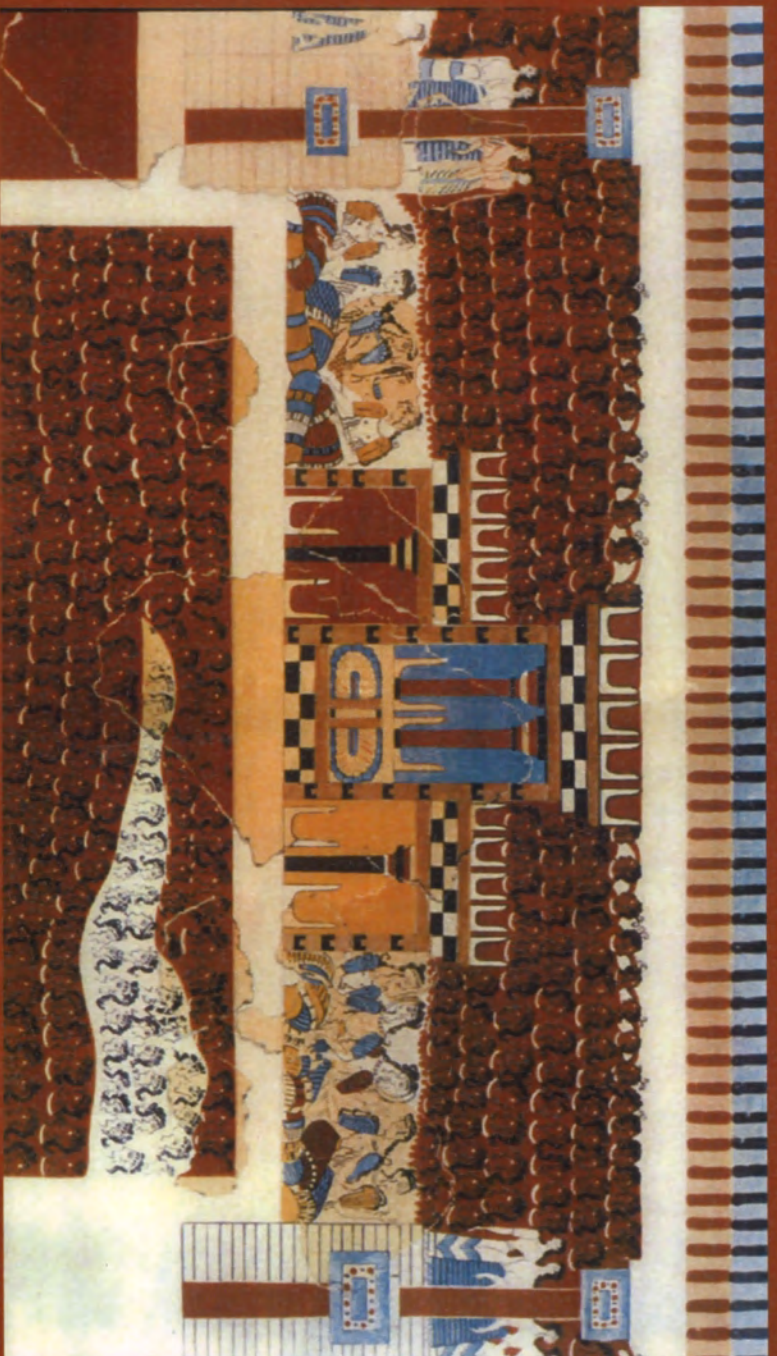


the Gilliérons at Knossos

PAINTED VISIONS OF MINOAN CRETE



The British
Museum

The exhibits: Copies of copies

This proposed exhibition displays three out of the four reproductions of restored Minoan frescos purchased by the British Museum in the 1920s. All three refer to fresco fragments found by Arthur Evans at Knossos in the early 20th century and then restored and reproduced by the Gilliérons. A replica of a Minoan rhyton (ritual vase) from the Museum of Manchester complements the exhibition along with a replica of a fake Minoan "Snake Goddess", also collected by the British Museum. A fragment of an original fresco from Knossos donated to the BM by Evans himself gives a glimpse into the distance that separated the archaeological Knossian finds from their restored images and their widespread reproductions.

