

# Birth and Life of Alexander the Great on Show at Barakat London

*A unique Hellenistic plate depicting the birth and life of history's greatest warrior goes on display at the Barakat London Gallery*

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM , October 30, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A unique Hellenistic-era plate, made of grey schist, is now on display at the Barakat Gallery in London. Dating to the period after Alexander the Great's death, it depicts scenes from the young king's life, starting with his birth and presentation to his father Philip II. Recent research has unlocked the secrets of this plate's myriad of mythological allusions, allowing experts at the Barakat Gallery to firmly identify the scenes depicted as being related to the greatest general in history.



Plate depicting the birth and teenage years of Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great conquered most of the known world before his death under suspicious circumstances in 323 BC. It was not Alexander's failure as a general, nor even his own deepening illness, that put a stop to his conquests. Instead, it was his own troops, homesick after twelve years of campaigning, who refused to go any further. After Alexander's death, and with his mentally disabled brother on the throne until his unborn child came of age, the Empire split between squabbling generals. It was during the era of this infighting that this plate dates. It probably represents an effort by the Seleukids, possibly Seleukos I Nikator, to link himself to the mythical Alexander and secure his legitimacy.

At the top of the plate is a scene depicting the infant Alexander being passed from his mother, Olympias, to his father, Philip II. In awe, some servants of the royal court look on. Legend has it that Alexander's birth would be heralded by three victories: first, Philip successfully concluded

the siege of Potidaea; second, one of Philip's generals, Parmenion, was victorious over the Illyrians; and third, Philip's horse won the prestigious race at the Olympic Games. These three victories are depicted on the plate. Philip is depicted in military dress, fresh from the battle. Behind him, Parmenion is also depicted, his shield lowered. And finally, a nude athlete leads Philip's horse into the scene.

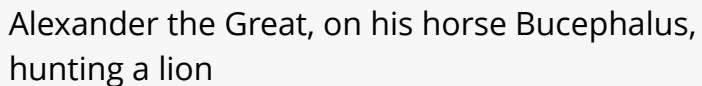
In the lower register, the teenage Alexander is depicted in armour. To the right, we see Aristotle, Alexander's tutor. He famously taught the king his love of poetry and music, and is shown here holding a lyre. In front of Alexander is a depiction of the Egyptian Pharaoh Nectanebo II, holding a snake. A popular tale records how Nectanebo, a powerful magician, was exiled at the

Macedonian court, where he magically imbued a snake with the power of the god Ammon and sent it into Olympias' bedchamber, whereupon it conceived Alexander. Nectanebo II then stayed on at the court, where he taught Alexander magic. This scene, then, depicts Alexander and his two most notable legendary teachers.

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*Dr Christopher Cooper*



Alexander the Great, on his horse Bucephalus, hunting a lion

The reverse of the plate shows Alexander on his horse, the famously untameable Bucephalus. He is hunting a lion, which rears up at Bucephalus' neck. Lion hunting was supposedly Alexander's favourite pastime, and had been an important symbol of Kingship in the Near East since the dawn of urbanisation in the region.

The artistic and sculptural quality of this plate is virtually unparalleled. The naturalistic poses of the figures, the way Philip cradles the infant Alexander, the way Olympias

clutches Alexander's swaddling clothes, the way Alexander's horse rears and jumps; the artist was clearly a Michelangelo of his day. This is one of the most remarkable pieces relating to Alexander on display in London today, and is possibly one of the most important Hellenistic pieces ever to have been offered for sale.



## About the Barakat Gallery

The Barakat Gallery is the world's largest for-sale collection of ancient art, spanning cultures on all continents, and from the Prehistoric to the Twentieth Century AD. With galleries in London, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Seoul, Marrakech and Amman, Barakat brings ancient art within reach of a global community of collectors and enthusiasts. Founded in Jerusalem nearly 150 years ago, the Barakat Collection is now under the custodianship of Fayez Barakat, perhaps the world's most notable antiquities dealer, and a well-respected contemporary artist in his own right.

[www.barakatgallery.eu](http://www.barakatgallery.eu)

[www.barakat.kr](http://www.barakat.kr)

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Alexander's mother, Olympias, presents the infant to his father, Philip II



Aristotle, the great philosopher and tutor of Alexander





Alexander the Great hunts a lion

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