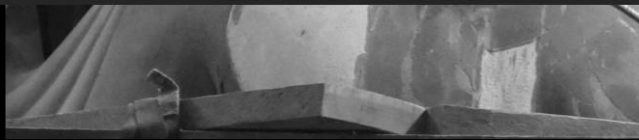
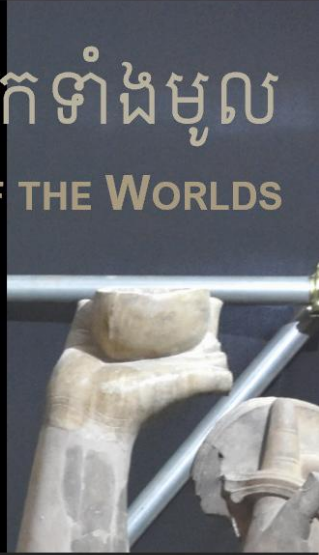


PRESS KIT –  
INAUGURATION  
CEREMONY,  
18 MARCH 2026

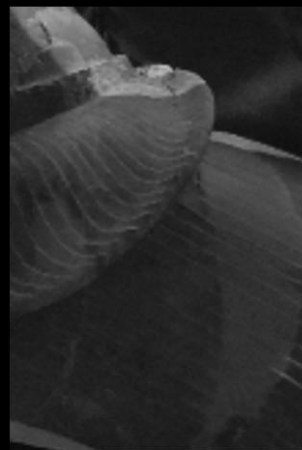


ម្ចាស់លោកទាំងមូល  
THE LORD OF THE WORLDS



THE MONUMENTAL STATUE OF DANCING ŚIVA FROM KOH KER

ប្រតិមាព្រះឥសូរយ៉ាងធំមកពីកោះកេរ្តិ៍



ចាប់កំណើតសាជាថ្មីក្រោយពីជួសជុល

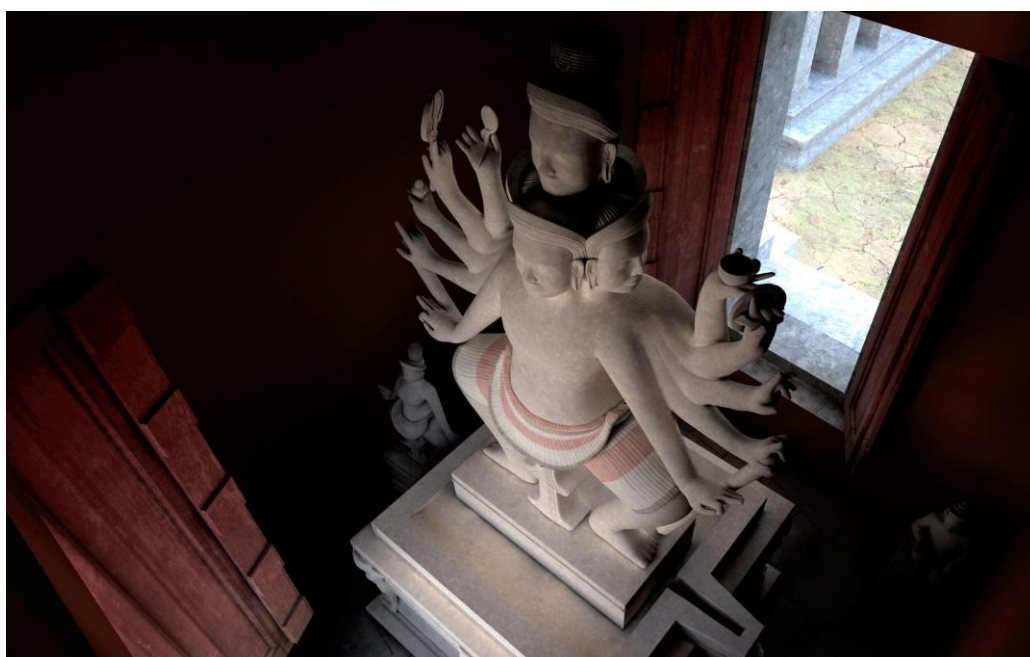
RESTORATION AND REBIRTH





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## RESTORATION AND REBIRTH

CEREMONY – MARCH 18, 2026



### PROJECT FRAMEWORK AND PARTNERS

The project is carried out under the high patronage of **H.E. Dr. Phoeurng Sackona**, Minister of Culture and Fine Arts of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and under the authority of the National Authority for Preah Vihear (NAPV), directed by **H.E. Mr. Kong Puthikar**.

The project is led by the École française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO), under the leadership of **Éric Bourdonneau** in cooperation with the NAPV.

#### FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The EFEO gratefully acknowledges the support of:

**ALIPH – International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage**

**GFC Pharma – Cambodian Pharmacists Association**

**Fondation Simone et Cino Del Duca – Institut de France**

**Armelle Darche**

**Marc and Socheata Franiatte – Chemins d’Angkor**

**Embassy of France in Cambodia**

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- Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts
- National Authority for Preah Vihear
- APSARA National Authority
- Angkor Conservation
- National Museum of Cambodia
- Preah Norodom Sihanouk – Angkor Museum

#### INSTITUTIONAL AND PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT – FRANCE

- France–Cambodia–Laos Interparliamentary Friendship Group, French Senate



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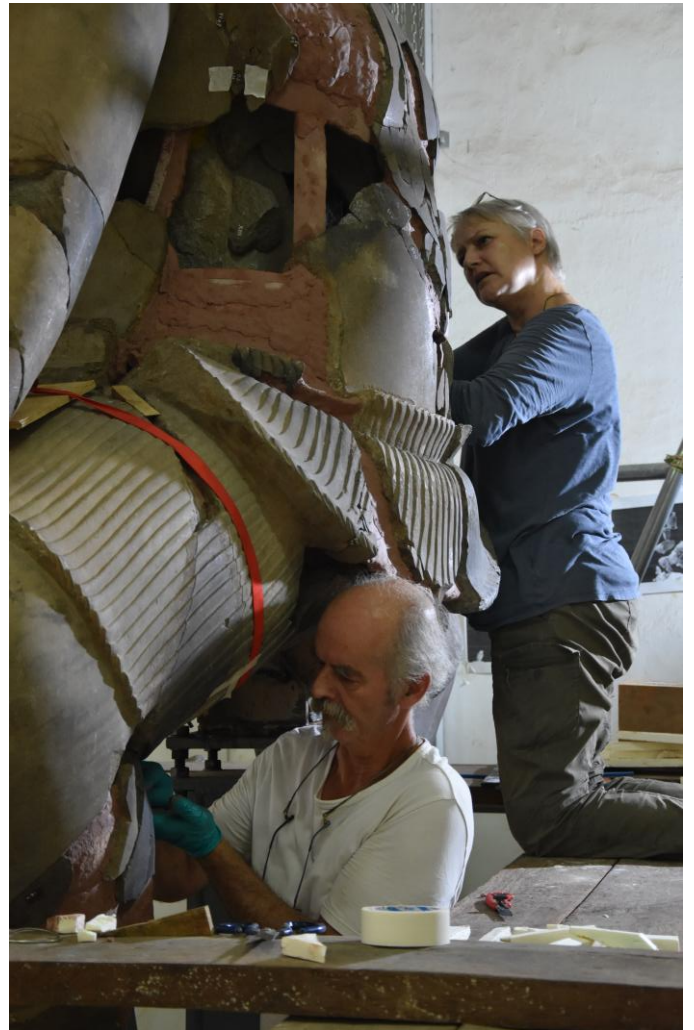
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### **Mr. Laurent Laly**

Art Mount Designers



# PROJECT TEAM

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**Fragment research and join identification**  
With the participation of:  
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**Angkor Conservation**  
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**National Museum of Cambodia (NMC) – Technical support for workshop setup and block transfer:**  
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**Mr. Chea Socheat,** Chief  
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**Ms. Khom SreyMom,**  
Former Stone Workshop

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With contributions from:

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PhD in Art History  
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GREZ Productions

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# FORWORD

There are images that seem to condense more history than others. They are not always the most well-known, nor necessarily those that, indifferent to the tumult and fury of humankind, pass through the centuries unscathed.

On the contrary, they are often those whose very scars bear witness to the heavy toll they have paid for the upheavals of history. The monumental statue of the Dancing Śiva from Prasat Thom—the great 10th-century temple built at the heart of Angkor’s former rival, the city of Koh Ker (Cambodia, Preah Vihear Province)—is one such exceptional image. It is unquestionably a unique masterpiece and emblematic of Angkorian history.

If its historical and heritage significance has until recently remained largely unknown to the wider public, and insufficiently studied or poorly understood by the scholarly community, it is precisely because of the destruction that history sometimes inflicts upon even the greatest masterpieces handed down to us by our predecessors.

In the face of such destruction, there can be no true return to the past. Yet neither is there absolute inevitability. Such was the ambition of the Franco-Cambodian programme of study and restoration initiated nearly fifteen years ago, whose first major milestone—made possible in particular through the exceptional support of the ALIPH Foundation—will be celebrated at the Conservation d’Angkor (Siem Reap, Cambodia) on 18 March 2026: not to erase the more troubled moments of history, but in a certain sense not to let them have the final say, and to do everything possible so that what has survived destruction—in this case, the thousands of fragments of the statue—may, in a sense, regain its place among us.