The Gilliérons at Knossos. Painted visions of Minoan Crete

An exhibition proposal for Room 3

**Esther Solomon,
University of Ioannina, Greece**

Émile Gilliéron (1850-1924) was a Swiss artist and archaeological illustrator best known for his reconstructions of Bronze Age artifacts from Greece. Having worked for Heinrich Schliemann, the German antiquarian who advocated the historic reality of places mentioned by Homer, he became the major restorer of frescos and other Minoan artifacts for Arthur Evans at the astonishing "Palace of Minos" at Knossos, Crete.

Together with his son, also named Émile, Gilliéron ran a family business in Athens where they sold commissioned watercolors and other reproductions made directly from originals. The British Museum, as well as several other museums around the world, acquired some of these replicas in the 1920s.

The proposed exhibition in Room 3 treats the fresco reproductions as museum objects in their own right. It explores the fascination with Minoan culture owed to the Gilliérons and the enduring impact of their work on modern perceptions of Minoan (and to some extent) Modern Crete.

The “making” of Minoan imagery

The Gilliérons often misinterpreted fresco scenes from Knossos and in some cases used fragments of different paintings in the restored compositions. Yet some of these made up compositions, such as the highly controversial “Priest King”, have become emblematic icons of the Minoan civilization.



2. The Grandstand Fresco from Knossos

Copy of a restored fresco from the Palace of Minos at Knossos. Both the restoration and the copy were made by E. Gillieron fils. After 1600 BCE, a trend set in at Knossos for the painting of miniature frescoes with human figures and buildings all depicted on a very small scale. The subjects are often connected with religious sites. The restored fresco influenced a great many reconstructions of the actual palace building at Knossos.

British Museum, 1929 0423.1

1. The Cupbearer from Knossos

Copy of a restored fresco from the "Palace of Minos" at Knossos. Both the restoration and the copy were made by E. Gilliéron fils.

The restored original fresco is at the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, Crete.

