Katerina Rhomiopoulou, director of the Archaeological Museum of

Thessaloniki and Curator of the Antiquities of Central Macedonia, and Cornelius C. Vermeule, III, curator of classical art for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Complementary Exhibition and Audio-visual Program

In addition to the exhibition will be a small group of original objects from Greek museums and a short audio-visual presentation documenting the tremendous popularity of Alexander through the past two millenia (in 20th-century Greek folk art; Western European paintings, tapestries, sculptures, prints, and drawings; manuscripts from Persia and medieval Europe; Byzantine icons; and Roman and Hellenistic images). This audio-visual program, prepared by the National Gallery with the cooperation of Professors Yalouris and Rhomiopoulou, will be made available at no charge through the Gallery's extension service to colleges, universities, and other groups.

Perhaps no leader in history has generated more fame, legend, and historical speculation than Alexander III of Macedon. His conquests by the age of 33 embraced most of the then known world from the Attic Peninsula to Egypt and eastward to the Indus Valley, spreading the humanistic values of Greek culture as well as Asiatic traditions.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer) or Pamela J. Driscoll, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565 area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 511.

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ALEXANDER III THE GREAT

[1980]
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Alexander was the son of Philip II and Queen Olympias, daughter of King Neoptolemos of Epirus, the other northern Greek kingdom. Born in 356 B. C. in Pella, his father's capital, Alexander succeeded as King of Macedonia after Philip's assassination in 336 B. C. With a swift campaign southwards, Alexander at once had himself confirmed by the Council of Corinth as commander-in-chief of the combined Hellenic armies for the Persian campaign.

Having settled affairs among the city-states, Alexander set out on the Persian venture in 334 B. C., leading a force of about 35,000 men. In a successful campaign which lasted some 12 years, Alexander subdued the Persians and, having continued his march as far as India, returned to Babylon, which was to be his capital. There, on June 13, 323 B. C., Alexander died. He was 33 years old. In his short life, Alexander changed the face of the world. Politically, his achievements may be measured by the fact that some of the kingdoms created after his death by his generals survived for more than 500 years. But Alexander's cultural influence on the world was more significant still. Wherever he went, he took with him the fundamentals of Greek civilization and culture, to a world which eventually became known as "Hellenistic." Himself a pupil, for about four years, of Aristotle, Alexander was strong in his support of artists, scientists and philosophers. Greek became the international language of commerce and culture.

It was this Hellenistic civilization that, as the Romans themselves said, "conquered its Roman conqueror." And it was through this civilization that Christianity spread throughout the western world. The New Testament, for instance, was written in Greek by the evangelists themselves, since Greek was the international language of the time.

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[1900]

THE ROYAL TOMB OF VERGINA

The first archeological excavations at Vergina, a small township in Macedonia, northern Greece, were begun in 1861 by the French scholar Léon Heuzey. His discovery of part of a 3rd century B. C. palace was not followed up until Professor C. Romaios of the University of Thessaloniki resumed the dig in 1937.

After an interval during World War II, excavations at Vergina were resumed in 1952. Professor Romaios continued to dig at the site of the palace, while Professor Manolis Andronikos (who had been a student of Romaios at the University and had worked with him on the pre-war dig) began investigating the cemetery area. The latest phase of the excavation began on August 30, 1977, and resulted, on November 8, 1977, in the discovery of the tomb of King Philip II.

The excavation at Vergina continues, with important finds still being made.

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PHILIP II

Philip II, born in 382 B. C., became King of Macedonia, one of the ancient Greek northern kingdoms, in 359 B. C.

Having first restored peace to his own kingdom by fighting wars and forming alliances, Philip proceeded to gain control over the whole of Greece. Responding to force or persuasion, the city-states of Greece united with Philip in preparation for war against the Persian Empire-- a war to be waged in revenge for the Persian invasion more than a hundred years earlier.

Following his proclamation as commander-in-chief of the combined Hellenic forces at a Council held in Corinth (337 B. C.), Philip sent an army to hold a bridgehead on the continent of Asia. But, just as he was preparing to lead his massed armies to join the bridgehead in 336 B. C., Philip was assassinated.

Both as a statesman and a general, Philip was one of the greatest military leaders of antiquity, overshadowed only by his son Alexander the Great. In particular, one of Philip's most notable achievements was his reorganization of the Macedonian army which, though never very large, became the most efficient instrument of warfare of its time under his own leadership and that of his son Alexander. The basic unit of Philip's army was the Macedonian phalanx--a formation of highly disciplined and heavily armed foot soldiers. Philip's innovation, however, was to change the role of the cavalry which, up to that time, had been used merely as a means of transportation for the foot soldiers. Philip turned the cavalry into the attacking spearhead of his forces, in front of the foot soldiers. This was a role which cavalry continued to play in all warfare until the time of the Napoleonic Wars.