In other words, to welcome into our present time this extraordinary creation of ancient Cambodia—the Koh Ker colossus—and to provide it with a new space in which it may once again dance: not exactly as it did 1,100 years ago, but to dance nonetheless.

# THE DANCING ŚIVA OF KOH KER HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



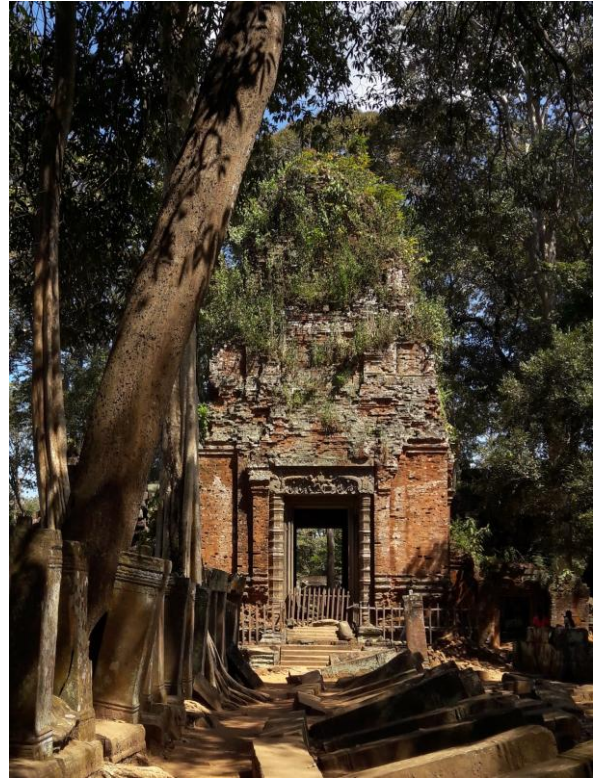
# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The monumental statue of the Dancing Śiva was erected during the first half of the 10th century in the great royal temple of Prasat Thom, founded by King Jayavarman IV at Koh Ker—an ephemeral capital of the Khmer kingdom which, for two decades, eclipsed Angkor located 80 kilometers away.

## A Colossus

The image of the god is carved from a single block, originally nearly 5 meters high. Most likely, the statue was erected before the tower that now houses it was built. The god himself, with bent legs, measured 3.60 meters in height, and nearly 3 meters in width. The total weight of the statue can be estimated between 7 and 9 tons.

It is not only the colossal proportions of the sculpture that impress, but also the remarkable technical and artistic achievement that made its execution possible. There is no real equivalent in ancient Cambodia of an image carved from a single block of such scale while conveying a posture as dynamic as Śiva's victorious dance.



# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

## Like a Theatrical Scene

The sculpture did not stand as an isolated image, but formed part of a sculptural group in which the various “actors,” as if on a theatrical scene, participated in the dance of the god.

Śiva was thus surrounded by four other life-sized deities. They were arranged according to two combined principles: the goddesses precede the male guardian deities; peaceful forms are placed to the god’s right, while terrible forms stand to his left.

Thus are represented Śiva’s two consorts, Umā and Kālī-Cāmuṇḍā. The beautiful and smiling Umā (to the god’s right), also depicted dancing posture, is currently housed in the Musée Guimet in Paris. Kālī-Cāmuṇḍā, the fierce and bloodthirsty form of the goddess, is represented seated, turned toward the dancing couple, holding the remains of a dismembered body. She is now displayed at the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh.

Slightly set back, and having suffered considerable damage from looting, are the two “commanders of Śiva’s troops,” Mahākāla and Nandikeśvara. The former, with bulging eyes and protruding fangs, displays the same ferocious features as Kālī-Cāmuṇḍā, while the latter joyfully plays the drum in rhythm with the divine dance.

On either side of the god are thus evoked two complementary aspects of Śiva’s dance—or more precisely, two distinct moments: that of destruction (of the forces of chaos and the enemies of the cosmic order), corresponding to the projection of the goddess’s martial forces; and that of victory and restored harmony, embodied in the union of the god and the goddess, of which their pas de deux is ultimately a euphemism.



# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

## An Unparalleled Iconography

Although it is not the earliest image of a dancing Śiva in ancient Cambodia, it is the first – and, in many respects, the only one – to combine such highly specific iconographic features, even when extending the comparison to the Indian subcontinent, the birthplace of Śiva's dance.

Within the profusion of artistic productions across Indian and Indianized kingdoms, nowhere else do we find this original and hybrid form of a ten-armed Śiva who is both dancing and five-headed. Representations of Śiva's dance are numerous, sometimes with ten arms; depictions of a five-headed god are also not uncommon. However, these two forms are never combined into a single image.