British Museum, 1927 1015.1

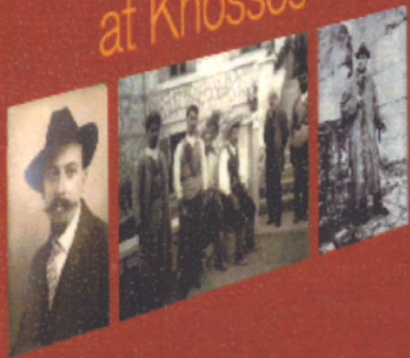
6. Fragment of a Minoan fresco

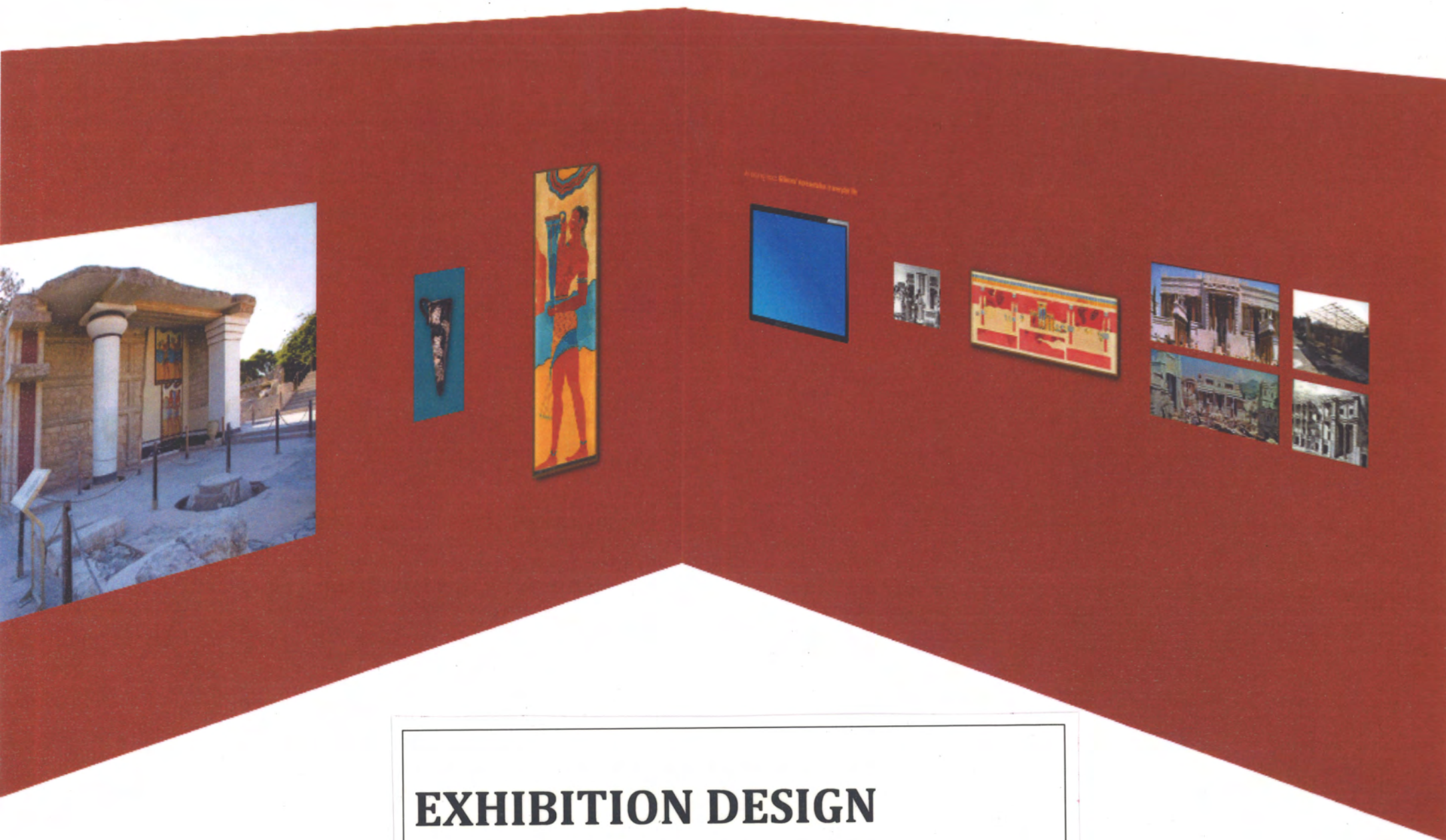
Fragment of an original fresco: thighs of woman. The flesh of the figure is painted white, indicating that the figure is female. The fragment comes from a group of miniature frescoes depicting bull-sports.

Donated by Sir Arthur Evans in 1908.

