





Ankara: the contemporary ancient past



An Early Bronze age ritual standard, Alacahoyuk, Turkey



Where is Mesopotamia, Near East, Middle East?





Possessing
the ancient past
(contemporary
colonialisms)
in the Middle East

Antiquities: The Hottest Investment

By MARIA BAJOH

Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2007



The 5,000 year-old Queen of Lions is made of limestone and stands 3-3.5 inches in height.

JACOB GUNDBERG / REUTERS

The sculpture is just three and a half inches tall and looks like a female body-builder with a lion's head. But there's no question that the 1948 purchase of the "[Queen of Lions](#)" by Alistair Bradley Martin was a brilliant investment. The 5,000 year-old piece of Mesopotamian religious art — presumably of Inanna, goddess of sex and war — was sold at auction by Sotheby's New York last week for a record-shattering \$57.2 million. Found at an archaeological dig near Baghdad, it is an extremely rare representation of the goddess — known elsewhere as Ishtar — in animal form. She is one of the earliest of the gods whose names have survived through history. Before her sale, the most expensive piece of sculpture of any period sold at auction was a piece by Pablo Picasso which went for \$29 million. The previous antiquities record was set by a Roman bronze which sold for \$28 million.

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LOOTING OF ANTIQUITIES

The endangered future of the past

By Christopher Minton and Steve Harnissawak

Published: December 20, 2007

PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island

\$57 million - \$28 million

Such record prices for antiquities ring louder than the lamentations of any archaeologist over the destruction of clues to the ancient world.

A number of news organizations reported on Sotheby's auction on Dec. 5 in New York, but their headlines tell only part of the story: "Ancient figure of lion shatters record price for sculpture at auction" (BBC World News), "Sculpture as old as civilization tops \$55m" (The Sydney Morning Herald), "Tiny lioness figure fetches hefty \$57M U.S. at auction" (CBC).

Why not simply say: "Loot and you will make vast sums of money!"

Today in Opinion

The loosening effect new evidence has on Palestinian

No place to hide

Fishing until all the fish are gone

Despite all of the hard-fought countermeasures against the looting of archaeological sites, such headlines only add impetus to trade in the illegal art market. To be sure, much legislation is in place that forbids the selling of looted antiquities, but where there is the lure of millions, too many people are willing to take their chances.

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as well.

The statue, which stands just over three and a quarter inches tall, is an unprovenanced limestone figure of a standing female lioness dance, dated approximately to 3000-2000 BC.

\$57 million - \$27.2 million, to be precise - is certainly a record. And of course the news has to be repeated. But the way it's reported is another matter. Many archaeologists have a different side to the story. Figurines like the 5,000-year-old Queen's Lioness may be art, but they are a lot of other things

Video

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Looting of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad

Where is Babylon?





Babylon, Ishtar Gate
6th c. BC



Babylon, Tower of Babel
16th c. AD
Pieter Brueghel, the Elder (1525-1569)



Babylon, archaeological
site, military base
21st c. AD

Three Babylons



92 The Hanging Gardens of Babylon (Kalmeyer's reconstruction)

Seven Wonders of the World
(or... the medieval European *imagination* of antiquity)

Hanging Gardens of Babylon

idea of *paradeisos*: exotic royal garden in the ancient Near East?

Utopian Transfiguration:

The Other Spaces of New Babylon

David Pinder explores the unique poignancy of Constant's vision of New Babylon, with its dynamic and disconcerting spaces. This is at a time when the idealism of other earlier utopian fantasies tends to elude us.



Situationist Utopian city "New Babylon" by Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys



Alejandro González Iñárritu (dir). 2006

Babylon: modern imaginations



Babylonian map of the world ("mappa mundi") on clay tablet
Early-mid 1st millennium BC. Probably from Borsippa, Southern Iraq.
Now in British Museum.

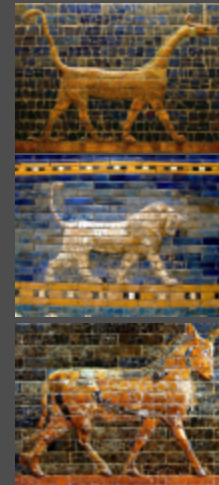


Creatures of Marduk

beyond the *marrutu* (river-ocean)

the *anzû*-bird, the scorpion-man (*girtablullû*), sea-serpent (*mušhussu*), gazelle (*armu, sabitu*), zebu, water-buffalo (*apsasû*), panther (*nimru*), bull-man (*kusarikku*), lion (*nešu*), wolf (*barbaru*), red-deer (*lulimu*), hyena (*busu*), male/female monkey (*pagû/pagitu*), ibex (*turahu*), ostrich (*lurmu*), cat (*suranu*), chameleon (*hurbabillu*).

The "known world" and its fictitious mytho-poetic margins.



Babylon = *Babli* = TIN.TIR^{K1}

Image of the city in Babylonian "topographical texts "

"Babylon, the bond of heaven and the underworld,
Babylon, the city of festivals, rejoicing and dancing,
Babylon, the city whose people continually celebrate festivals,
Babylon, the sacred city,
Babylon, which is granted full measure of wisdom,
Babylon, which recites a spell for all creation,
Babylon, house of reason and counsel "



Sedimentation of history: the making of a powerful place



Babylon: Ishtar Gate
6th c. BC
Neo-Babylonian Kingdom

urban spectacle ..



Babylon: Tower of Babel
16th c. AD
Pieter Bruegel, the Elder (1525-1569)

mytho-poetic imagination ..

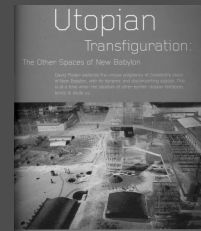


Babylon: archaeological site, military base
21st c. AD

political conflict

Three **Babylons**: three spectacles, three sites of historical representation

Where is Babylon?



Babylon transported:
many babylons

