

The Millennium Sapphire

Evaluation Report & Appraisal

Pascal Butel MS INALCO - March 09, 2020



Evaluation Report

Award winning Italian artist and designer Alessio Boschi directed the design and carving of the Millennium Sapphire. Boschi has an international reputation for innovative éclat and intense precision for detail. As well as winning design awards in France, Italy, Spain, China, Japan, Hong Kong, UK, and the USA, Boschi's work has been on display in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and in other international art exhibitions. As the creative director behind this masterpiece, he transfigured an 18kg rough sapphire into a record breaking 61,500-carat monument of human triumphs.



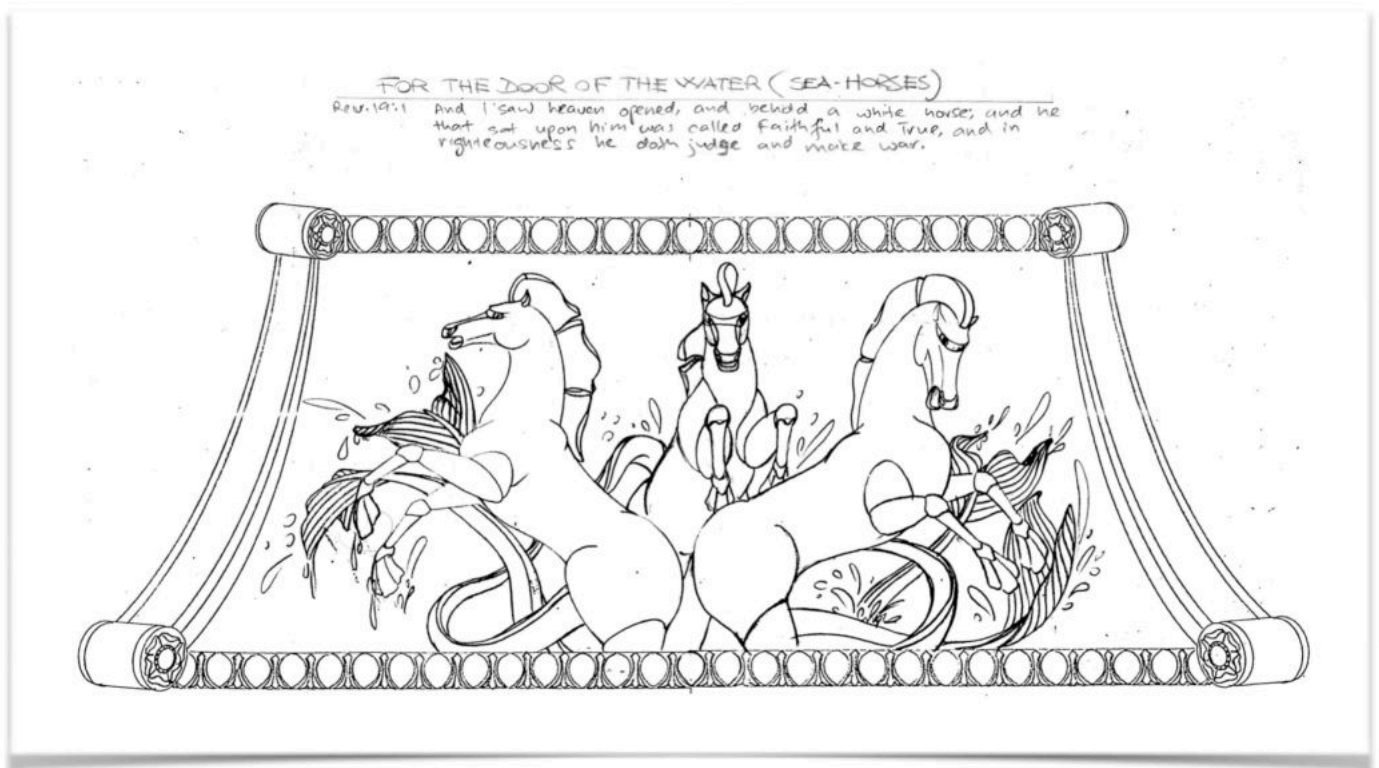
Award winning designer of The Millennium Sapphire

Alessio Boschi

The vision for the Millennium Sapphire is to pay tribute to the creative genius of humanity over the span of civilization. From the beginning, the design concepts behind the project emphasized a wide range of subjects. That range includes great civilizations, inspired individuals who sparked change, and remarkable discoveries and advancements during the last 5000 years. To illustrate these themes, exceptional people and achievements were chosen to represent the fields of science, mathematics, philosophy, law, human rights, war and peace, architecture, fine art, literature, music, sports, and performing arts. The subject matter is by no means comprehensive, and it was with considerable struggle that certain individuals of great influence and merit were left out in favor of others.

