

Iconic Objects: Striding Lion
Clemens Reichel, Associate Curator, Near Eastern Archaeology
Royal Ontario Museum

[Podcast begins with music and Iconic Objects logo, title reads: Iconic: The Must-See Treasures of the ROM]

[Fade to close-up of the lion's head with title: Striding Lion]

[Music starts; cut to close up of Toronto on an animated globe; zoom out as the globe turns; zoom in on the Middle East; Babylon is marked on the map]

Clemens Reichel, Associate Curator, Near Eastern Archaeology: Babylon is an archaeological site in the area of the world *[cut to shot of Clemens standing next to the Striding Lion in the Wirth Gallery of the Middle East at the Royal Ontario Museum]* that now is largely comprised by Iraq.

[Cut to panning view of a reconstruction of the city of Babylon] It actually covered an area of several square kilometres, *[cut to animation with a high angle view of the city of Babylon; Euphrates River, Tower of Babel and Temple of Marduk are marked on the map along with the date 590-560 BCE]* probably really the largest city in the world at that point, and several kings decorated it lavishly, most famously Nebuchadnezzar II.

[Cut to black title screen with line drawing of a coin: King Nebuchadnezzar II]

[Fade to a shot of landscape filled with palm trees] **Clemens:** Babylon is known for *[cut to high angle shot of a sand-coloured building in the desert]* many of the great wonders of the ancient world, most famously probably the Tower of Babel, *[fade to a colour illustration of the Tower of Babel]* which shows up in the Bible, the Hanging Gardens, *[fade to a colour illustration of the Hanging Gardens]* and of course, from biblical writings, Nebuchadnezzar, *[cut to map showing locations of Judah and Babylon]* the Babylonian king, is the one who leads the Jews into the so-called Babylonian exile.

[Cut to Clemens standing next to the striding lion] **Clemens:** There are many other things that the general audience, the general public will not know, such as the story of this lion.

[Music starts; cut to panning close-up of the lion's face; cut to panning close-up of the lion's mane]

[Cut to shot showing the entire lion] **Clemens:** This lion is one of many lions that were found in Babylon.

[Cut to elevation drawing of Babylon with Procession Street and Ishtar Gate marked] **Clemens:** Most of them were part of the Gate of Ishtar and the grand procession street that preceded it.

[Cut to shot of a recreation of Procession Street moving towards a blue gate]
Clemens: As you were approaching the inner city, you would be struck by a shining radiant blue appearance formed by a gateway, the so-called Ishtar Gate.

[Cut to a shot of a blue tiled structure surrounded by palms] **Clemens:** The Ishtar Gate was about 15 metres high. *[Cut to close up of mosaics with animals flanking the opening in the gate]* It was made out of baked bricks. It was also glazed, so it had to be baked first, *[cut to panning shot of a glazed blue and yellow brick wall]* then colour had to be applied to the bricks and then it had to be re-baked to give it a shining blue appearance.

[Cut to panning shot of a tiled mosaic with decorative borders and tree-like elements] **Clemens:** In a part of the world where really true natural colours are very rare, this must have been a really, really striking appearance to a visitor. *[Zoom in on a row of lions along the bottom of the mosaic]* But these glazed bricks, in addition, were decorated by reliefs *[cut to close up of a relief of a bull]* that were carrying images of bulls, *[cut to relief of a dragon]* of mystical dragons that are partly snake, partly bull and partly bird, *[cut to a relief of two lions]* and by lions.

[Cut to shot of Clemens next to the Striding Lion] **Clemens:** This particular lion is a rare case, it's almost unique since it wasn't found at the gate, it was found in the castle, *[cut to elevation drawing of Babylon with Citadel and Ishtar Gate locations marked]* the citadel of Nebuchadnezzar where it decorated the throne room.

[Music; cut to panning close-up of the Striding Lion relief]

[Cut to shot of Clemens in a collections area, there are two slabs on a counter in front of him] **Clemens:** In order to have his name commemorated, King Nebuchadnezzar stamped a lot of the bricks with his own name, *[cut to shot of a stamped slab]* so that future kings could not claim his great achievements *[cut to panning close up of the inscription on the slab]* which of course include the Gate of Ishtar, his palace, the procession street, and ultimately the lions, *[cut to shot of the Striding Lion relief]* like our lion that we have in our gallery.

[Cut to shot of Clemens in the collections area, reading from the slab] **Clemens:** What it says is that Nebuchadnezzar, *[cut to close up of Clemens' finger tracing the inscription]* king of Babylon, the first born son of Nabopolassar *[cut to shot of Clemens in the collections area]* - the king of Babylon.

[Cut to close up on the eye of the Striding Lion] **Clemens:** The king is the ruler of civilization, of the city. *[Cut to shot of the lion's head]* The lion is the element, the epitome of the wild of the world out there, *[pans over to show Clemens standing beside the Striding Lion in the Wirth Gallery]* so when these two orders collide, it creates a fight and of course, the king is the one who has to overcome the wild. So the lion, in its power, in its stateliness, in its own royalty is a very, very important figure for the ancient near east.

[Music starts; cut to panning shot of the Striding Lion]

[Cut to black as music ends; Podcast ends on black]