## A Palladium Image of the Khmer Kingdom

For the historian, this uniqueness must be understood in light of the central role this sculptural ensemble played in the religious and political history of Cambodia. It establishes, for the centuries that follow, the iconographic formula through which the god manifests and becomes visible on earth as the 'Lord of the Worlds', that is, as the tutelary deity of human action and, above all, of the king.

The same dance is reproduced in bas-relief on the pediments of temples at major sacred sites of the kingdom, including Banteay Srei, Preah Vihear, and Vat Phu.

This image likely remained a palladium of ancient Cambodia – a protective and symbolic image of the kingdom – until the statue was brought down, probably in the 14th or 15th century, during the burning of the tower, as documented by archaeological excavations conducted in 2012.



## The Making of a Neak Ta: a Territorial Guardian Spirit

Once fallen, over the passing centuries, the pedestal and fragments of the statue became, in the new proximity of wooden Buddha images, associated with a Neak Ta cult – one of those territorial spirits which, in certain respects, are the heirs of earlier cults.

The Neak Ta of Prasat Kraham remains particularly renowned for its power to this day. The transport to Siem Reap of the fragments collected on the site in 2012 and 2013 required informing this spirit and seeking its authorization. Through a medium – herself a dancer – the Neak Ta expressed the wish that the statue, once restored, be returned to Koh Ker, which is indeed the current project.

# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

## Dispersion in the Modern Period

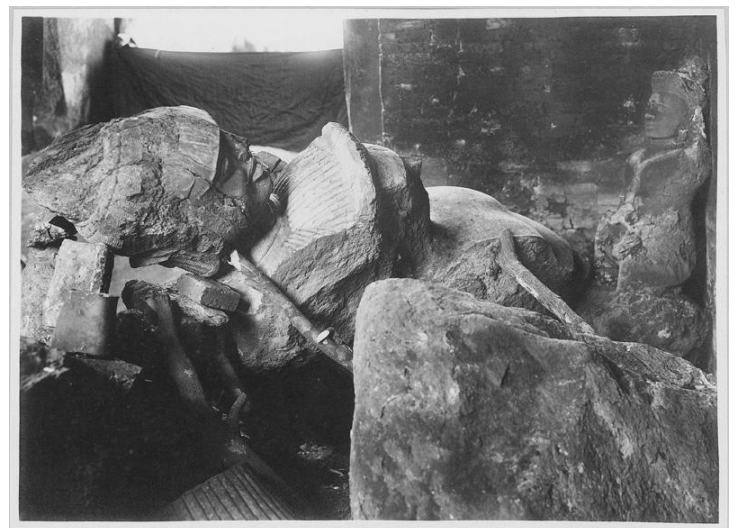
In the modern period, the statue of Umā was already recorded at the end of the 19th century during expeditions organized by Louis Delaporte, who decided to send it to Paris (though without its feet or pedestal). It was, however, in the 1920s and 1930s, through the work of Henri Parmentier, that the sculptural group was first photographed and properly documented. A foot and several hands of Śiva, as well as the torso of the goddess Kālī, then entered the collections of the Phnom Penh Museum.

During the years of unrest preceding independence, and until 1960, the museum curator Jean Boisselier once again decided to transfer to Phnom Penh several remarkable pieces of Koh Ker sculpture that had remained in situ. It was on this occasion that the uppermost head and one of Śiva's four lower faces were secured.

## Looting

Until the late 1960s, the site and its sculptures remained relatively preserved. In the decades that followed, however – particularly before and after the Khmer Rouge came to power, and until the 1990s – Koh Ker became the target of systematic and highly organized looting, the full extent of which has only been assessed in the past decade.

At Prasat Thom, looters chiseled into the torso of Śiva in order to detach the three heads left by Jean Boisselier. The atlantean lions of the pedestal, as well as the statues of Mahākāla and Nandikeśvara, were treated in the same way. Like other sculptures from Koh Ker, these pieces entered the art market through antiquities trafficking networks, eventually ending up in private collections – European, Asian, and above all American – or, in some cases, in public collections, such as one of the pedestal lions now held at the Dallas Museum of Art.



# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



# THE RESTORATION PROCESS



**LAUNCH OF AN EFEO  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION AT  
KOH KER**

**2009**



**DOCUMENTING AND  
CONSERVING THE FRAGMENTS —  
PREAH NORODOM SIHANOUK  
MUSEUM (SIEM REAP)**

**2012**

**EXCAVATIONS AT PRASAT  
KRAHAM: RECOVERING THE  
DANCING ŚIVA GROUP**

Systematic recovery of fragments from the monumental Dancing Śiva group. Over 10,000 fragments were collected, including several thousand with sculpted surfaces from the Śiva and the four accompanying deities.



