

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Facsimiles of two Lamassu from the north-west palace of Ashurnasirpal II in Nimrud have been donated to the University of Mosul by Factum Foundation (Madrid) and the British Museum (London)**

**with support from the Rijksmuseum Van Oudheden (Leiden), the Spanish Ministry of Defense and the Iraqi Government**

On 24<sup>th</sup> October, exact facsimiles of two lamassu statues (Assyrian protective deities in the form of human-headed winged lions) have been presented at the University of Mosul by the British Museum and Factum Foundation, with the logistical support of the Spanish Ministry of Defense, the Iraqi Government and the financial support of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden. The project was managed by Ali Aljuboori, the director of the centre for Assyrian studies at the University of Mosul.

In 2004, Factum Arte (before the formation of Factum Foundation in 2009) recorded the original statues at the British Museum. They were taken to London in 1848/1849 by Sir Austin Henry Layard. The statues of winged lions with five legs are from the north-west Palace of Ashurnasirpal II in Nimrud. They are guardians that ensured no evil presence entered the building and were placed at places of significance. The entrance to the main University building is in front of the University's Central Library where over one million books and manuscripts were burnt in 2017.

All parties hope that the installation of the facsimiles of the two lamassu in the University of Mosul will be seen as a new approach to sharing cultural heritage that has been made possible by Factum's mix of technology and craftsmanship. A sign of hope that will be followed by a significant transfer of skills and technology that has been agreed between Ali Aljuboori and Adam Lowe, the founder of Factum Foundation. The training initiative has also received the support of Dr. Adel Mustafa Kamel, the ambassador for the Republic of Iraq in Madrid and Juan José Escobar Stemann, the Spanish ambassador in Iraq and other important figures working on the preservation of Iraq's heritage. High-resolution recording in 3D and colour, the production of exact facsimiles and digital restorations can never replace the Assyrian carvings that were destroyed in Nimrud and at the Museum in Mosul but they can play an important role in keeping their memory alive and in sharing their cultural and political significance.



The head of the lamassu recently installed © Luke Tchalenko for Factum Foundation



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The installation of the lamassu at the entrance to the student centre © Adam Lowe for Factum Foundation



The lamassu standing either side of the entrance to the main student building in the University of Mosul, recently restored after it was intentionally set on fire by Islamic State © Adam Lowe for Factum Foundation





## **RECORDING AND RE-MATERIALISING THE LAMASSU**

In 2004, a team of experts from Factum Arte recorded two Nimrud Lamassu in the collection of the British Museum, using a high-resolution white light scanner (NUB3D) made in Barcelona. As part of the documentation process, specialists from Factum Arte's workshop carried out multiple tests at the British Museum comparing the colour and texture with the original. From these samples and tests, they created a specific recipe of stucco marble to ensure the accuracy of the replicas.

The high-resolution information obtained by scanning the colossal winged lions was processed and prepared for routing. This was part of one of the largest high-resolution routing projects ever undertaken for conservation purposes. In addition to the Lamassu, each of the relief panels from the north-west palace of Ashurnasirpal II were recorded at the British Museum, the Pergamon Museum, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, the Sackler Collection at Harvard University and the Art Museum at Princeton University. The lamassu and relief carvings that remained on site in Nimrud were destroyed in 2016.

The information recorded from the Lamassu was routed in sections in a high-density polyurethane. These sections were assembled to create a prototype and verify the overall fit. Each part was covered with numerous layers of silicone and a supporting fiberglass jacket to create a mould.

These silicone moulds were used to create the facsimiles, made in stucco marble and coated with wax to obtain its distinctive colour. The facsimiles were first produced in 2016 for the exhibition *Nineveh* at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, Netherlands, organised by the Rijksmuseum Van Oudheden, and in 2017, in anticipation of their donation to the University of Mosul.