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BIOGRAPHY

[1980]

Nicholas Yalouris

Nicholas Yalouris, the distinguished General Inspector of the Greek Archaeological Service, was born in Smyrna in 1918 and educated in Athens. From 1934-1938, he studied at the University of Athens and after studying archaeology at the universities of Zurich, Geneva and Basel, received a Ph.D. from the latter in 1949. While in Geneva he undertook the clarification and re-exhibition of the collection of Greek vases at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire.

Professor Yalouris has been an officer of the Greek Archaeological Service since 1951, first as an assistant at the National Museum, charged with reorganization of its store rooms and then, as Ephor of Antiquities for the Western Peloponnese and Olympia. While in charge of these areas, he was engaged in excavations and the restoration of ancient monuments at various sites, the organization of the Museum of Patras with antiquities from Achaia, and finally, the Museum of Chora, containing preparatory work for the re-exhibition of the treasures of the Olympia Museum, as well as that of Kalamata in Messenia.

In the late 1960s, Professor Yalouris served as Ephor of the Department of Sculpture at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens and spent time in the U. S. as a Temporary Member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, and as Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Greek and Roman Art at the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

In 1970 he became Director of Greek Antiquities and from 1975-1977 served as Director of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, until his appointment to his present post of General Inspector. A member of the Greek Archaeological Society, and the German and Austrian Archaeological Institutes, he has also been the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship (1955-1956) and a Scholarship at the Warburg Institute, London. He has been involved in many excavations including an annual expedition since 1960 to Elis, ancient capital of Elis, and patron city of the Olympia sanctuary. He has lectured widely throughout the world and is the author of numerous publications.

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BIOGRAPHY

Manolis Andronicos

Manolis Andronicos is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Thessaloniki. He was born at Prusa, (Asia Minor), in 1919. He studied at the Philosophical School of the University of Athens, from which he received his doctorate (1952), and completed his studies at Oxford with Sir John D. Beazley (1954-1955).

Dr. Andronicos has taught archaeology as Assistant Professor at the University of Thessaloniki (1957), where he has held the second chair of archaeology as a lecturer (1961) and as a Professor (1964).

He has been among the founding members of the Art Society of Macedonian Studies, the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art, and the German Archaeological Institute of Berlin.

He excavated at Veroia, Naoussa, Chalkidike, Kilkis, Thessaloniki, but worked mainly on the excavation of Vergina where he uncovered a most important Geometric cemetery and continued in collaboration with his colleague, Mr. George Bakalakis, the excavation of the Hellenistic palace, begun in 1937 by K. A. Romaios.

Professor Andronicos has written many books and contributed several articles to Greek and other periodicals.

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Katerina Rhomiopoulou

Katerina Rhomiopoulou was born in Alexandroupolis and studied at Thessaloniki University, Basel University and Freiburg University. From 1957-1959, she was Assistant in charge of the Department of Ancient History, University of Thessaloniki, and in 1959, she entered the Archaeological Service. She has taken part in many excavations on sites from prehistoric to Roman times in Macedonia and Thrace (Abdera, Amphipolis, Pillipoi, Chalkidike, Thessaloniki, Vergina, Veroia, Leukadia, Kozani, Pella) and organized Museums of National Greece.

From 1966-1969, she was assistant Director at the Department of Antiquities in the Ministry. From 1969-1972, she was Curator of Antiquities for Western Macedonia and, since 1973, has been Director of the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki and Curator of Antiquities of Central Macedonia. She recently organized the temporary exhibition, "Treasures of Ancient Macedonia," including the Vergina finds at the Museum of Thessaloniki.

She has travelled to the United States, China and many European countries to give lectures in universities and institutes.

She has written extensively on the archaeology of Macedonia and Thrace in professional journals and elsewhere. She is now writing a book on the Macedonian tombs.

The award of the European Committee on Museums, which is under the aegis of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, was bestowed this year on the Exhibition of Metal Work consisting of treasures of ancient Macedonia, an exhibition which Miss Rhomiopoulou organized in 1978 and presented in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki. This was the first time ever that an international award was given to Greece for the organization and presentation of an exhibition in a Greek museum. The exhibition was considered the most successful presentation of a specialized subject to have been organized in a Greek museum. Experts, art lovers, critics, and the totality of the Greek and foreign press commented most enthusiastically on the presentation of the artifacts. The presentation of the award took place February 26, 1980, at the Brussels Town Hall in the presence of the Queen of Belgium and other officials of the Council of Europe.