**2012**

**-  
2018**

**2012**

All fragments transferred to the Preah Norodom Sihanouk Museum (Siem Reap), except the large pedestals of Śiva and Mahākāla, left in situ.

**-**

**2015**

Initial 3D scanning campaign: excavation fragments scanned, completing the 2011 scans of pieces from the National Museum of Cambodia. First visualization of the monumental Dancing Śiva's three-dimensional "puzzle".

**2017**

Major documentation and conservation campaign. Sculpted fragments grouped by formal similarities; minimal cleaning, stabilization and consolidation treatments; GACP intervention on the multi-headed nāga from Śiva's pedestal.

**-**

**2018**

Digital database created for fragments with preserved sculpted surfaces. 2,750 records and 5,860 photographs.

**2018**

**TESTING THE FEASIBILITY**

Pre-Study :

- evaluation of the statue's dimensions and the weight of the largest blocks
- initial assessment of stone alteration
- test sessions to identify fragment joins
- methodology for the next technical study



**THE MONUMENTAL PUZZLE –  
ANGKOR CONSERVATION (SIEM  
REAP)**

**2019**



Technical study in a dedicated workshop: trial assembly of major blocks; eight months of systematic search for fragment joins; temporary reversible assemblies to facilitate handling and study.

**Dec**

**2019**

**LAUNCH OF THE STATUE'S  
REASSEMBLY**

First Scientific and Technical Committee: approval to launch the reassembly.

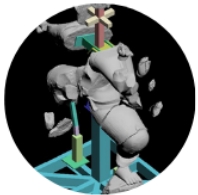
About 70% of the torso surface could be repositioned, confirming the possibility of restoring the statue's volume and form. Reintegration scenarios for missing parts outlined.



**2020**

**-  
2021**

**ENGINEERING THE STRUCTURAL  
SUPPORT SYSTEM**



Ultrasound testing of the main blocks to assess mechanical strength and load resistance.

Selection of an internal metal framework capable of supporting the sculpture's full weight (over seven tons) while remaining largely invisible within the statue.

**2022**

**-  
March**

**2026**

**RESTORATION: RAISING THE  
STATUE AND REINTEGRATION  
OF MISSING PARTS**

Internal structure with steel base frame and central mast; stone consolidation.

Case-by-case reintegration of missing parts based on material evidence, structural logic and close knowledge of the Koh Ker statuary corpus.



**PUBLICATION ON THE PROJECT**

**2027**

Resin shells and mortars of sandstone powder and lime used to reconstruct volumes, with colour integration using natural pigments and lime washes.



**TOWARDS THE KOH KER MUSEUM**

**202?**

All interventions validated by the scientific and technical committee, ensuring coherence, legibility and distinguishable additions.



# THE DANCING ŚIVA OF KOH KER

## PROJECT IN NUMBERS

**€480,000**  
PROJECT  
BUDGET

**11**  
PROFESSIONS  
INVOLVED

conservator–restorer –  
art mount designer –  
technical worker –  
historian – archaeologist  
– heritage curator –  
conservation scientist –  
geologist – librarian –  
architect – graphic  
designer

**600**  
PERSON-DAYS  
CONSERVATION  
RESTORATION

**215**  
PERSON-DAYS  
STRUCTURE  
DESIGN /  
FABRICATION

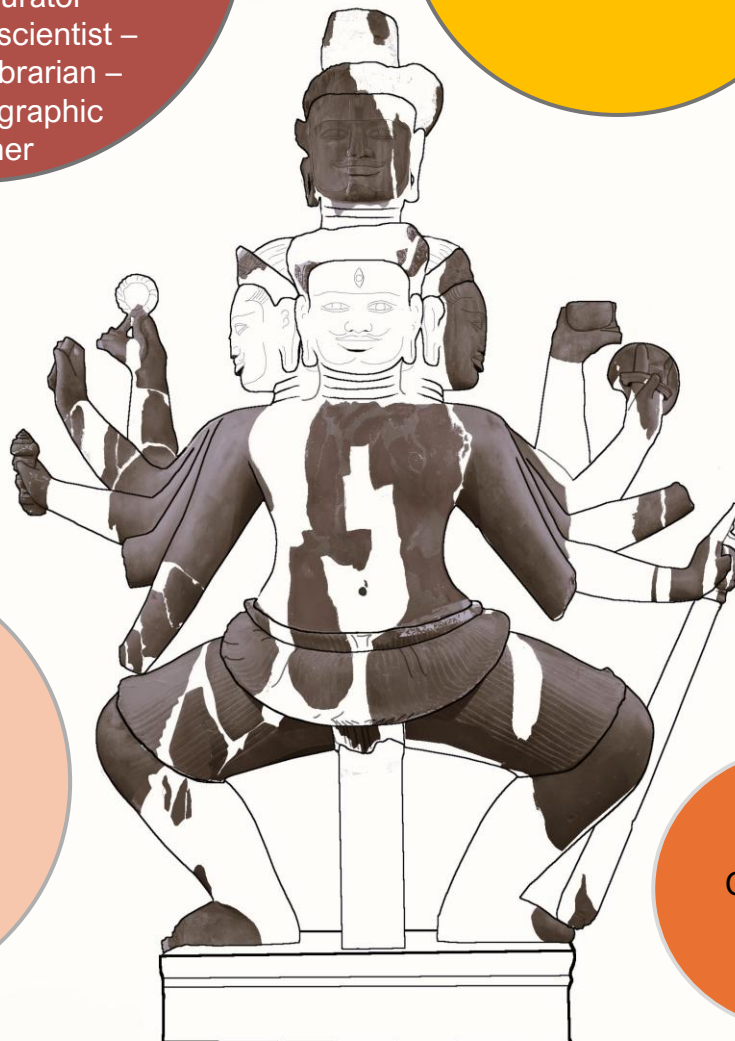
**700**  
joins  
between  
fragments  
identified