After extensive research and a painstaking selection process, the artist, Alessio Boschi, began making preparatory sketches. They were placed side-by-side with photos of selected subjects, and a proposed design for the sapphire carving began to take shape. That design was patterned after the structure of the human DNA molecule, which is a spiral and a very effective way to present a logical progression of the images around the large gemstone.

Starting at the bottom, the images represent a timeline of the human saga from ancient days until the present. The spiral is also found in ancient art, since it is a very practical way to represent a long sequence of events. The classic example is the Traiana Column of Rome, 113 AD. The spiral has also been an aquatic symbol since ancient Phoenician and Greek times, and it symbolically connects us with life itself as all of us are born of the water of the womb.

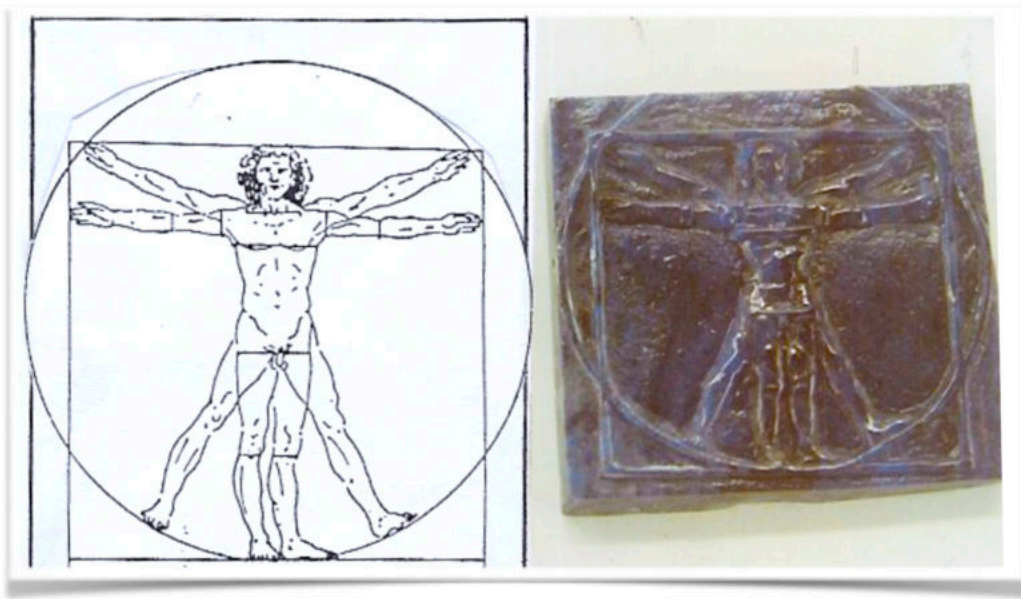


The base of the carving features naked masculine figures; the majority of which are from famous classical sculptures. Like the mythical character, Atlas, who held the Earth upon his shoulders, these male figures at the base of the Millennium Sapphire uphold the story of humanity. In the 4th century BC, the Greek philosopher, Empedocles, developed the theory of the four elements: air, earth, fire, and water. The combination of these elements regulated natural law as understood at the time. The Atlas-like figures are positioned in these four elements on the Millennium Sapphire, and they are depicted standing at four corresponding doors opening to the story of humanity.

The sapphire's origin was also incorporated into the design, since it was designated a national treasure by Madagascar. The African origin is depicted as an outline of the island of Madagascar found in the center of the water door, with the year of the sapphire's discovery, 1995, written in ancient script in the center. On the opposite side, the year marking the project's beginning, 1999, is in modern script on the air door.

Because sapphires have traditionally been associated with the heavens, the progression of carvings highlights people and achievements related to the heavens. The sculpture begins with the Orion constellation, which has served as a basis for navigation over the centuries. After that are ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Mayan pyramids, followed by medieval castles designed around a celestial theme. Further on are images of Ptolemy, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton — all of whom are recognized for their great contributions to human knowledge through astronomy. Completing the celestial theme is Sputnik, Neil Armstrong in his lunar suit, Mariner 10, the Space Shuttle, and finally the binary coded message constantly beamed to the stars from the Arecibo deep space antenna.

