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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON, AND TURKISH REPUBLIC REACH AGREEMENT
FOR TRANSFER OF TOP HALF OF *WEARY HERAKLES* TO TURKEY



Weary Herakles, 2nd-century AD

BOSTON, MA (September 23, 2011)—Last evening, an agreement between the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), and the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage and Museums of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey was signed, transferring ownership of the top half of the 2nd-century AD Roman Imperial marble sculpture *Weary Herakles* to the Turkish government. Malcolm Rogers, Ann and Graham Gund Director of the MFA, and Murat Suslu, Director General for Cultural Heritage and Museums, signed the Memorandum of Understanding at the Museum. The agreement acknowledged that the MFA acquired the object in good faith and without knowledge of any ownership or title issues. It also provided for the transfer of the object, which took place after the signing.

Weary Herakles is a Roman statue (Hadrianic or Antonine Period, 2nd century AD) made of marble and is a copy of a famous bronze statue sculpted about 330–320 BC by the Greek master Lysippos of Sikyon. It depicts the mythological hero Herakles (Hercules to the Romans), son of the Greek god Zeus and the mortal Alcmene, fatigued by his many labors. The version that the MFA acquired is close to a type that was popular with ancient artists and is best exemplified by a colossal work at the Naples Archaeological Museum. The bottom half of the statue is at the Antalya Museum in southwestern Turkey.

“The *Weary Herakles* is a great work of art and we believe that it should be back in Turkey where it can be made whole once again,” said MFA Director Rogers. “We are pleased with this significant resolution.”

In addition to Murat Suslu, General Director for Cultural Heritage and Museums, who signed the document on behalf of the Republic of Turkey, other Turkish representatives who attended last night's meeting included Hakan Aytek, Head of the Culture Department at the Turkish Foreign Ministry; Yakup Harmanda and Zeynep Boz, specialists with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism; Mustafa Demirel, Director of the Antalya Museum; Mesut Ozbek, Attache for Cultural Affairs of the Turkish Embassy; and Murat Lutem, Consul General of Turkey to Boston.

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"We are very pleased to have received the *Weary Herakles* from the MFA. We believe that it is important that such objects should be returned to their homeland and displayed there. I hope that the return of the statue will enhance our cooperation with the MFA," said Cultural Heritage Director General Suslu.

Background on *Weary Herakles*

The MFA acquired a half-interest in the sculpture in 1981 from a dealer in Frankfurt, Germany; the other half-interest was owned by collectors Leon Levy and Shelby White. The work was accessioned into the MFA's collection at the end of 1981 and first displayed in 1982. It has been included in two exhibitions: *Glories of the Past: Ancient Art from the Shelby White and Leon Levy Collection*, presented in 1990–1991 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and *Sculpture in Prints*, on view February–August 2007 at the MFA.

In 1990, when the statue was on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition, a scholar noted its similarity to the bottom half of a *Herakles* sculpture that had been excavated in 1980 in Perge, Turkey (the bottom half held by the Antalya Museum). Shortly thereafter, the Turkish government claimed ownership of the sculpture. In 1992, the Museum conducted scientific testing on *Weary Herakles*, and casts were made of the MFA torso and the sculpture excavated from Perge. The two pieces fit together, and it was determined that they originally formed one sculpture, which was at some time broken apart. When the break occurred and when and where the torso was excavated have not been documented.

The MFA and Turkey have been in discussions since the early 1990s regarding how the two pieces might be reunited. After the Museum acquired full interest of the top half of the sculpture in 2004, it contacted Turkey regarding a resolution, and yesterday (September 22, 2011) the MFA's Board of Trustees voted to deaccession the sculpture.

The MFA has been a leader within the museum community in sharing objects in its collection and their provenance (history of ownership) worldwide through its collection database at www.mfa.org. The Museum has also worked to create opportunities for extended cooperation internationally in the field of museums and archaeology. In 2006, the MFA transferred 13 antiquities to Italy and signed an agreement with the Italian Ministry of Culture that included the creation of a partnership in which the Italian government would loan significant works from Italy to the MFA. A result of this relationship is reflected in the MFA's upcoming exhibition, *Aphrodite and the Gods of Love*. On view October 26, 2011, to February 20, 2012, it is the first museum exhibition of classical works devoted to Aphrodite (known as Venus to the Romans) and her realm. It features some 160 works from the MFA's Greek and Roman collection and highlights 13 important loans—nine from Rome and Naples—including *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, which has left Italy only once prior to this exhibition.

INFORMATION AND IMAGE

For more information about *Weary Herakles*, please visit www.mfa.org/collections. A high-resolution image of the object is downloadable on line in the mfa.org Press Room image library at www.mfa.org/press.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), is recognized for the quality and scope of its encyclopedic collection, which includes an estimated 450,000 objects. The Museum's collection is made up of: Art of the Americas; Art of Europe; Contemporary Art; Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa; Art of the Ancient World; Prints, Drawings, and Photographs; Textile and Fashion Arts; and Musical Instruments. Open seven days a week, the MFA's hours are Saturday through Tuesday, 10 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.; Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 9:45 p.m. Admission (which includes two visits in a 10-day period) is \$22 for adults and \$20 for seniors and students age 18 and older, and includes entry to all galleries and special exhibitions. Admission is free for University Members and children 6 and younger. Youths 17 years of age and younger are admitted for free during non-school hours. On school days until 3 p.m., admission for youths 7–17 is \$10. Wednesday nights after 4 p.m. admission is by voluntary contribution (suggested donation \$22). The Museum is closed on New Year's Day, Patriots' Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. For more information, visit www.mfa.org or call 617.267.9300.

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