

DESIGN WORKSHOP:

Ancient Objects / Future Tools

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OVERVIEW:

In this workshop, students will learn about the looting and repatriation of Anatolian artifacts and design a timeline with the imagined future of a recently returned artifact. Visiting Fulbright scholar Skylar Masuda will share her research and lead a discussion about the competing social, economic, and cultural roles that have shaped the life story of an ancient drinking horn from the Istanbul Archaeological Museums. Each student will design a timeline infographic, communicating the story of the artifact and creatively imagining how it may be used in the future.

PARTICIPANTS WILL...

- Become familiar with artifact repatriation
- Consider different ways to visually represent time
- Create an infographic timeline about the Stag's Head Rhyton
- Use speculative design to imagine the role of the object in the near and distant future

BACKGROUND

Since 2002, over 12,139 historical artifacts have returned to Türkiye. Repatriation is the process by which stolen or looted objects are returned to their countries of origin. Their illicit excavation means that much information about their past has been lost without hope for recovery. How can these objects become tools for imagining the future?

This workshop uses the goals and methods of speculative design to understand an unprovenanced repatriated artifact. It was created in April 2025 by Professor Merve Çaşkurlu for students in the Visual Communication Design Undergraduate Program at Yeditepe University in Istanbul. This workshop is part of Skylar Masuda's 2024-2025 Fulbright research project titled "Return of Anatolian Artifacts to Turkish Museums: A Design Impact Analysis."

CASE STUDY:

Stag's Head Rhyton



This drinking horn, also called a rhyton, was recently repatriated to the Istanbul Archaeological Museums. It was created around 400 B.C.E. in Milas (Muğla Province) and used for ceremonial drinking rituals. The rhyton is gilt in silver and depicts a stag's head with a mythological scene on the rim.

On May 17, 1990, an anonymous letter was sent by a local resident to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism reporting that looters were digging in Milas. It appeared on the international art market very soon after.

The Rhyton was bought by American billionaire investor Michael Steinhardt. He purchased it for \$2,600,000 from Merrin Gallery, a New York gallery famous for selling ancient artifacts. In 1993, Steinhardt loaned the Stag's Head Rhyton to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the largest art museum in America. It was displayed in the museum for almost 30 years.

On January 21st, 2022, the Manhattan District Attorney's office seized the Stag's Head Rhyton along with 13 other stolen artifacts from Steinhardt's collection and legally returned them to Türkiye. Repatriation ceremonies were held at the Turkish Consulate in New York and the Istanbul Archaeological Museums.

KEY DATES:

400 BCE - Created in Milas

May 1990 - Unearthed by local looters

22 November 1991 - Sold by Merrin Gallery to Steinhardt

11 March 1993 - Loaned to the Met and displayed in the museum

21 January 2022 - Seized by the Manhattan DA over looting claims

February 2022 - Displayed in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums



ASSIGNMENT SHEET

You will create a timeline infographic that creatively tells the story of the Stag's Head Rhyton.

You will imagine the continuing life of the rhyton by extending the timeline to **the near and distant future**.

Your timeline should be a 2D design using any dimensions and any design platform. At exactly the 60-minute mark, you will export and submit what you have created.

You can provide an entirely different history of the artifact.

Your timeline does not need to adhere to fact.

You can include all or none of the key dates provided

You can use the links provided or find your own sources.

Reference Sources:

- [Manhattan District Attorney's Office Press Release](#)
- ["Statement of Facts" in the Steinhardt Investigation](#)
 - See page 72 for information about the rhyton
- [Ministry of Culture and Tourism Press Release](#)
- [American News Coverage of the Repatriation \(Smithsonian Magazine\)](#)
- [American News Coverage of the Repatriation \(The Guardian\)](#)
- [BBC News Coverage of the Repatriation](#)
- [Turkish News Coverage of the Repatriation \(Hurriyet\)](#)
- [Turkish News Coverage of the Repatriation \(AA\)](#)
- [Turkish News Coverage of the Repatriation \(Milas Önder\)](#)

FURTHER READING

- [Wine culture in the Hellenistic² Mediterranean](#)
- [Merrin Gallery Website](#)
- [New York Magazine Article About Steinhardt's Collecting](#)