This and other thematic progressions in the Millennium Sapphire illustrate Rousseau's well known quote, "History repeats itself." For example, feminine beauty is exemplified by Aphrodite of Milos, ancient Greece. The same theme is found several centuries later in Botticelli's 1498 painting, "The Birth of Venus," during the renaissance period in Florence, Italy.



Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man carved in lapis lazuli to create a working prototype.

As work began to make the design a reality on the Millennium Sapphire, Boschi and his team was immediately confronted with difficulties of the gem as a carving material because of its hardness. It left no room for correction, and errors of interpretation would soon become permanent without sacrificing precious gem weight. The solution was to carve each planned design element on a slab of lapis lazuli to create a working prototype. Since lapis lazuli is a much softer stone than sapphire but of a similar blue color, it provided a perfect medium to test the artistic intent and interpretation. Only when perfection was achieved in lapis was the design transferred to the sapphire.

The list of lapis figures includes:

1. The Orion constellation. 2. The three Pyramids of Giza. 3. Temple of Ur. 4. The father of poetry, Humerus. 5. Confucius. 6. Discobolo, the discus thrower of Mirone. 7. The Parthenon. 8. The Acropolis. 9. Aristotle. 10. Socrates. 11. Plato. 12. Aristotle. 13. Alexander the Great. 14. Rafael painting inside the room of the Signatory in the Vatican. 15. Archimedes. 16. Marble statue l'Afrodite di Milo by Botticelli. 17. Great Wall of China. 18. Julius Caesar. 19. Caesar Augustus. 20. The Colosseum Rome. 21. Chinese invention of paper by Ts'ai Lun. 22. Ptolemy. 23. Mayan hieroglyphic writing, calendar and the introduction in Mayan mathematical systems of zero. 24. The Temple of Registrations, Mayan pyramid, Palenque, Mexico. 25. Indian Numerology with the introduction of the zero. 26. Emperor Giustiniano I mosaic in the basilica of St. Vitale to Ravenna. 27. He was the encoder of the Roman laws: Corpus Juris Civilis. 28. Byzantine symbol of the eagle on a gold and enamel pin belonging to the empress Gisela. 29. The exceptional mathematical and astronomic mastery of the Arabs appears evident in this plain Astrolabe. 30. Arabic numerical system that was adopted by Spaniards and eventually Italians. 31. Samurai posted to watch an old building of the shogun. 32. Castle of the Mountain, Bari, Italy. Gold Florin depicting the lily of Florence from which the name given to the coin was derived. 33. The dome of the Cathedral, Florence, Italy, built by Phillip Brunelleschi. 34. The Birth of Venus painted by Sandro Botticelli, Florence, Italy. 35. Donatell's David in bronze. 36. David performed by Andrew of the Verrocchio. 37. Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. 38. Leonardo da Vinci's Proportions of the human body. 39. Leonardo da Vinci. 40. Christopher Columbus. 41. Columbus' ship "Santa Maria". 42. Rafael's Sanzio self-portrait. 43. Michelangelo's David, Florence, Italy. 44. Michelangelo bust by Volterra. 45. Nicolos Copernicus' revolutionary theory that the Moon revolves around the Earth and the Earth and other planets revolve around the Sun. 46. Queen Elizabeth I of England. 47. Portrait of William Shakespeare. 48. The telescope of Galileo built in 1609. 49. Galileo Galilei. 50. Bernini's David, about to cast the stone. 51. Portrait of Gian Lawrence Bernini. 52. Borromini's tall lantern like spiral tower on the Church of Sant'Ivo to the Wisdom, Rome, Italy. 53. Isaac Newton. 54. The reflecting telescope of Newton built in 1688. 55. Johan Sebastian Bach. 56. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. 57. Ludwig Van Beethoven. 58. Francois Marie Arouet, better Known as Voltaire. 59. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. 60. Benjamin Franklin. 61. James Watt. 62. Johann Wolfgang Goethe. 63. First flight in a hot-air balloon, the brothers Montgolfier. 64. A & B - two symbols of the French revolution, people of Paris rebel at the high taxes, the wealth & extravagance of King Louis XVI. 65. The English physician Edward Jenner. 66. Alexander Volta invents the first torchlight and in his honor the electric unit is called the volt. 67. Robert Fulton used the discoveries of Watt to invent the steamboat. 68. George Stephenson introduces the first locomotive, the Bentcher. 69. Louis Daguerre conceived the first photographic method: the daguerrotipo, patented and produced by his brother-in-law Alphonse Giroux. 70. 1851, London, the Great Exposition of Culture and Industry, architect by Joseph Paxton. 71. Louis Pasteur. 72. Monet's Impression, soleil Levant. 73. Thomas Alva Edison. 74. Gottlieb Daimler put a motor on four wheels and created the original gasoline powered buggy. 75. Kiss by August Rodin,. 76. Self-portrait of Vincent Van Gogh. 77. Auguste Marie and Luis Jean Lumiere invented the Cinematographe. 78. William Marconi, inventor of the radio. 79. The first flight of the Flyer I built by brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright. 80. Chimneys on the roof of La Casa Milà, Barcellona, Spain, by Antoni Gaudi. 81. Dance by Henri Matisse in the Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg, Russia. 82. Albert Einstein. 83. Charlie Chaplin. 84. Architect Gropius's masterpiece Bauhaus, Dresden, Germany. 85. Charles A. Lindbergh and his "Spirit of St. Louis". 86. Walt Disney. 87. Women in the fire of the Suburb of Rafael by Picasso. 88. Italian physicist Henry Fermi discovers nuclear division. 89. Louis Armstrong. 90. Mohandas Gandhi. 91. Corbusier's Unit d'habitation di Marsiglia. 92. James Watson & Francis Crick discover the structure of DNA. 93. Russian satellite Sputnik, first to orbit the earth. 94. Elvis Presley. 95. Martin Luther King. 96. The Beatles. 97. Singer Maria Callas,. 98. Alfred Hitchcock. 99. Apollo 11, first astronaut to walk on the moon, Neil Armstrong. 100. The satellite Mariner 10. 101. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Nobel Peace prize winner. 102. The Space Shuttle. 103. Transmission into space of binary code electric impulses of the story of humans on planet earth by the radio antenna Arecibo.

