

AFCP-FUNDED RESTORATION OF THE BUDDHA HEAD
CONTINUES: U.S.-BASED J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM AND THE
STATE MUSEUM OF TURKMENISTAN CONTINUE JOINT WORK

On March 1, the J. Paul Getty Museum and the State Museum of the State Cultural Center of Turkmenistan concluded their second mission to preserve and restore a 5th century Buddha head found in the ancient city of Merv. This joint project is funded by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) and restoration of the Buddha Head is the 30th AFCP project in Turkmenistan. The delegation consisted of Ms. Susanne Gänsicke, Head of Antiquities Conservation at the J. Paul Getty Museum; Mr. Fabio Colombo, Conservator in private practice; and Mr. Giuseppe Salemi, Professor at the University of Padua and 3D computer imaging specialist.



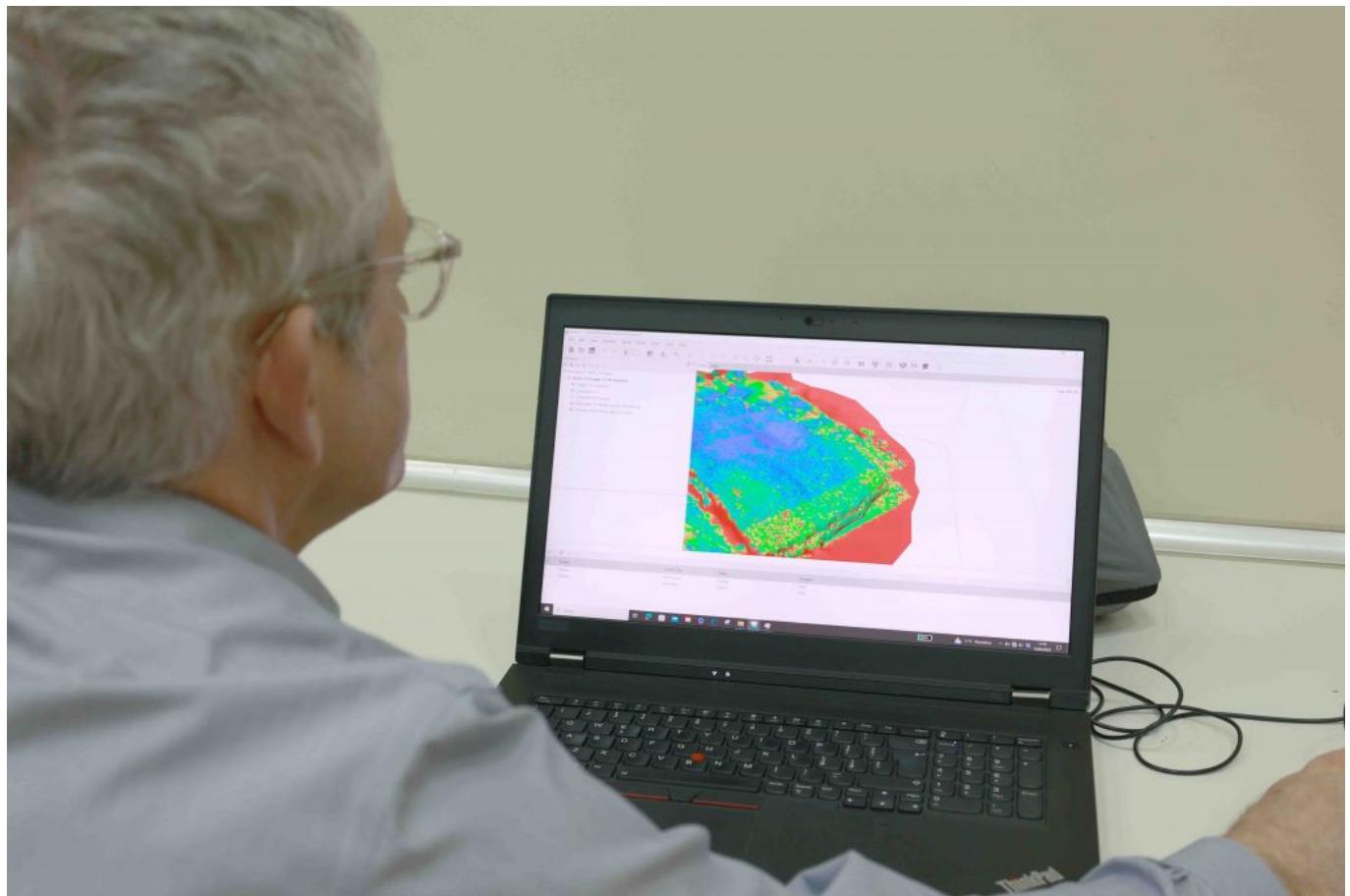
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During the three-week mission, the Getty Museum experts achieved a major goal of the project, completing removal of materials applied to the fragments of the head during a previous restoration. To prepare for this intervention, the Getty team placed the fragments inside shells that were custom-made using a 3D printer with data collected during the Getty Museum's first mission to Ashgabat in 2023. The experts also conducted photogrammetry of the interior surfaces of the fragments in order to document the state of the artifact before, during and after treatment.

The Getty Museum and the State Museum are planning additional missions to continue work on the Buddha head in late 2024. First, the Getty Museum will design and create 3D printed interior supports to prepare the fragments for assembly and ensure structural integrity of the artifact throughout the restoration process. The end goal of the project is to display the restored Buddha head at the State Museum of Turkmenistan, and for the specialists to publish their findings about the Buddhist heritage in Turkmenistan.

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This project was made possible by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) – an annual grant competition established and administered by the U.S. Department of State. Since its inception in 2001, AFCP has supported over 1,000 cultural preservation projects in more than 130 countries worldwide. To date, the AFCP has funded 32 projects in Turkmenistan worth close to three million U.S. dollars, which makes Turkmenistan the leading recipient in AFCP awards in the South and Central Asia region.

US EMBASSY ASHGABAT

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