



Friday 1 July 2022

V&A announce a new cultural partnership with the Ministry of Culture & Tourism in Türkiye and Istanbul Archaeology Museum

- The partnership centres around a joint conservation and restoration project to reattach a unique object, the Head of Eros, to the famous Sidamara Sarcophagus in Istanbul
- The Head of Eros is currently in place at the Istanbul Archaeology Museum
- The partnership is the culmination of collaboration between the two institutions that dates back to the 1930s

Today, the V&A announce a renewable cultural partnership with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, that sees a unique object, the Head of Eros, returning to Türkiye to be reattached to the famous Sidamara sarcophagus. The partnership is the culmination of an initial collaboration dating back to the 1930s, resulting in a joint conservation project between the V&A and Istanbul Archaeological Museums.

The Head of Eros is a life-sized marble carving dating back to the 3rd century AD, which was donated to the museum in 1933 by Marion Wilson, in memory of her father, Sir Charles Wilson. From 1879–1882 Charles Wilson was the British military consul general in Anatolia, and it was at the end of his term, in 1882, that he discovered an important Roman sarcophagus at or near the site of the ancient settlement of Sidamaria in Lycaonia (now in Karaman province, Türkiye).

His intention was to return at some point to ship the sarcophagus to Britain. In the meantime, he took away the head of Eros, which had become detached, placing it on loan at the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) in 1883. Wilson wrote at the time: *'[I] should wish the head eventually to go to whoever secures the sarcophagus'*. In 1900, however, the sarcophagus was moved to the Archaeology Museum in Istanbul under the supervision of its director, Osman Hamdi Bey, where it remains on display today.

The collaboration between the two institutions first began in 1933, some 50 years after Charles Wilson placed the Head on loan to the museum, when a visitor noticed that it corresponded in style to the Sidamara Sarcophagus. This prompted staff at the V&A to contact the Istanbul Archaeology Museum and to create a plaster cast of the Head which was sent to Istanbul to determine whether it matched the figure on the sarcophagus. A match was confirmed, and the cast was attached to the sarcophagus where it remained until earlier this month.

Negotiations were renewed in 2010 and since then, conservation teams across both museums have been working on a joint plan to conserve the head and determine how it

might be safely reunited with the figure carved onto the sarcophagus. An initial conservation treatment took place at the V&A in London, where the marble head was cleaned and an old metal dowel was removed, before a team from the V&A flew to Istanbul in June 2022 with the Head of Eros with the generous support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Turkish Airlines. In Istanbul both teams worked to remove the existing dowel, replacing it with a stainless steel, adjustable dowel before the marble head was reattached to the sarcophagus.

The Sidamara sarcophagus, now complete after over a century, is currently on display at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum.

Notes to editors:

For further information please contact press.office@vam.ac.uk

A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk.

More information about the object can be found [here](#).

About the V&A

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London (V&A) is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity, spanning 5000 years of human creativity. It was established in 1852 to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, its purpose is to champion creative industry, inspire the next generation, and spark everyone's imagination. vam.ac.uk Twitter: @V_and_A Instagram: @vamuseum Facebook: @VictoriaandAlbertMuseum