

## Made whole, "Weary Herakles" finds his feet in Turkey

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Like one of Herakle's great labours, after years of discussion, an agreement has been reached 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, transferring ownership of the top half of the 2nd-century AD Roman Imperial marble sculpture "Weary Herakles" to the Turkish government.

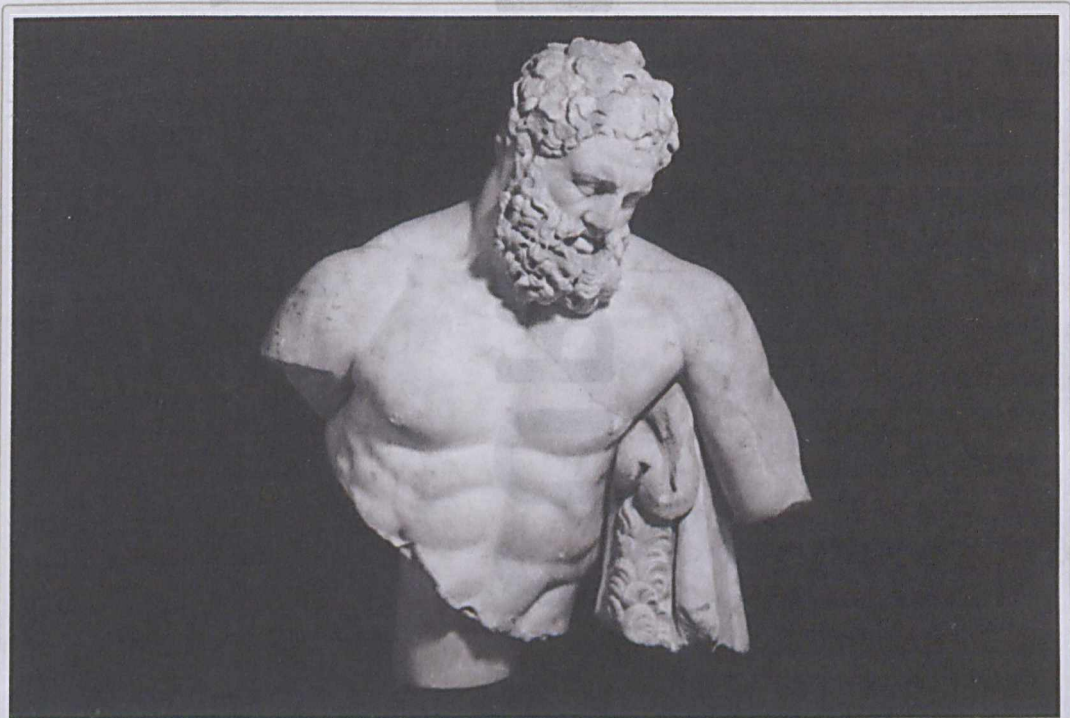
The agreement acknowledged that the MFA acquired the object in 'good faith and without knowledge of any ownership or title issues.

*"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."*

Turkey's Cultural Heritage Director General Suslu announced that, *"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."*

### Background on Weary Herakles

The "Weary Herakles" is a Roman marble statue (Hadrianic or Antonine Period, 2nd century AD) and is a copy of a famous bronze statue from 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 labours.



Weary Herakles ("Herakles Farnese" type), Roman, Imperial Period, mid to late 2nd century A.D. Marble, probably from Paros or Aphrodisias. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Leon Levy & Shelby White and Museum purchase with funds donated by the Jerome Levy Foundation. Photo: © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

"Weary Herakles" statue upper section. (Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts)

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.

### Looted treasure?

Although there is no documentation detailing the discovery of the MFA's upper half, Turkish archaeologists said they were sure it was found at the same time and the same place as the lower section of the statue.

That place is called Perge, a city about 10 miles east of Antalya and once a wealthy centre of cultural and



political life. Today, Perge is a huge tourist attraction, home to one of the country's longest-running archaeological sites which began in the 1940s.

In 1980 Turkish archaeologists found the southern baths where, buried in deep rubble, lay a dozen statues. One of the discoveries was the lower section of a "Weary Herakles" in eight pieces.

According to Inci Delemen, a professor at Istanbul University and now the deputy director of the Perge excavations, the upper half was probably in the area at the same time, though it was not recorded as found.

Delemen said that security was lax in those days, and that she suspects someone found the upper half and quickly spirited it away from the site. For her, it was simply too much of a coincidence that the top half emerged in public in 1981, one year after the discovery of the bottom half.

The MFA purchased the piece in 1981 along with New York collectors Leon Levy, a Wall Street millionaire, and his wife, Shelby White, from a German dealer named Mohammad Yeganeh.

As for the origin of the upper portion of the statue, Yeganeh told the collectors that it came from "his mother's collection and before that from a dealer in Germany about 1950," which was recorded to MFA records.

During that time 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.



Researchers fit together plaster casts of the two halves of the "Weary Herakles" statue as part of the exchange between Turkey and the Museum of Fine Art to make the statue whole. (Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts)

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).

## A reclaimed ownership

Soon, the Turkish government claimed ownership of the whole 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 fitted together and it was determined that they originally formed one sculpture which was at some time broken apart.

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.

- [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston](#)
- [Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism](#) (Archaeology)

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