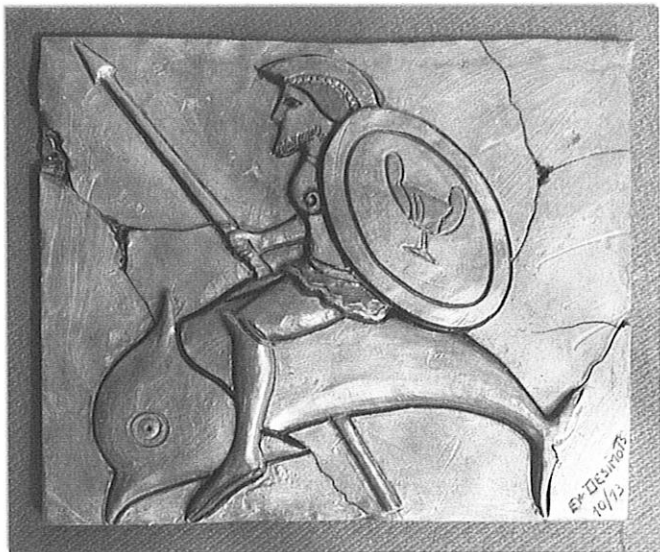


Dolphins and Humans

Dolphins were admired in antiquity for their sociable and compassionate behavior and they have long played a role in human culture, as evidenced by the literature, coins and art of the ancients.

One of the most popular stories involving dolphins concerns the founding of the City of Tarentum, a Greek colony in southern Italy. According to tradition, the town was founded in 708 B.C. by Taras, a Spartan who had been saved from a shipwreck by a dolphin sent by his father Poseidon, as was predicted by the oracle at Delphi (whose name comes from the word for dolphin, and who is the sacred oracle of Apollo, whose symbol is the dolphin).



The image of a Hoplite riding a dolphin was created by the painter Olto in 510 B.C. Recruited from the wealthy middling ranks of society, particularly farmers, Hoplites were citizen soldiers - the military ideal of ancient Greece.



A 2nd century A.D. bronze sculpture of Eros (Roman Cupid) riding a dolphin, original in the Ephesus Museum in Selcuk, Turkey.



Boy Riding Dolphin, miniature bronze from the Athenian Accropolis, 5th century B.C. original in the national Archaeological Museum, Athens.



Tarentum was one of the most prolific producers of coinage in the middle centuries of the Greek empire and it flourished for nearly 500 years before it was destroyed by the Romans c. 207 B.C. Like most cities, Tarentum chose to place symbols of its city and its founder on the faces of its coins, examples of which are on display in this exhibit.

Ancient Breaststrokers

"There is no such thing as a modern way to swim," the great Duke Kahanamoku once said. "I have no doubt that the ancients used every stroke we know and perhaps had better swimming form than we'll ever have." Archeological discoveries may very well prove Duke's assertion correct. The development of the "modern" wave breaststroke, credited to 2014 ISHOF Coach Jozef Nagy, bears an uncanny resemblance to two of the oldest images of swimming humans have produced: the fabled images from the "Cave of the Swimmers" in Egypt, and a Mayan stucco frieze recently discovered in Guatemala.

- The Cave of the Swimmers (8,000 B.C.) -

Discovered in 1933 by the Hungarian explorer László Almásy, and made famous by the 1996 Hollywood film, *The English Patient*, the images found in this cave, located in the Gilf Plateau of the Libyan desert, bear a remarkable resemblance to the modern breaststroke and are believed to be the oldest existent images of swimmers in the world. For much of geologic history the vast Sahara of southern Egypt has been a desert, but around 10,500 years ago Monsoon rains begin transforming the region into a savannah, characterized by lush vegetation, rain pools and even large lakes. This opened the door for humans to move into the area, as evidenced by the radiocarbon dates of human and animal remains from more than 150 excavation sites. Although this change in climate lasted a few hundred years, humans left a record of their lives through cave art.



- The Mayan Creation Myth Confirmed (300 B.C.) -



In 2009, Idaho State University anthropologist Richard Hansen unearthed a 26 foot long stucco frieze in the ruins of an ancient Mayan city in northern Guatemala. It confirms one of the world's enduring creation stories, the *Popol Vuh* and the importance of swimming in Mayan culture. Depicted are two swimmers, believed to be the "Hero Twins," Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who were like a double dose of Hercules. The image of Xbalanque shows him wearing a jaguar headdress as he swims to the bottom of the ocean to retrieve the decapitated head of his father. Like the images found in the Cave of the swimmers, the technique depicted is unmistakably similar to the modern breaststroke.

Reproductions on display in the ISHOF Museum were created by Jean Ermann Désimots