

# Cypriot Art at The Ringling: A New Gallery

Most ancient art at The Ringling once was held by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Metropolitan's first director, Luigi Palma di Cesnola unearthed many of the pieces on Cyprus between 1865 and 1876. Some of the objects were on display in New York into the early 1900s.



Limestone sculpture from the Cesnola collection on display at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1907 (Ringling SN28.1755 in second case from left facing to the right) (courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

## RINGLING BUYS MOST AT MUSEUM'S SALE

He Acquires Metropolitan's Antiquities for His Sarasota (Fla.) Exhibits.

FIRST DAY BRINGS \$80,519

Institutions Throughout the Nation Profit by Dispersal of Duplicated Cypriote Items.

John Ringling, the circus owner, bought almost 75 per cent. of the Cypriote and classical antiquities offered by the Metropolitan Museum at auction yesterday afternoon and last night at the Anderson Galleries. The sculptures and pottery from the Island of Cyprus, some carved or molded 3,000 or more years ago, are to go to the museum which Mr. Ringling has established in Sarasota, Fla. Nor is this the only museum which profited by the Metropolitan's auction. The Minneapolis Institute of Art, the John Heron Art Museum of the Indianapolis Institute, the Toledo Museum of Art and the Public Library of Roanoke, Va., either purchased directly at the sale or will be recipients of articles bought yesterday.

John Ringling of the Ringling Brothers Circus purchased nearly 3,300 works of ancient art from The Metropolitan's collections during four days of auction in 1928 at the Anderson Gallery in New York. The resulting widespread newspaper coverage shaped the identity of John Ringling and his wife, Mable, as collectors.

Excerpt from *The New York Times*, March 31, 1928, p. 19.

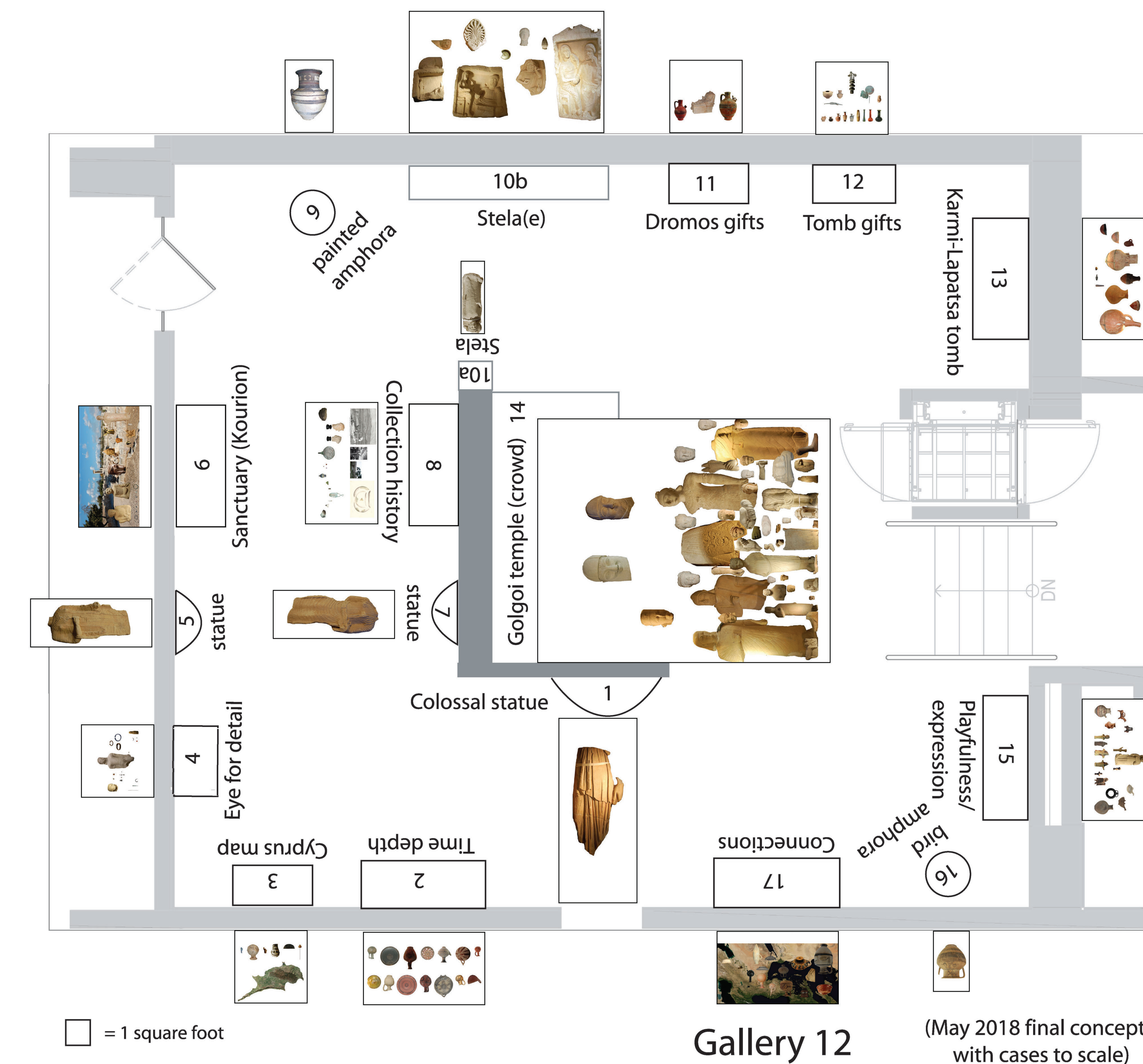
The Ringlings envisioned a pavilion of ancient art for their museum in Sarasota, Florida. It did not materialize due to Mable's death and the stock market crash of 1929. In 1936 John Ringling bequeathed his property to the State of Florida. Today the museum is part of Florida State University.