Factum Arte's recording specialists digitising the Lamassu at the British Museum in 2004 © Factum Arte



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The facsimile being assembled at Factum Arte's workshops © Factum Arte



The Lamassu facsimiles created for the exhibition *Nineveh* at the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden. Part of the agreement to loan them was dependent on the sculptures being donated to the University of Mosul



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## FROM MADRID TO MOSUL: THE JOURNEY OF THE FACSIMILES

In September 2019, the two lamassu were first flown to Baghdad by the Spanish airforce, in collaboration with the Spanish Ministry of Defense and the Spanish Embassy in Iraq, and then from Baghdad to Mosul by the Iraqi government. The Rijksmuseum Van Oudheden provided financial support to produce the crates, which were designed and produced specifically for the trip at by architects and designers from Factum's workshops, allowing the pieces to travel in the most secure way.



The Spanish Army loading the crates in the Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft © Spanish Air Force



The Spanish Army's Hercules flight arriving in Baghdad © Spanish Air Force



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# The British Museum

After 3 days of intense work by the Factum team, including Adam Lowe, José Menendez, Nicolas Béliard and Luke Tchalenko, and with the great help of members of the University, the facsimiles of the lamassu were unveiled on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at the University of Mosul, where they were installed at the entrance to the University's student centre. For the occasion, a flamenco concert was organised by the Spanish Ambassador in Iraq, Juan José Escobar Stemmann.



Students from the University assisting to the unveiling of the lamassu and the flamenco concert organised by the Spanish Ambassador in Iraq, Juan José Escobar Stemmann



Flamenco concert taking place in front of the burnt Central Library on 24<sup>th</sup> October



## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The sculptures originally adorned the throne room of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud, the first great Assyrian king (ruler of Assyria between 883–859 B.C.) who undertook a vast building program at Nimrud, ancient Calah, including the construction of the north-west palace – a building designed to inspire awe and tell the story of a King and his life.

The friezes in Nimrud were once part of one of the greatest and most complex narrative cycles that mixed coloured images in relief and text. The walls of the palace were decorated with cuneiform text and painted relief carvings depicting both leisure activities (hunting, preparation of food and libation) and images of battles and conquered cities. After the fall of the Assyrian Empire, the north-west palace lay buried for over 2,000 years until it was excavated by Sir Austin Henry Layard between 1845 and 1851, working for the British Museum.

In 2004, Factum Arte worked with the British Museum to record the two Lamassu, the throne back, 8 panels from the south-east wall of the throne-room, a winged figure from the east wall, an urn found in the throne-room and a 'carpet piece' from Nineveh. Through high-resolution recording and re-materialisation techniques, merging new technology and traditional craft skills, the aim was to inform both a local and international public about the complex history of each of the fragments that once formed one of the most important cycles of sculpted, polychrome narrative images. The work was part of an exhibition project organised by the Danish company United Exhibits Group. Due to the ongoing conflict in Iraq the exhibition never happened.

In early 2014, plaster casts of the relief panels from the British Museum were donated to the Ashurbanipal Library Project at the University of Mosul by Factum Foundation and the British Museum. The Ashurbanipal Library Project aimed to build a large campus consisting of a museum and a research centre, besides several rooms for national and international symposium. Next to it is the College of Archeology building at the campus of the University of Mosul.



Detail of Throne-back that was fixed to the Eastern end of the throne room behind the throne. It was recorded by Factum Arte in the British Museum in 2004 © Factum Arte

