

Caesar Is In Town

Newly Discovered Marble Busts from the Italian Island of Pantelleria

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The Caesar (100 – 44 B.C.) bust, together with that of Antonia Minor, was excavated on August 14, 2003. The finders were lucky, too, that a ZDF team happened to be on site at the hour of discovery to document the salvage live. This research on S. Marco hill in Pantelleria currently provides considerable insight into the settlement of the port town of Cossyra during the Late Punic and Roman periods. A complex system of cisterns was documented on the widely eroded settlement area on top of the hill. The sophisticated pipe system for fresh-water delivery bears witness to a highly developed settlement during the years 500 to 217 B.C. The cistern system had been destroyed by filling all cisterns with dirt and debris at the beginning of the 6th century A.D.



Newly discovered marble bust

The bust of Antonia Minor (mother of the emperor Claudius, 36 B.C. – 37 A.D.) was found in the second layer, which contained much ash and numerous ceramic fragments, as well as thigh bones of oxen with obvious traces of fire. The marble head of Caesar, protected by a stone plate, was found in the central area of the cistern. It was a marvelous moment for the archaeologists when one the best-preserved heads of Caesar in the world was excavated.

The bust of the Titus Flavius Vespasianus (39 – 81 A.D.) was excavated in another buried water reservoir in September of 2003. The heads were found by an excavation team under the direction of Professor Dr. Thomas Schäfer (at that time still at the University of Greifswald; from the winter semester 2003 on, Director of the Institute for Classical Archaeology at the University of Tübingen) in cooperation with a team from the University of Basilicata in Southern Italy under the direction of Professor Massimo Osanna.

These heads were common in the galleries of the Roman provinces. They promoted the emperor cult and demonstrated solidarity with Rome. This also demonstrates Pantelleria's strategic importance between Sicily and Tunisia.

The historically rich location does not reveal all secrets. It is, for example, impossible to answer the question of why the marble busts, which had been carefully placed on sand and adorned with sacrificial offerings, were



buried. A possible explanation for the burial of the heads would suggest a dynastic change from Claudian to Flavian family rule. But then, why had the heads of Antonia and Caesar been chosen? All 3 busts came to Germany for research and exhibition purposes. Copies were also to be made.

Since residual paint was visible with the naked eye when the heads were discovered, a procedure which was able to preserve these residues was of interest. Conventional gypsum casting ran the risk of damaging the paint particles since first a silicone mold had to be made directly from the original. Using a procedure called "side light optometry," Mrs. Buck and Mr. Schwing of the Technical University of Karlsruhe scanned the heads and converted them into 3D data. A colleague of Mrs. Buck at the Department of Criminal Investigations of Baden-Württemberg in Stuttgart, which had experience in the creation of models from scanned 3D data, had drawn her attention to alphacam.

Equipped with the 3D data, Professor Schäfer contacted alphacam and requested that the busts be rebuilt in their original size from Thermoplast ABS using the Rapid Prototyping System from the American manufacturer Stratasys. Since the busts are more than 50 cm (approx. 20") high, the FDM Maxum, with its large building area (600 x 500 x 600 mm; approx. 23.5" x 20" x 23.5"), is ideal for this purpose.

What Happens to the ABS Heads?

The busts were shown during the exhibition "Caesar Is In Town" in the Schloss Hohentübingen Museum in the spring of 2004 together with their originals.

Since the busts not only caused a stir in the professional world, but also among the Italian public, and particularly on the island itself, in no time they became a symbol of the popular vacation island where

the well-known wine, cultivated from the Zibibbo grape, is produced. On the occasion of the wine fair "VinItaly" in Verona, a wine producer wanted to promote the wines from Pantelleria with the help of the busts. The advantage of these ABS heads is their low weight and their robustness, as opposed to gypsum busts that are more easily damaged during transport.

Meanwhile they are back in Tübingen and have found their rightful place at the entrance portal of the institute, together with the informative panels that were designed for the exhibition. They are included in the courses offered (seminar "Roman Sculptures" in the current winter semester 2004/05).

They now serve as pure duplicates of the highest quality and in the original size. Smaller heads were also built and are taken to lectures by Professor Schäfer. They are shown at exhibitions and other events as well, since the marble originals are back again in Italy.

"The excavation will continue for the next 5 years. We hope, of course, to find additional heads," Professor Schäfer describes the next tasks. The ABS heads will be made available to the scientific world and the public upon request. They can also be purchased through the Institute.



Bust detail

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