Art student at The Ringling, with displays of objects from the ancient collection in the loggia, probably early 1960s (from Florida Memory, image number PR09442).

The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, plans to install its first permanent gallery of ancient art in Gallery 12 in 2020 as part of a museum-wide gallery reinstatement project. Gallery 12 highlights the museum's large collection of ancient Cypriot art.

Gallery 12 connects viewers with history (ancient and modern), aesthetics (detail and abstraction), and art and experience (sanctuaries and tombs) through thematic and contextualized displays, including digital content. The centerpiece is a crowd of sculptures said to be from Golgoi, Cyprus.



Gallery 12, The Ringling Museum of Art, plan for the display of the ancient collection with frontal views of each section of the display placed next to its location in the gallery (plan by J. S. Smith)

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Colossal male statue head SN28.1755 said to be from Golgoi, Cyprus, on display in the Astor Library at The Ringling, 2000s (courtesy The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art)

The Ringling's holdings of ancient art include stone and terracotta sculpture, ceramics, glass, bronzes, jewelry, and gems from the Early Bronze Age to the Roman period (ca. 2,500 BCE to 400 CE). At 3,500 pieces today, these form the museum's largest collection. About 2,300 of the objects are from Cyprus.

The first permanent gallery of ancient art at The Ringling is part of a reinstatement project, led by the museum's director, Steven High. Transport amphoras and limestone sculptures from Cyprus in the new Asian wing speak to the theme of cultural interconnections. The collection can be searched online through eMuseum.



Connecting Cultures gallery, The Ringling, view of Cypriot objects on display, February 2018 (photo by J. S. Smith)



Gallery 12, The Ringling, objects in display space, April 2018 (Ringling SN28.1755 at center facing viewer) (photo by J. S. Smith)

Research on the ancient collection for the new gallery, Gallery 12, began in 2014. The projected opening date is 2020. The 200 objects for the gallery were brought together in the display space in 2018 for discussion among the director, curators, registrars, preparators, educators, guards, and other museum staff.