

MEDIA IMAGES

Heart of an Empire: Herzfeld's Discovery of Pasargadae

On view February 13–July 31, 2016, Freer|Sackler

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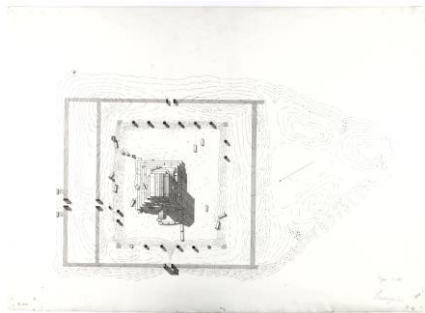
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Before his untimely death in 530 BCE, the Achaemenid king Cyrus the Great laid the foundation of the ancient world's first empire in his birthplace, Anshan (Parsa), in southwestern Iran. In 539 BCE, he chose Pasargadae as the heart of his multilingual, multifaith empire and transformed it into a magnificent symbol of Achaemenid power. The site also became Cyrus's final resting-place.

Located in the fertile plain known as the *dasht-i murghab*, or "plain of the water bird," Pasargadae comprised lavish palaces, gardens, pavilions, and a number of other structures. With the fall of the Achaemenids in 330 BCE, the site was gradually forgotten, and in the early thirteenth century, materials from the palace grounds were used to transform Cyrus's mausoleum into a mosque. The impressive structure even became known as a woman's burial place. It was not until 1908 that the German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld (1879–1948) devoted his dissertation to Pasargadae and proved conclusively that it was the royal capital of the Achaemenid Empire—and that the tomb belonged to one of the most admired rulers of the ancient world.

This exhibition focuses on Herzfeld's discovery of Pasargadae and explores his meticulous work to restore the site's historical and archaeological importance.

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Mausoleum of Cyrus: ground plan
Ernst Herzfeld
Iran, 1905–28
Drawing, ink on paper
Ernst Herzfeld Papers
Freer|Sackler Archives
FSA A.6 05.0808

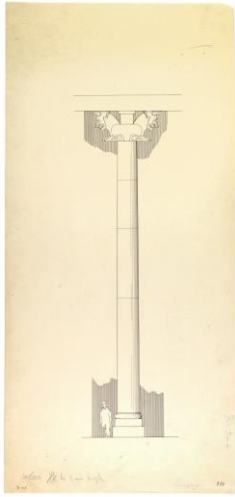


Mausoleum of Cyrus
Ernst Herzfeld
Iran, 1905–28
Glass plate negative
Ernst Herzfeld Papers
Freer|Sackler Archives
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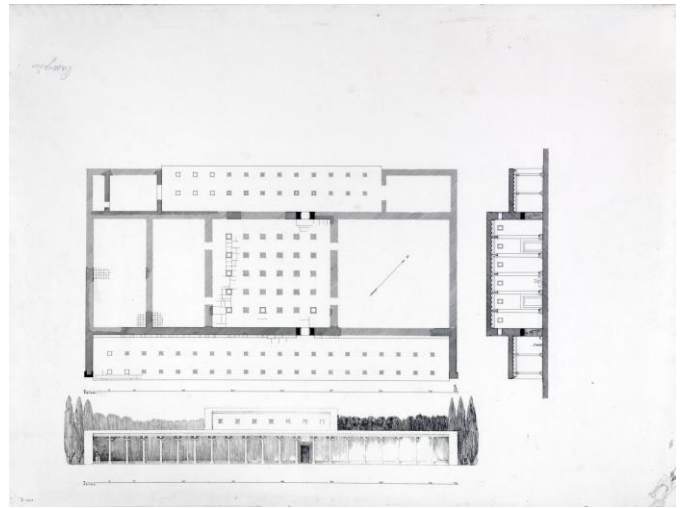
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Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery



FREER | SACKLER
THE SMITHSONIAN'S MUSEUMS OF ASIAN ART



Palace S: reconstruction of column
Ernst Herzfeld
Iran, 1905–28
Ink on paper
Ernst Herzfeld Papers
Freer|Sackler Archives
FSA A.6 05.0805



Palace P: Herzfeld's reconstructed ground plan and elevation of the ruins
Friedrich Krefter
Iran, 1928
Ink on paper
Ernst Herzfeld Papers
Freer|Sackler Archives
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