



***Minoan Crete:
The Dawn of European Civilization***

April 29 and 30, 2011

Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness, San Francisco

Tickets: City Box Office 415 392 4400 or
www.cityboxoffice.com

A prosperous and powerful maritime society flourished on Crete from ~2700 to ~1400 BCE. Around 17th-16th century BCE a devastating volcanic eruption at nearby Thera (Santorini), followed by a tsunami, destroyed the Minoan navy and economy, triggering the gradual collapse of this Bronze Age civilization. Egyptian records, paintings of Cretans bearing gifts to the Pharaoh, and Minoan paintings found in Egypt testify to this brilliant culture. The magnificence of its art and architecture and the sophistication of the urban culture of Knossos were not rediscovered until archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans excavated Knossos from 1901-1930. Archaeological finds in Crete and Santorini showcase Minoan Crete as a flourishing sea empire until a shift in power transmitted and transformed Minoan culture onto the European continent and into the palatial empire of the Mycenaeans.

In collaboration with the **Consul General of Greece, Center for Modern Greek Studies and Classics Department at SF State University**, and **UC Berkeley**. With support from the **George and Judy Marcus Family Foundation, Grants for the Arts/SF Hotel Tax Fund, Bank of the West, Institute of European Studies at UC Berkeley**. **Moderator: Kim Shelton** (Director, Nemea Center for Classical Archaeology, UC Berkeley).

Friday, April 29, 2011, 8:00 to 10:15 pm

Opening Remarks. **Hon. Ioannis Andreades** (Consul General of Greece in San Francisco), and **Kim Shelton**

Excavating in Santorini. **Hon. Xenia Stefanidou** (Ambassador of Greece to the Philippines) reflects on her experience excavating ancient archeological sites on Santorini.

Knossos and the Making of Minoan Civilization: a Century of Bronze Age Archaeology. **Eleni Hatzaki** (Classics, University of Cincinnati). In 1900, British archaeologist Arthur Evans began excavating the largest prehistoric building in Crete and the Aegean, which he named *Palace of Minos* at Knossos. The unparalleled craftsmanship of local and imported material culture, combined with Evans's definitive scholarship, has much shaped our understanding of Europe's first civilization. Professor Hatzaki explores, critiques, and evaluates 100 years of Knossian and Minoan archaeology in the context of Bronze Age Crete, the Aegean, and the East Mediterranean.

Performance. Mezzo soprano **Lauren Groff** performs Monteverdi's "Lamento d'Arianna," the aria from the lost opera *Arianna*, and Haydn's solo cantata "Arianna a Naxos," accompanied by **Allen Perriello**. Introduced by **Clifford (Kip) Cranna** (SF Opera).

Saturday, April 30, 2011, 10:00 am to noon and 1:30 to 4:00 pm

Explaining the Minoan Miracle. **Ian Morris** (Classics and History, Stanford University). Minoan Crete was an amazing place: between 1800 and 1600 BCE its people ate better, lived longer, and inhabited bigger, more comfortable houses than Cretans ever had before or would have again for centuries. Why? By looking at Minoan

Crete against the background of other moments when ancient Greeks lived unusually well (particularly 600-300 BCE and 400-600 CE), we see the answer—geography. The Aegean world began each of these eras as a backwater on the fringes of a more dynamic core in the east Mediterranean. As the core expanded, the Aegean world was drawn in, setting off economic and cultural explosions from its advantageous position on the periphery. Similar growth has happened throughout history, not least to northwest Europe and then North America after about 1600 CE. Only by looking at the Minoan Miracle in a global framework can we make sense of what happened there--and gain a whole new way to see our own times.

The World of Minoan Art: Sacred Landscapes and Nature; Gods and Man; Daily Life and Epic. **Vance Watrous** (Art History, SUNY Buffalo). During the Late Bronze Age (1700-1400 BCE), the civilization of Minoan Crete was part of an international era that included the entire Eastern Mediterranean--the Aegean, Levant and Egypt. Famous as craftsmen, Cretan artists created wall paintings, jewelry, vases and seals. Of exquisite quality, this art still has the power to affect us. Minoan seafarers traveled widely and absorbed the artworks they saw in their journeys. Details in their art were clearly derived from the Near East, especially from Egypt. Nevertheless, when we turn from the art of Egypt and the Levant to Crete, nothing prepares us for what we see. We pass into a land of enchantment, into a world that is sensuous, alive, full of wonder and spirituality. Minoan art depicts landscapes and nature as well as gods and man, and epic themes of war and peace in which we can detect the very beginnings of Western art.

Plato's Myth of Lost Atlantis. **Andrew Jameson** (Emeritus, History, Harvard University and UC Berkeley). Lost Atlantis, one of the most exasperating mysteries of human history, was born in the mind of Plato. In two dialogues, *Timaeus* and *Critias*, Plato originated the idea, the legend, and the mystery of an advanced civilization "destroyed by a huge natural catastrophe." Since antiquity many have tried to find Atlantis and date its destruction. The search has involved many disciplines: geology and archeology, ethnology and linguistics, mysticism and occultism, and the natural and psychological sciences. Ever since Greek archeologist Spyridon Marinatos proposed in 1939 that the Bronze Age eruption of Santorini was responsible for the demise of the Minoan Crete civilization, geologists and archeologists have studied volcanic eruptions there, leading some to conclude that Santorini is the antecedent of Plato's Atlantis. Thousands of works have been written about Atlantis in the scientific literature and in bestsellers of popular science, much of it characterized by myth, legend, and fantasy. Lost Atlantis has become a legendary symbol of the human search for a lost "cradle of human culture."

The End of the Minoan Story and the Beginning of the Mycenaean. **Kim Shelton** (Classics; Director, Nemea Center for Classical Archaeology, UC Berkeley). The Mycenaean Greeks rose to power on the mainland and in the Aegean during and after the collapse of the Minoan civilization. The interaction between these two cultures helped define not only the nature of the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean but also the legacy of prehistoric and pre-Hellenic civilization to the later Greeks of the historical period. The Mycenaeans lived at Knossos before its destruction in the middle of the 14th century BCE. Mycenaean art and society were strongly influenced by Minoan culture at several essential phases, while the concept of "Mycenaean" Crete and what that means for our understanding of the Minoans themselves and the implications for the first Greeks on the mainland as they develop into a palatial empire is the end of one fascinating story and the beginning of yet another.

Panel Discussion Moderated by Kim Shelton

*******Related Events in Other Venues*******

April 6, 5:30 pm. *Humanities West Book Discussion with Lynn Harris. The Bull of Minos: The Great Discoveries of Ancient Greece* by Leonard Cottrell. Commonwealth Club of SF. RSVP required:

<http://tickets.commonwealthclub.org> or 415 597 6700. Free.

April 26, 7 pm. *Minoan Crete Fireside Chat.* **George Hammond.** Orinda Library, Orinda. Free.

April 28, 8 pm, *Lecture. Minoan Art: the Aesthetics of a Ritual Culture.* **Mary Louise Hart** (Associate Curator of Antiquities, The Getty Villa). Seven Hills Conference Center, San Francisco State University. Co-sponsored by SFSU Center for Modern Greek Studies and Classics Department. Info: Center for Modern Greek Studies, 415 338 1892 or modgreek@sfsu.edu. Free.