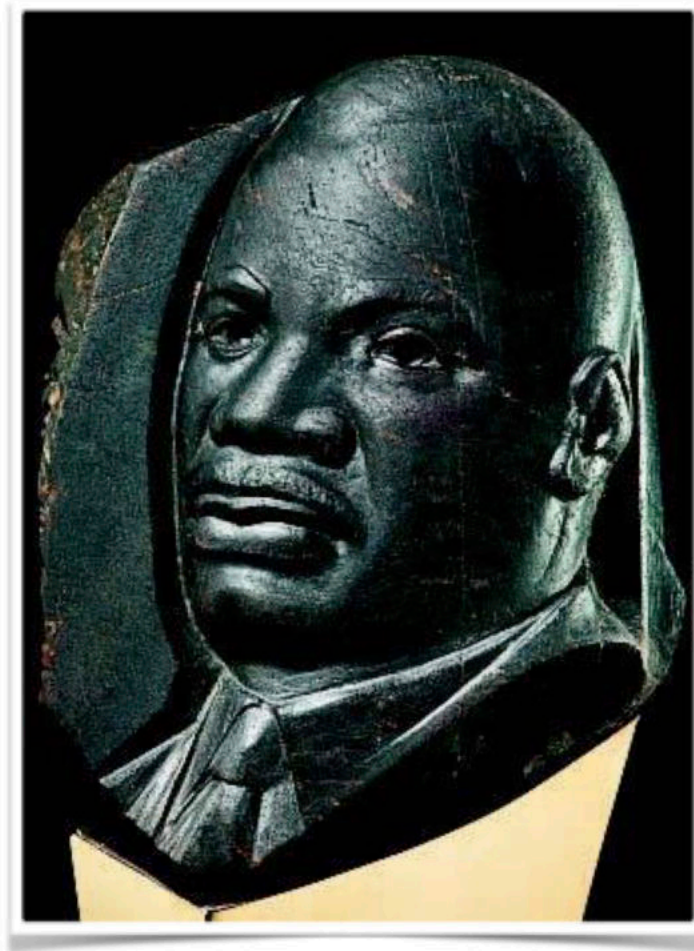
Consequently, the Millennium Sapphire is accompanied by a collection of lapis lazuli squares that show enlarged three dimensional representations of each element of the design. These squares are individual works of art and have become important factors in allowing viewers to better appreciate the complexity of human history plus the art and design elements incorporated into the sapphire. Each piece can be viewed individually, and they are accompanied by a written description about what they depict and why they were chosen.



Millennium Sapphire with lapis lazuli working prototype of Queen Elizabeth I

The Millennium Sapphire is unique in the history of art and humanity. Alessio Boschi's vision is for Millennium Sapphire be a source of wonder, imagination and inspiration for many future millennia.