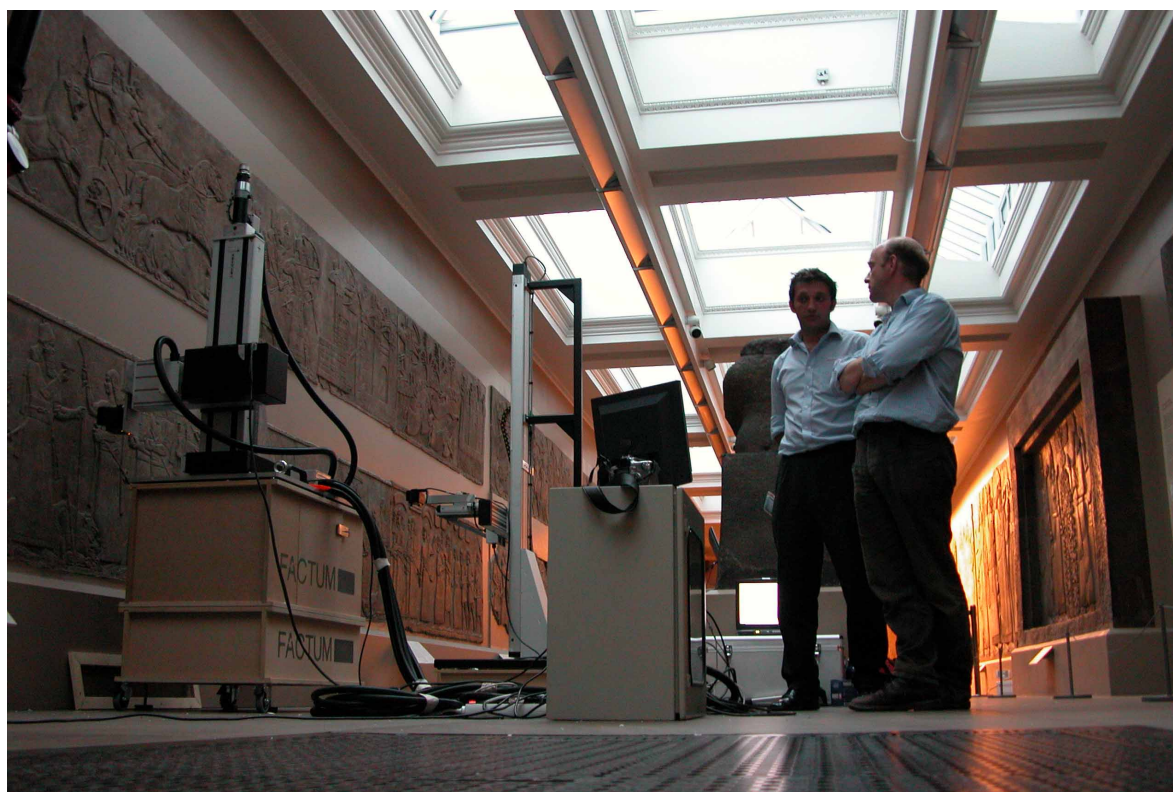


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Recording of the panels from the throne room of Ashurnasirpal II at the British Museum in 2004 using a purpose built scanning system.  
© Factum Arte



Recording of the panels from the throne room of Ashurnasirpal II at the British Museum in 2004 © Factum Arte







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### **ON THE ASHURBANIPAL LIBRARY PROJECT**

The Ashurbanipal Library is oldest surviving royal library in the world is that of Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria (668-around 630 BC). British Museum archaeologists discovered more than 30,000 cuneiform tablets and fragments at his capital, Nineveh (modern Kuyunjik). Alongside historical inscriptions, letters, administrative and legal texts, were found thousands of divinatory, magical, medical, literary and lexical texts. This treasure-house of learning has held unparalleled importance to the modern study of the ancient Near East ever since the first fragments were excavated in the 1850s.

The Ashurbanipal Library Project was set up in 2002 as a long-term co-operation with the University of Mosul, in Iraq. We aim to bring Ashurbanipal's astonishing library back to life. Using modern technology, this most ancient library can be opened to new readers.

In 2016, the site at Nimrud was destroyed by Islamic State (ISIS) in a well-documented iconoclastic attack. The Nimrud Rescue Project, run by the Smithsonian Museum, is now starting to gather the fragments left on site at Nimrud. The University of Mosul could play an important role in digitising, preserving and studying whatever remains.



The Ashurbanipal Library Project building at Mosul University © Ali Aljuboori

Note: Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.) was the ruler of Nimrud while Ashurbanipal (668–627 B.C.) ruled from Nineveh.





## ON THE ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF IRAQ'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Increasingly facsimiles are being used as a new way to share, reunite and understand culture. The work carried out by Factum Arte on Veronese's *Wedding at Cana* is a good example of this. A facsimile of Veronese's great painting in the Louvre was installed into its original location in Palladio's refectory on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, now the home of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini. The recording, re-materialisation and installation of the two Lamassu in Mosul links Assyria's past, the cradle of civilisation, with the preservation of Iraq's cultural heritage.

