

<b>Institution:</b> University of Oxford
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 17A – Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology: Archaeology
<b>Title of case study:</b> Enriching and educating visitor experience at Aphrodisias in SW Turkey: The stone-for-stone reconstruction of the Sebasteion and the contextual display of its reliefs.
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Professor R.R.R Smith has led the interpretation, conservation, and display of seventy marble relief sculptures from the Sebasteion ('Temple of the Emperors') at Aphrodisias, one of the most important Roman cities in Turkey. His published research underpins a major museum display and the only restoration of a major classical building with relief sculpture on its <i>original</i> site.</p> <p>Smith's research has improved international understanding of Roman rule seen from a Greek perspective. His work has informed and shaped (a) a major new museum display of the reliefs in their correct ancient sequence, and (b) an ambitious <i>anastylosis</i> (precise stone-for-stone in-situ reconstruction) of the building that shows the physical context of the reliefs, and gives a real-scale visualisation of a truly extravagant ancient monument. Both the museum and the reconstruction have already had a strong impact on international visitors, and enabled a deeper understanding of public art in context in an ancient Greek city under the Roman empire, for students and an interested public across Europe and Turkey.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Since 1991, Prof. R.R.R. Smith (Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology and Art at Oxford University since 1995) has directed research and excavation at Aphrodisias, in conjunction with New York University and an Oxford team. The Oxford team consists of Dr. J. Lenaghan (Senior Sculpture Researcher, 2009-present), Dr. O. Bobou (part-time Researcher for Aphrodisias Project, 2007-present) and Dr. M. Melfi (Research Assistant to Lincoln Professor, 2004-present).</p> <p>A major project led by Smith from 2000 to 2011 has carried out painstaking research, publication, reconstruction, and display of the reliefs from the Aphrodisian Sebasteion (Temple of the Emperors – a building 12m high and 90m long, dedicated by two local families in the first century AD). The reliefs feature a striking combination of Roman imperial scenes and heroic subjects from Greek mythology. <b>Fig. 1</b> (in <b>Section 3</b>) shows part of the reconstructed building, illustrates what is described here, and demonstrates the aesthetic impact of the building and its reliefs.</p> <p>The Sebasteion was excavated in 1979-81, but it was not until 2000, as the subject of a research project at Oxford led by Smith, that the seventy life-sized marble relief sculptures which decorated the building's facade were properly identified, reconstructed in their correct sequence, and interpreted as a whole iconographic programme. Smith identified all the constituent fragments of the reliefs in the old excavation notebooks, and from this made find-plans (showing the find-spot of each relief fragment) and graphic reconstructions. On the basis of this research, Smith was able to oversee the conservation of the reliefs (broken into 5-20 fragments), to determine their sequence on the Sebasteion's facade, and to undertake the first historical contextualisation of the monument and its decoration since its discovery. In 2007-8 Smith's work was supported by a substantial grant (£68,000) from a British Academy/Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowship for his project 'Roman Emperors and Greek Heroes: The Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias'. This enabled him to complete the first full interpretation of the monument, to prepare the reliefs for transfer to a new, purpose-built museum hall opened in 2008, and to compose all the explanatory texts for the bilingual wall-panels and labels in the display. <b>Fig. 2</b> (in <b>Section 3</b>) shows the effect of the new 65m-long museum interior with reliefs of Roman emperors on one side, and Greek heroes on the other.</p> <p>The first full publication of the monument has appeared as a large monograph titled <i>The Marble Reliefs from the Julio-Claudian Sebasteion</i> [R1]. Smith interpreted the later reception of the monument in the early Christian period in 'The Second Lives of Classical Monuments' [R2] and in</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

'Defacing the gods' [R3] in the context of late antique negotiation over pagan images in the public realm. He investigated the craftsmen involved in the huge Sebasteion commission in 'Marble Workshops' [R4], and explored aspects of the mythological reliefs in 'Herakles and Antaios' [R5].