**2,750**  
Sculpted  
fragments  
recorded  
after rescue  
excavations

**30** days  
**5** training sessions  
in sculpture  
conservation

**20+** trainee  
conservators

**2**  
Campaigns  
of 3D  
Scanning



# FROM LOOTING TO RESTORATION: INVESTIGATING BEFORE INTERVENING (2012 – 2019, through successive campaigns)

**A Decisive Preparatory Phase (2012–2019).** *From the 2012 excavation to the launch of restoration in 2019, this preparatory phase marked a crucial step in the project. It ensured the first material safeguarding of the sculptural ensemble while generating structured documentation and deepening understanding of its formal and iconographic composition. These investigations transformed thousands of vulnerable fragments into a documented and workable corpus, laying the foundation for a restoration that would address significant methodological and technical challenges.*



## A Monumental Sculptural Group, Deeply Altered

The dancing Śiva was toppled at the end of the Angkorian period, probably in the 14th century. Excavations uncovered, between the fallen blocks and the paving, a thick burnt layer containing charcoal, already noted by Henri Parmentier in the 1930s. Radiocarbon dating carried out in 2012 supports this hypothesis.

In the modern period, late 19th-century expeditions reported blocks lying on the ground. In the 1920s and 1930s, Henri Parmentier documented the monumental group photographically. A foot and several hands of Śiva entered the collections of the Phnom Penh Museum. In the years before and after independence, Jean Boisselier transferred several significant pieces to Phnom Penh, including the upper head and one of the lower faces of the god (removed in 1952 and 1960 respectively).

Until the late 1960s, the site remained relatively preserved. In the following decades – particularly before and after the Khmer Rouge period and until the mid-1990s – Koh Ker was subjected to systematic, organized looting. At Prasat Kraham, looters chiseled into the torso of Śiva to detach the faces that remained in situ. This resulted in extreme fragmentation of the torso, reduced to thousands of fragments, leaving only an internal core – a *nucleus* – largely stripped of its sculpted surface.

When the EFEO archaeological mission was established in 2009, in collaboration with the APSARA National Authority and later the National Authority for Preah Vihear, the monumental image of Śiva was found in an extremely fragmented condition, the direct consequence of looting, compounded by earlier disturbances linked to early 20th-century site works.



## Archaeological Excavation: Locating and Collecting (2012)

The 2012 excavation inside Prasat Kraham marked a decisive first step. A grid dividing the interior into thirteen squares allowed each fragment to be precisely recorded. Despite successive disturbances – ancient collapse, 1930s archaeological interventions, and modern looting – the spatial organization of the remains had not been entirely disrupted. Most blocks were found close to where they had originally fallen.

More than 10,000 fragments were recovered. The majority consisted of small or medium-sized fragments without sculpted identifiable form.

Approximately 2,750 fragments corresponded to sculpted surfaces belonging to the Dancing Śiva and the four accompanying deities; representing roughly one quarter of the total, they were precisely inventoried.

Significantly, traces of polychromy were observed on the body and *sampot* (lower garment) of Śiva. While painted remains on Khmer temple architecture have long been known, comparable evidence had not previously been demonstrated for monumental statuary under similar conditions.

These fragments were examined in 2012 under a video microscope by Esther Leisen of the German Apsara Conservation Project. Stratigraphic analysis revealed complex layers of polychromy. Geochemist Christian Fischer (University of California) identified lead, mercury, and cinnabar in the pigments.