Previous to the Millennium Sapphire, the largest known sapphire sculptures were from black sapphires found in Central Queensland, Australia carved by Russian artist Vasily Konovalenko as busts of the American Presidents; Washington at 1,056-carats, Lincoln at 1,318-carats, Jefferson at 1,381-carats and Eisenhower at 1,444-carats all commissioned by The Kazanjian Foundation of Los Angeles, California. On loan to Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., the Presidential Busts were eventually donated to The White House during President Reagan's second term in office, and to this day they are prominently displayed in the Oval Office.



Black Sapphire bust of Martin Luther King Junior

by Russian artist Vasily Konovalenko. Photo @Denver Post

A fifth bust of Martin Luther King Junior was carved by Russian artist Vasily Konovalenko from an Australian sapphire that originally weighed 4,180-carats with a finished weight of 3,284-carats, also commissioned by the The Kazanjian Foundation and currently on display at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science.

The major challenge in appraising the Millennium Sapphire is that there has never been any comparable objet d'art in history. Therefore, I have chosen to use modern art sculptures created from the 1940's through year 2000 which have been auctioned by Christie's & Sotheby's since 2010 as comparisons.



L'Homme au doigt Photo ©Christie's

\$141.3m, Alberto Giacometti's 1947 L'Homme au doigt, May 2014 Christie's New York 2015, current record holder of the highest price paid for any sculpture at auction.

\$117.0m, Alberto Giacometti's 1961 L'Homme qui marche I, February 2010 Sotheby's London.

\$104.4m, Alberto Giacometti's 1950 Chariot, November 2014 Sotheby's New York.

\$61.4m, Jeff Koons 1994–2000 Balloon Dog (Orange) November 2013 Christie's New York.



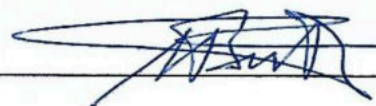
Balloon Dog (Orange) Photo ©Christie's

Appraisal

The Millennium Sapphire is arguably the most durable major object-d'art in history. Sapphire can still withstand temperatures which would incinerate paintings, shatter marble or melt bronze and iron sculptures. The prestigious Gübelin Gem Lab of Lucerne Switzerland confirmed the Millennium Sapphire as natural in report No. 0009553 dated 13 November 2000. Additionally, in 2003 the Guinness World Record was awarded to The Millennium Sapphire as the world's largest engraved Sapphire at 61,500 carats.



Major auction houses offer pre-sale estimates with the high figure as much as 50% more than the low estimate. I have followed the same formula in estimating a fair market value for the Millennium Sapphire of USD 100,000,000 to USD 150,000,000.

 09/03/2020

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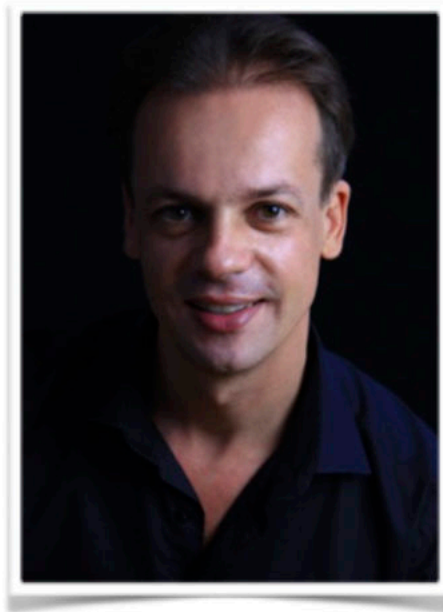
About The Appraiser

Author, lecturer and appraiser Pascal Butel is a fourth-generation private collector of exceptional ancient Asian art. After earning a Master's Degree from INALCO (Oriental Languages and Civilizations National Institute, Paris), Pascal began building upon his inherited family collection. Over 30 years of field experience and first-hand knowledge of Asian culture, art and antiques has honed his expertise and made him a leading authority. As a devoted collector, Pascal has acquired "one of Bangkok's most stunning private collections of antiques" (Time Magazine International Edition, April 2011).

<http://www.time.com/time/travel/article/0,31542,2061126,00.html>

Mr. Butel has lectured before prestigious groups such as the WPO (World Presidents Organization). He is also the co-author of *An Emerald Encryption: The Abhaya Emerald Buddha* documenting a remarkable example of social commentary art dedicated to the lost standing Buddhas of Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan, a sculpture accomplished in a 2,620 carat single crystal natural emerald. His extensive art and antique market experience includes supplying important ancient works to Christie's for Asia Week in New York, as well as consulting with museums and institutions regarding acquisition of ancient sculptures of global significance.

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/life/The-biggest-little-Buddha-30183684.html>



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