THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS
“ANTIOCH: THE LOST ANCIENT CITY”

Ancient mosaics reunited for the first time since their discovery 70 years ago

BALTIMORE, MD (September 10, 2001) – Antioch: The Lost Ancient City, on display at The Baltimore Museum of Art from September 16 through December 30, 2001, reawakens one of the great cities of the Roman Empire with 160 treasures created nearly 2,000 years ago and reunited for the first time since their excavation in the 1930s. This traveling exhibition includes magnificent mosaics that cast light on the evolution of ancient art, as well as antiquities from the early years of Christianity, glittering coins that span nine centuries, and fine Roman sculpture displayed in galleries arranged to evoke a sense of place and lifestyle in 2nd- to 6th-century A.D. Antioch. An activity center completes the experience with a hands-on mini-excavation site where visitors can sift through sand to discover their own artifacts or try their hand at replicating intricate mosaic patterns.

“The Baltimore Museum of Art helped lead the adventure of unearthing these treasures 70 years ago,” said BMA Director Doreen Bolger. “Now these extraordinary objects are being reunited here in Baltimore, joining the Museum’s own breathtaking permanent collection of Antioch mosaics. Visitors will have the opportunity to compare modern city life with life in an ancient cosmopolitan center and make their own discoveries.”

Now located in modern Turkey near the Syrian border, the ancient metropolis of Antioch ranked as one of the great cities of the Roman Empire and early Christian world. Decimated centuries ago by earthquakes, plague, and military invasion, the city was lost until an American-led team of archaeologists excavated the site in the 1930s. The participating institutions—The Baltimore Museum of Art, Princeton University, Musées Nationaux de France (Louvre), and the Worcester Art Museum—discovered Antioch’s port, the famed spa and suburb of Daphne, as well as parts of large private houses, two churches, and several public baths that had been buried beneath fields and olive groves for more than 1,000 years. The excavation yielded the largest collection of high-quality Roman domestic floor mosaics from 120-520 A.D. found in the Mediterranean region. The Baltimore Museum of Art today has one of the finest collections of Antioch mosaics in the nation in its permanent collection, 28 of which are continually on display in the Museum’s sunlit courtyard.

The exhibition opens with a shimmering quartet of 4th-century silver gilt statuettes of tyches, fortune goddesses meant to represent and guard the four great cities of the Roman Empire—Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch.

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The galleries are organized by the following themes:

**City and People:** As a crossroads between the East and the West, Antioch’s influences are evident in exquisite gold jewelry, such as a delicate necklace of representations of double grains of wheat and a Sasanian silver horn vessel shaped like the head of an antelope.

**Entertainment:** Bronze and silver helmets worn by gladiators in combat and parades, game tokens made of bone, inscribed curse tablets, and a mosaic of Greek poet and playwright Menander seated with the personification of Comedy reveal the breadth of ancient entertainment.

**Water:** Antioch was built on the Orontes River and fed by the springs of Daphne, and water featured prominently in the lives of its people, as seen in a model of a labyrinthine public bath house, the BMA’s *Mosaic of Tethys* (a protective marine deity emerging from the waves), and the *Mosaic Bust of the Pyramos River* from the mid to late 2nd century.

**The House:** A mosaic of the *Drinking Contest of Herakles and Dionysos* greets visitors to a reconstructed dining room floor from Antioch. The floor features the BMA’s mosaics *Dancing Maenad*, whirling on her toes and playing cymbals, and *Dancing Satyr*, pan flute in hand. View fine examples of marble sculpture, ancient silver, colored glassware, and a *Mosaic of an Outdoor Banquet* from the 4th century.

**Religion:** The diverse population of Antioch worshiped a vast array of gods, and the city played a key role in the formation of Christianity. View a five-foot high wooden cross inlaid with silver inscriptions, the largest to survive from the early Byzantine period, and a mosaic of a peacock, an early symbol of Christianity. Study a wall painting fragment of Roman cult god Mithras and Sol, a model of a Roman synagogue, a mosaic of Greek god of wine Dionysos, and an African red slip bowl picturing Saint Thecla facing the lions in the arena.

**Antioch: The Lost Ancient City** was organized by Dr. Christine Kondoleon as Curator of Greek and Roman Art at the Worcester Art Museum. A leading authority on Roman mosaics, she is currently the George D. and Margo Behrakis Curator of Greek and Roman Arts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This exhibition is curated at the BMA by Sona Johnston, Senior Curator of Painting & Sculpture.

Organized by the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts, this exhibition was funded in part by the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. It contains loans from numerous institutions, including The Baltimore Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Princeton University Art Museum, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Worcester Art Museum, and Yale University.

This exhibition is generously sponsored in Baltimore by Bloomberg, the Dorothy Wagner Wallis Charitable Trust, and Tony and Lynn Deering.