### **Preparing the Fragments: Securing, Documenting, Classifying (2012–2018)**

Except for the large pedestals of Śiva and Mahākāla, which remained in situ, all fragments were transferred to the Preah Norodom Sihanouk Museum in Siem Reap in 2012–2013, removing them from ongoing risks of theft or deterioration.



From 2013 onward, a major documentation and conservation campaign was undertaken. Fragments with preserved sculpted surfaces were entered into a digital database, which ultimately comprised 2,750 records associated with 5,860 photographs.

Stabilization and consolidation treatments were carried out in parallel. The GACP intervened on the multi-headed nāga from the Śiva's pedestal. Minimal cleaning was performed on approximately 150 pieces. The restoration workshop of the National Museum of Cambodia also cleaned blocks and the pedestal remaining in situ.

This preparatory campaign transformed the excavation material into an identified, documented, and technically manageable corpus, ready to be tested against reassembly hypotheses.

### **Two Campaigns of 3D Digitization: Virtually Testing Reassembly (2011–2013 / 2022)**

Initial 3D scanning campaigns were conducted in 2011 and 2013 (in partnership with Heidelberg University), including the digitization of 13 fragments held at the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh and 62 fragments discovered during excavations at Koh Ker. These early scans made it possible to visualize this three-dimensional “puzzle” allowing hypotheses to be assessed before undertaking full-scale trial assemblies requiring heavy lifting equipment.

The digitization was later entirely resumed and completed by the project team in 2020 producing a more comprehensive and precise dataset incorporating the verified connections between fragments.

### **Technical Study: From Virtual Model to Physical Reassembly (2018–2019)**

In 2018, a preliminary mission was entrusted to conservator-restorer Benoît Lafay, and in 2019 a dedicated workshop was set up at the Conservation of Angkor in Siem Reap to carry out the preliminary technical study preceding restoration.

This phase focused on three objectives: trial assembly of the largest blocks; systematic search for fragment joins among thousands of pieces; and temporary, reversible assembly of selected elements to facilitate handling and research.

The central question concerned how much of the torso surface could realistically be reassembled after the looting of the 1990s.

The issue was not only quantitative – the number of fragments – but structural and formal: how much of the original volume and sculpted surface could be restored?

After eight months of daily work, significant results were achieved. Among the fragments with identifiable sculpted surfaces, 575 showed at least one confirmed join. Nearly 100 additional fragments without sculpted surfaces were reintegrated into the internal nucleus of the torso, helping restore its volume. In total, between 70% and 75% of the torso surface could be repositioned, allowing the restoration of the sculpture's formal continuity.

The project's perspective changed fundamentally. What once seemed nearly impossible became technically achievable. The focus then shifted to structural stability, reinforcement of the main fragments, technical solutions, and ethical choices about the level of intervention.

### **The Restoration Committee: A Collegial Framework (2019)**

Given the scale and complexity of the project, a scientific and technical committee was established. Meeting in December 2019, it validated the principle of restoration, subject to complementary structural studies.

Throughout the process, the committee reviewed technical reassembly choices, the extent of restitution, and the aesthetic reintegration approach. The objective remains to restore the legibility and monumentality of a unique sculpture while ensuring that the material traces of its history remain perceptible.







# RESTORATION IN PRACTICE: STRUCTURE, CONSOLIDATION, AND REINTEGRATION (2019–2025)

**The Restoration Phase (2019–2025)** *In 2019, the restoration of the Dancing Śiva entered its operational phase with the creation of a dedicated workshop at Angkor Conservation in Siem Reap.*

*The project focused on three main tasks: consolidating weakened sandstone blocks, defining a secure strategy for reassembling the main fragments, and developing a restoration approach that restores the statue's unity and monumentality while acknowledging its fragmentary history.*



## Designing the Support Strategy

As reassembly progressed, it became clear that restoring volumes was only part of the challenge. The central issue was ensuring the long-term stability of the major blocks – particularly the arms and legs – in light of internal cracking and the structural constraints associated with drilling and load-bearing required for assembly.

Ultrasound testing conducted by GACP in 2020 and 2022 identified the extent and location of internal weaknesses, proving decisive in defining the support strategy.

Two options were examined: an external supporting frame acting as a structural backdrop, or an internal system organized around a central mast with branching supports extending into the sculpture.

While an external structure would have transferred the load to an outer frame, it would also have introduced a heavy and visually intrusive support, compromising the perception of the sculpture in the round – essential for a five-headed Dancing Śiva. The internal system was therefore developed with rigorous safeguards, including detailed mechanical calculations and controlled load distribution, together with consolidation of the most fragile fragments. This solution secured the statue while preserving its legibility, monumentality, and spatial presence.