### 3. References to the research

**Publications:**

- [R1] R.R.R. Smith, *The marble reliefs from the Julio-Claudian Sebasteion: Aphrodisias VI* (Philipp von Zabern, Darmstadt, 2013). Academic monograph, providing fundamental scientific base for project (including exhibition, reconstruction, and display).
- [R2] R.R.R. Smith, 'The Second lives of classical monuments at Aphrodisias', in T. Stephanidou-Tiveriou (ed.), *Roman Sculpture in Greece* (Thessaloniki, 2012), 57-73.
- [R3] R.R.R. Smith, 'Defacing the gods at Aphrodisias', in B. Dignas, R.R.R. Smith (eds), *Historical and Religious Memory in the Ancient World* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 2012), 283-326.
- [R4] R.R.R. Smith, 'Marble Workshops at Aphrodisias' in F. D'Andria, I. Romeo (eds.), *Roman Sculpture in Asia Minor*, *JRA Suppl.* 80 (2011), 62-76.
- [R5] R.R.R. Smith, 'Herakles and Antaios at Aphrodisias', in G.R. Tsetskhladze, A.M. Snodgrass, A.J.N. Prag (eds.), *Periplous, Essays for Sir John Boardman* (London 1999), 299-308

**Grant:**

2007-8: British Academy/Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowship, for Smith's project 'Roman Emperors and Greek Heroes'. Grant value: £68,000.



Fig. 1: Sebasteion, *anastylosis* (stone-for-stone reconstruction), opened 2011.



Fig. 2: Display of Sebasteion reliefs in new hall of Aphrodisias Museum, opened 2008.

#### 4. Details of the impact

Smith's work [R1] on this unique monument has provided unparalleled insight into how Roman emperors were viewed in the political culture of the Greek-speaking East, which resonates with western academia and the public, locally and internationally. International visitors to Aphrodisias are inspired by the scale, beauty, and physical effect of the reconstructed building and the museum display of the reliefs. The combination of ancient architecture and the co-located museum-display greatly enhances the visitor's aesthetic and learning experience. Smith has distilled his research into a series of easily-understood bi-lingual wall texts that have wide educational impact. The content and meaning of the reliefs has been made thoroughly accessible.

Smith's careful documentation of the reliefs, now available in a major monograph [R1], enabled them to be passed to professional conservators who prepared them for display. In 2007-8, a large new museum hall was designed and built to display the reliefs in the full archaeological sequence identified by Smith. The reliefs were conserved and the museum built with financial support from private sponsors: Sevgi Gönül, the Geyre Foundation, and the UK Friends of Aphrodisias. Smith's texts for the explanatory bi-lingual wall-panels inform visitors about the monument and the individual reliefs. These texts also formed the basis of a bi-lingual guidebook [Section 5: C1] which has sold more than 3,000 copies. The new museum hall forms a large wing of the existing Aphrodisias Museum (Fig. 2), and is now a tourist destination in its own right [C2]. It was opened on 31 May 2008 by the Turkish Director of Antiquities to great press interest – for example, *Bizden Haberler* 7, 2008; *Yapi* 2, 2008; *Euro News* 2, 2008.

The museum display is located on the site just 150m from the Sebasteion building itself. In 2000-2011, the project architects carried out a modern *anastylosis* (stone-for-stone reconstruction) of part of the building, based on Smith's study of its facade. The restored building was fitted with precise copies of the reliefs and recreates their original context. The best preserved part of the complex has now been restored to its full three-storey height, and since 2011 has been open to visitors. It is the only major classical monument to have been restored *in situ* with its reliefs, and as such represents an important development in heritage management and the tourist experience of antiquities. From this painstaking reconstruction, carried out with each original part of the architecture in its exact position, visitors can understand the physical context and ancient function of the reliefs, which they also see close-up in the new museum space. The close proximity of both the restored building (Fig. 1) and the museum display of the reliefs (Fig. 2) enables visitors to understand and to visualize this extravagant ancient showpiece of a monument.

#### Impact on international visitors and tourism:

The results of Smith's research have reached over 600,000 international visitors between 2008 and 2012 (averaging 147,000 annually) [C3]. High visitor numbers are managed by 20 museum staff members. The appeal of the new display of the reliefs can be seen on a number of tourist review sites, such as Trip Advisor. One site, for example, says: 'The Aphrodisias Museum...has lots of helpful signage. I actually gasped when I entered into the Sebasteion sculpture hall. It was so impressive to see such a complete and beautiful collection of 1st century AD Roman reliefs... My only regret is not spending more time in the Museum' [C4]. Another travel website writes: 'The museum of Aphrodisias is one of the most outstanding museums of western Anatolia. The monuments of unsurpassed value which have been found at the excavations are displayed here' [C5]. The Sebasteion reconstruction already has near-iconic status in tourism in Turkey, seen for example in the well over 100 pictures of it that result from a simple google search for 'sebasteion aphrodisias turkey'. More qualitative evidence is provided by a university course leader, who states that '[the Sebasteion] allows...the wider public the chance to understand fully how such a monument would have worked within the ancient cityscape ... provides the opportunity for a direct engagement with the ancient monument, allowing a deeper understanding of how it would have worked visually in the past' [C6].