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**ANTIOCH MOSAICS**

Archaeologists discovered 300 magnificent mosaic pavements in and around Antioch during the excavations of 1932 to 1939, a landmark event in the study of floor mosaics and pictorial arts of the Roman East. Found in public buildings (baths and churches), but mostly from vacation villas and private bathhouses in the affluent suburb of Daphne and the nearby port city of Seleucia Pieria, the mosaics are notable for their grand scale, outstanding technical achievement, and the brilliance of their decorative and naturalistic effects.

The Antioch mosaics date from the days of the emperor Hadrian in the 2nd century A.D. to the Christian empire of Justinian in the 6th century, forming a bridge between the classical world and the early Middle Ages. They illustrate how the classical art of Greece and Rome evolved into the abstract and near-Eastern influenced art of early Christian times. The Baltimore Museum of Art received some of the finest mosaics from the Antioch excavation, totaling 34 pieces. *Dancing Maenad, Dancing Satyr, and Tethys* are part of the exhibition. The 28 items from the BMA’s Antioch mosaic collection are on permanent display in the Museum’s Schaefer Court and the Cone Wing.

**ANTIOCH: THE CITY**

The history of Antioch begins when Alexander the Great died without naming a successor in 323 B.C. One of his generals, Seleukos, son of Antiochos, carved out a kingdom from Alexander’s conquests in Syria and in 300 B.C. established Antioch as the capital. For the next 300 years Antioch stood out as the grandest and most beautiful of the new cities that anchored Hellenistic culture and political order to the older strata of indigenous Near Eastern societies.

Syria’s strategic location between the Mediterranean, Armenia, and Persia, and the wealth derived from the caravan trade and mercantile links to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf made Antioch vital to Rome’s expanding interests in the Near East. Roman emperors favored the city by building palaces, public baths, circuses, and an amphitheater. Traders flocked to bazaars, bringing merchandise from India, Persia, central Asia, and the Red Sea ports. Indigenous Greeks, Syrians, Jews, Phoenicians, and Arabs jostled with Roman legionaries enlisted in Italy and other western posts. Though Greek language and culture dominated, many other languages were spoken and read by the citizens of Antioch, including Latin, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Coptic, and Persian.

Various religious communities co-existed, among them Egyptian (Isis, Harpocrates, Attis), Near Eastern (local Syrian cult), and Roman pagans. In the 1st century, people of Antioch were the first to call the followers of Jesus Christ “Christians,” and saints Matthew and Luke lived and wrote their gospels there. Antioch is also a rare historical example of Jews being fully integrated into the life of a city while maintaining their own ancestral traditions, and attracting and welcoming non-Jews into its community.

At its height, the population of Antioch grew to more than half a million by the 4th century. However, beginning in the 6th century, earthquakes, plagues, and famine weakened Antioch, and it became impossible to defend against invaders from the East. The modern Turkish city of Antakya now sits over part of ancient Antioch.

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CATALOGUE
Published by Princeton University Press, a fully illustrated 272-page catalogue edited by Dr. Christine Kondoleon includes essays that explore life in Antioch and a catalogue of objects described within their architectural and cultural contexts. The catalogue will be sold in the BMA Museum Shop for $29.95 paperback; $65 hardback.

SYMPOSIUM
The Johns Hopkins University, in collaboration with The Baltimore Museum of Art, will sponsor a symposium, Antioch at 70: An Excavation and Its Impact, in conjunction with the exhibition. Scholars will examine the cultural and historical significance of the Antioch excavation and how the findings and mosaics changed our understanding of history and ancient art. The two-day symposium will be held on the Homewood Campus of The Johns Hopkins University on Friday, October 12, from 2-5:30 p.m. and at the BMA on Saturday, October 13, from 10 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public. For more information, contact The Johns Hopkins University’s Classics Department at 410/516-7556. Advance registration required; please call the BMA’s Division of Education and Interpretation at 410/396-6321.

BMA BACKGROUND
Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is Maryland’s largest art museum and features an internationally renowned collection of more than 85,000 objects ranging from ancient mosaics to contemporary art. In addition to The Cone Collection of post-Impressionist and modern art, major areas of strength include: contemporary art, the arts of Africa, Old Master paintings and sculpture, European and American decorative arts, textiles, and works on paper from the Renaissance to the present day.

PRESS INQUIRIES
Members of the media are invited to the Press Preview on Monday, September 10, 2001, at 10 a.m. For more information, contact BMA Public Relations at 410/396-6310.

VISITOR INFORMATION
PLEASE NOTE: NEW ADMISSION FEES EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2001

The Baltimore Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. until 6 p.m.; and during FREESTYLE, the first Thursday of every month (except major holidays), 5 until 8 p.m. The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Admission is $7 for adults; $5 for seniors ages 65 and over and college students; and free for BMA Members and ages 18 and under. Admission is free on the first Thursday of every month and for FREESTYLE activities. The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31st Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. To obtain general Museum information, call 410/396-7100 or visit the BMA's web site at www.artbma.org.

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