





Escaping Swimmers

Kalhu (modern Nimrud, Iraq) Northwest palace, Room B, Slab 17 (top)

Assyrian, mid-late 9th century BC

Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East 1890.7.11A-B

Modern painted resin cast of plaster copy of British Museum, London original 124538

Line Drawings by Catherine S. Alexander

On display at the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East

[From Stone to Silicone: Recasting Mesopotamian Monuments](#)

The gallery on the third floor of the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East showcases newly fabricated casts from ancient scenes that once adorned Mesopotamian palace walls. Meticulously created by museum curators and Harvard students, these relief sculptures show how the ancient kings commemorated their military triumphs and civic achievements.

This scene probably portrays an actual event from Ashurnasirpal II's 878 BC campaign on the Euphrates, when his opponent, Kudurru, along with 70 soldiers, tried to escape across the river. The Assyrian archers shoot arrows at the swimmers who use animal skin floats, inflated by mouth, to assist them in their escape.

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