#### Educational impact:

Over the last two decades, Smith's research and lecture programmes have also given rise to several communities of enthusiasts around the world – the large network of 'Friends of

## Impact case study (REF3b)

Aphrodisias' groups in London, New York, Istanbul, and Izmir [C7]. These groups combine talks and educational programmes with fund-raising on behalf of the excavations. For his work on the Sebasteion project, Smith received (on behalf of The Aphrodisias Excavations) the Certificate of Merit for 'distinguished achievement in, and contribution to Archaeology' from The National Arts Club of New York, in December 2011.

More specifically from an educational perspective, both the Sebasteion and Smith's publications on it have become core topics in the study of Rome in the Greek East in teaching and learning in HEIs outside Oxford and outside the UK (for example, Warwick University, The University of Minnesota, and New York University). The course leader for 'Art and Architecture of Asia Minor' at Warwick states: 'This monument plays a key role in the undergraduate course... [Smith's] publications on the monument form the basis for presentations in which students describe the form and iconography of the monument and analyse the evidence it presents for provincial views of the Roman emperor' [C6].

The rich evidence of the reliefs, as presented in Smith's published research, has been used widely in books intended for a broad public [C8]. The Sebasteion restoration has appeared in popular publications aimed at archaeology and ancient history enthusiasts, as well as the wider public. Smith was invited to contribute a lead article on the Sebasteion in *Omnibus*, the Joint Association of Classical Teachers (JACT) magazine for school students, and produced, with Julia Lenaghan and renowned Turkish photographer Ahmet Ertuğ, a large-format publication on Aphrodisias and the Sebasteion sculpture for the wider public. The Aphrodisias excavations and the Sebasteion have also featured in popular publications – such as the Turkish *National Geographic* [C9]. In 2009, the Aphrodisias excavations and the Sebasteion display were the cover story for the bilingual in-flight magazine for Turkish Airlines, *Skylife* [C10], and in 2011 were the subject of a three-page spread in the popular Turkish lifestyle magazine *Diva* [C11].

Smith's research is embodied in the display and public explanation of the Sebasteion. The on-site reconstruction and museum installation enhance visitors' understanding as well as their enjoyment of a remarkable monumental complex.

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [C1] *Aphrodisias. Sebasteion Sevgi Gönül Hall: Afrodisyas Sebasteion Sevgi Gönül Salonu* (Yapı Kredi Publications, Istanbul 2008), museum guide to display of reliefs.
- [C2] Sebasteion at Aphrodisias described on 'interest site' aimed at general enthusiast: <http://www.travellinkturkey.com/aphrodisias.html>
- [C3] Visitor Numbers supplied from the *Site Management Plan for Aphrodisias* (2012), commission by the Geyre Vakfi for the Turkish Ministry of Culture.
- [C4] <http://daydreamtourist.com/2012/07/25/you-must-see-aphrodisias/> - text confirms quoted the effect on tourists visiting Aphrodisias.
- [C5] Sebasteion-Museum advertised in promotional material of tour company: <http://www.tourgoodtravel.com/aphrodisias-tour/315-daily-private-afrodisias-tour-specification-sheet.html>
- [C6] Written support available from course organizer at Warwick University. Letter on file confirms that Sebasteion and Smith's publications form basis of this teaching. Course syllabus: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/modules/artarchi/syllabus>.
- [C7] 'Friends of Aphrodisias': contact details PDF for international communities available on file.
- [C8] Example of publication aimed at broad audience that includes discussion of the Sebasteion reliefs based on Smith's published interpretation of them: C. Vout, *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge 2007), 25-6. Further examples can be provided on request.
- [C9] Murat Türemiş, "Aphrodisias", *National Geographic* (Turkey), 9, 2010.
- [C10] *Skylife Magazine*, October 2009: "On the Trail of New Finds: Aphrodisias", Jülide Karahan, Yiğit Günel. PDF of cover available.
- [C11] *Diva Magazine* 12<sup>th</sup> August 2011: "Afrodisias: Aşka Adanmış, Aşkı Taşlarına Kazımış, Tarihin Toprağına Gömülmüş Antik Kent", B. Bridge. PDFs available.