It is hoped that future initiatives similar to the installation of the Lamassu at the University of Mosul will lead to new insights and understandings about both cultural heritage in Iraq and the ways to preserve it efficiently. Attitudes to the preservation of culture are both constantly changing and geographically conditioned.

Nimrud, Nineveh and Babylon have become intertwined in the public mind in recent history with Baghdad, Mosul, Basra and the conflicts of the first and second Gulf Wars. As Iraq starts to emerge from years of war, new technology, re-materialisation techniques and the deployment of training initiatives to local communities must be put at the centre to offer a positive message at a local, national and international level. The Factum/Frontline collaboration has trained Luke Tchalenko as the first photojournalist able to use photogrammetry for heritage recording and train graduates in Iraq. The scheme will be dependent on practical work on the ground supported by remote access support from Factum's team in Madrid.



Re-materialising the Lamassu at Factum's workshops in Madrid © Factum Arte

## QUOTES

### **Adam Lowe, Founder of Factum Foundation**

Years after the recording of the Lamassu in London we have watched the people of Mosul go through terrible suffering. We have been in contact with Ali Aljuboori during the occupation of the city and the destruction of the Mosul Museum and the site at Nimrud. Now there is a genuine excitement about this important gesture of international collaboration. The return of the Lamassu to Mosul will signal the start of a new positive relationship with Europe in which technology and the transfer of equipment and skills demonstrate that cultural heritage can lead to deeper understanding, while creating a new local economy based on recording, re-uniting and sharing.

### **Jonathan Tubb, Keeper of the Middle East and Director of the Iraq Scheme at the British Museum**

The presentation of these two splendid *lamassu* to Mosul University by the Factum Foundation is a wonderful gesture of solidarity with our friends and colleagues in Iraq, and will be greatly appreciated by them. The British Museum is proud to have helped in the process leading to the production of these outstanding replicas. Our involvement in the project complements the important work we are doing in Iraq in association with the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, namely our Iraq Emergency Heritage Management Training Scheme. This provides training for their employees in sophisticated techniques of surveying, documentation and excavation, and allows them to confront and manage the challenges of dealing with archaeological sites, monuments and museums that have been severely damaged or largely destroyed by Daesh.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation** is a not-for-profit organisation founded by Adam Lowe in 2009. It is dedicated to the use of high-resolution digital recording and exact facsimiles as part of a coherent approach to the preservation, understanding and public exhibition of major cultural heritage sites and objects. Advances in digital technology have rapidly and radically changed our understanding and appreciation of our shared cultural heritage.

The conservation and preservation communities have realised the importance of high-resolution digital recording and this data is starting to be integrated into professional protocols. Central to this shift of attitude is a fundamental reappraisal of the role of exact facsimiles both installed in their original location and used in touring exhibitions.

The aim of the Foundation is to show that the way we understand the ‘original’ object is part of a dynamic process and not a fixed state of being. This shift can be used to turn cultural interest into a proactive force assisting in and encouraging the preservation of important monuments and works of art. The Foundation wishes to ensure that future generations can inherit the past in a condition at least as we received it and where it can be studied in depth by this and future generations – using secure, archived digital data that does not age.



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The central aim of the Foundation is creating a pool of funds generated from donations, exhibitions and other sources that can be used to seed a variety of projects in the developed world and in areas where the application of technology is limited but where the preservation of cultural heritage is most needed.

Factum has demonstrated the success of this model in practice over the last ten years through completed and ongoing projects with major international institutions in conflict-affected regions such as the Middle East, Dagestan, Egypt, Nigeria and Chad. It is one of the leading organisations involved in this type of work with a proven track record and a network of partnerships with like-minded organisations and institutions devoted to high-resolution recording.

**RESOURCES:**

Video \_ [Raw footage for TV available from this link.](#)

Images \_ On demand

**PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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