



Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Preußischer Kulturbesitz

URUK

5 000 Jahre

MEGACITY

Berlin, den 15.11.2012

PRESS RELEASE

**Museumsinsel Berlin | Pergamonmuseum
Vorderasiatisches Museum – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin**

Venue: Pergamonmuseum, Vorderasiatisches Museum
Entrance: Am Kupfergraben, 10117 Berlin

Official statements on the forthcoming exhibition “URUK – 5000 Years of the Megacity”

25 April 2013 to 8 September 2013, Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin
20 October 2013 to 21 April 2014, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen, Mannheim

Time and again over the past 100 years, unique finds from an archaeological dig in the south of present-day Iraq have sent shockwaves around the scholarly world. The excavations have meant that for the first time archaeologists in Uruk, now Warka, have managed to unearth testaments of urban life that were hidden for thousands and thousands of years. At the site of Uruk, one of the first cultural centres in Mesopotamia, they found the origins of urban life as we know it.

Michael Eissenhauer, Director General of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, emphasizes the significance of the first known city that existed 5000 years ago:

“For a century now, finds from Uruk and the ongoing excavations have been a source of fascination for the international community of scholars. Next year the city and its cultural achievements will be laid bare to a wider audience in the first major exhibition to be held since its discovery.”

Margarete van Ess, Scientific Director of the German Archaeological Institute's Orient Department: “There have now been more than forty excavation campaigns at the site. Even though less than five percent of the huge area that once made up the city has been explored, our current findings provide us with a wealth of details on the ancient Near-Eastern city of Uruk.”

Beate Salje, Director of the Vorderasiatisches Museum:

“When we compare the megacities of today with Uruk, the first city in the history of humankind, at a point in its growth around 3000 BCE, we find all ‘urban technologies’ required to sustain human coexistence—and what is more, we find them in full flourish. For instance, we find a sophisticated financial and administrative system that is supported by the early stages of writing, which also facilitates trade and imports from distant lands of materials to a region that possesses relatively few natural resources of its own. We find masterful achievements of architecture, such the first monumental structures—the temple of Eanna (or ‘House of Heaven’)—and an 11.5-km-long city wall that encircled an area some 5.5 km² in size, where around 40,000 people lived. We find a people governed by anthropomorphized gods and apotheosized rulers. All these things are also related to us in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Now, for the first time ever, you will have the chance to explore and experience all these things for yourself in our forthcoming major exhibition *URUK – 5000 Years of the Megacity*, on show at the Vorderasiatisches Museum (Pergamonmuseum), from 25 April 2013. The exhibition will allow you to draw your own parallels with urban culture as we know it today.”

GENERALDIREKTION
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Markus Hilgert, Chairman of the German Oriental Society:

“Our aim is to present to the general public Uruk and what it stands for, not just because the excavations at this site amount to nothing less than a milestone in the German Oriental Society’s own history, but because Uruk as a ‘megacity’ presented one of the most fascinating highpoints in the cultural life of ancient Mesopotamia, over a period that endured for several millennia. A core part of our mission is to bring attention to the richness and significance of the cultural legacy that the urban centres of the ancient Near East have bequeathed to humankind.”

Nicola Crüsemann, leading curator at the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen’s Curt-Engelhorn Foundation:

“The fact the show will travel and be on display in two cities will give a wide audience the chance to see for themselves the origins of urban forms of life. We will reveal to visitors the exact nature of the innovations that stemmed from Uruk and show how, despite being modified over time, they are still very much part of our urban way of life today.”

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