British Museum, 1906, 1112.78

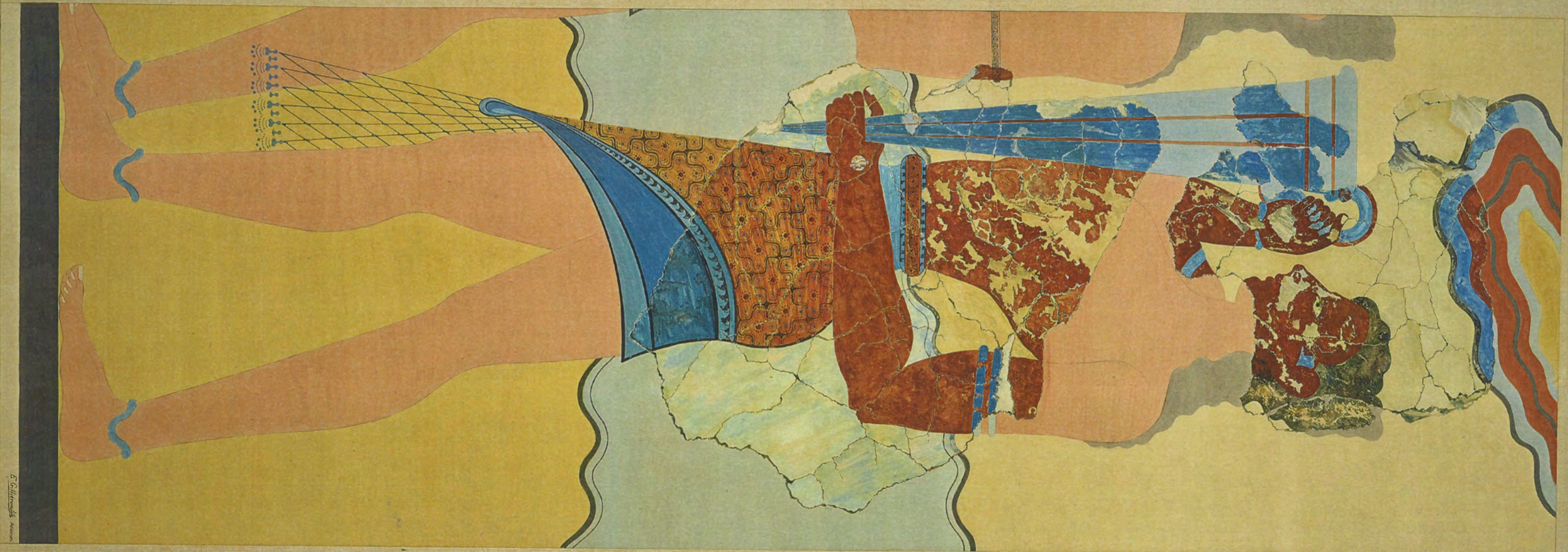
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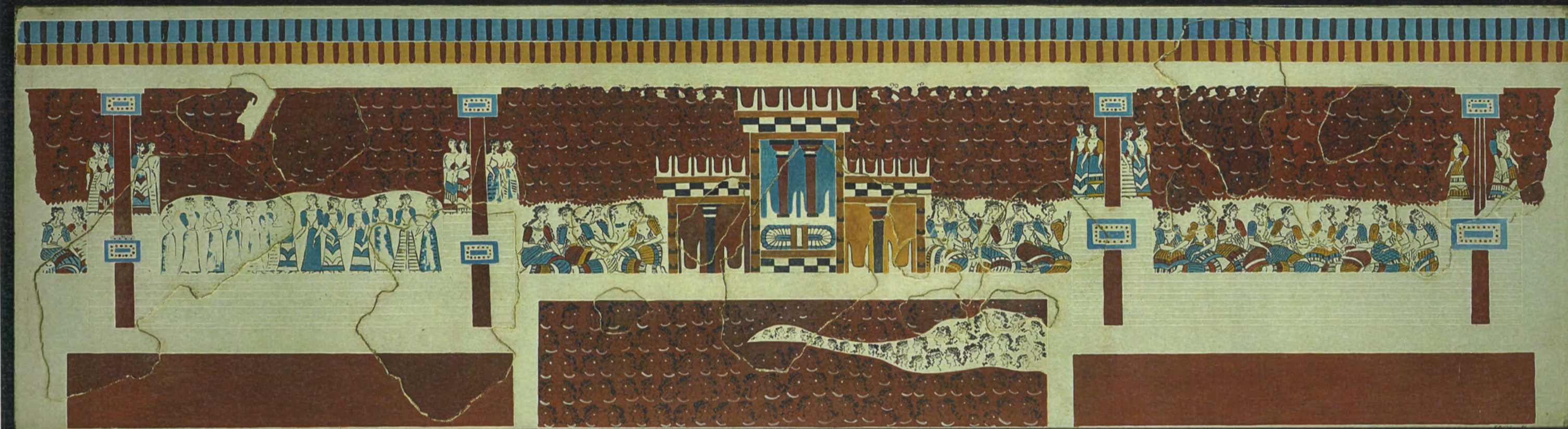


EXHIBITION DESIGN
Walls 2 and 3





E. G. Silliman, 1880



THE THEATRE OF KNOSSOS.