### Consolidating before mounting

Once the structural option had been defined, the most fragile fragments were consolidated to stabilize cracks and restore the stone's cohesion before assembly, ensuring that the fragments could safely support their own weight.

At the same time, the main elements were prepared for mounting onto the internal structure. Precise drilling enabled the insertion of stainless-steel supports, while laser guidance ensured accurate positioning in three dimensions. This stage required millimetric precision to guarantee correct alignment and long-term stability.

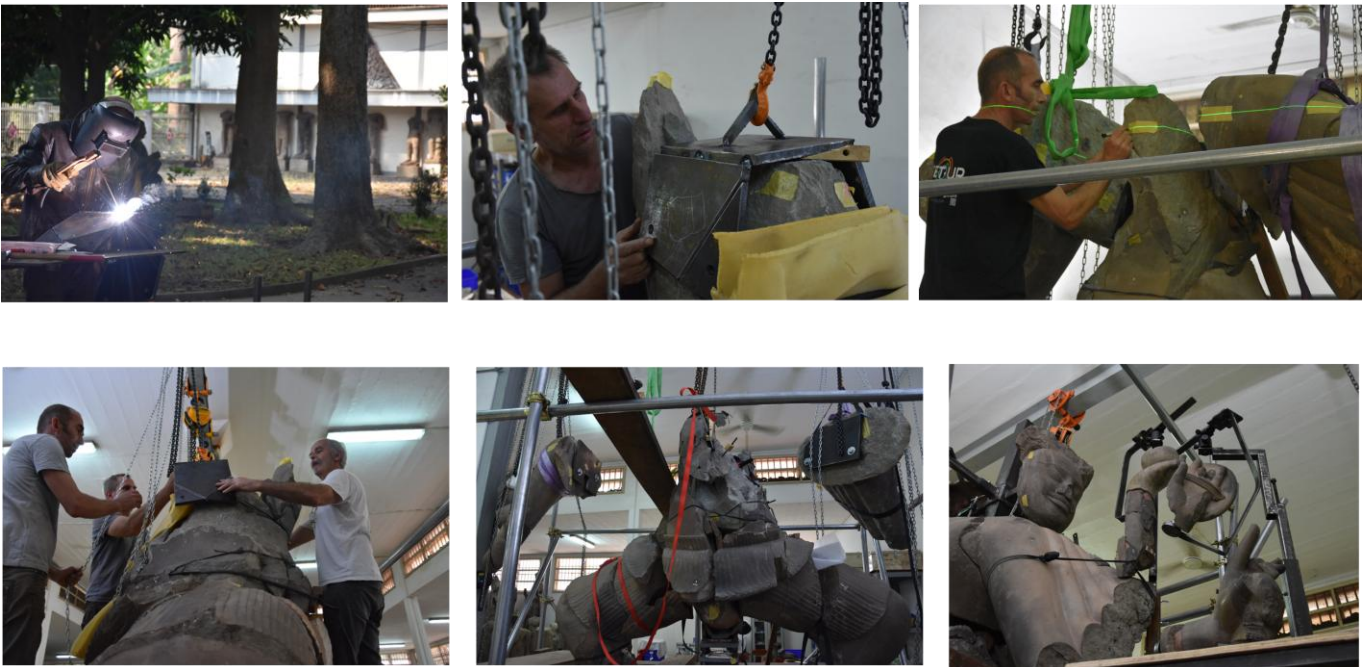
### Building the internal structure

The supporting system was conceived as an internal metal framework capable of carrying the sculpture's full weight – estimated at

over seven tones – while remaining largely invisible within the statue. A square steel base frame distributes the load evenly, from which a central vertical mast rises at the sculpture's centre of gravity. Carefully dimensioned, this mast replaces the missing carved fall of the *sampot* between the legs, assuming its former structural role.

The torso nucleus rests on a custom-shaped steel cradle, surmounted by a metal "cap" that anchors the shoulder and arm blocks and stabilizes the upper structure.

Additional independent supports were introduced for each leg, ensuring that the weight is safely transferred to the framework rather than borne by the stone itself. As reassembly progressed, precise measurements revealed a slight asymmetry between the two folded legs, confirming a more dynamic pose than previously assumed.



## Reintegrating missing parts

The project then turned to defining how missing parts should be completed. Rather than applying a single overarching solution, the team adopted a series of precise, case-by-case decisions.

Restoration – understood here as the restitution of lost parts – was undertaken only when supported by material evidence (preserved fragments, meaningful break lines, structural logic) and by close knowledge of the Koh Ker statuary. At the same time, careful attention was paid to maintaining a coherent level of intervention across the sculpture. The aim was to recover formal coherence and legibility, while ensuring that added areas remain distinguishable from the original material upon close examination.

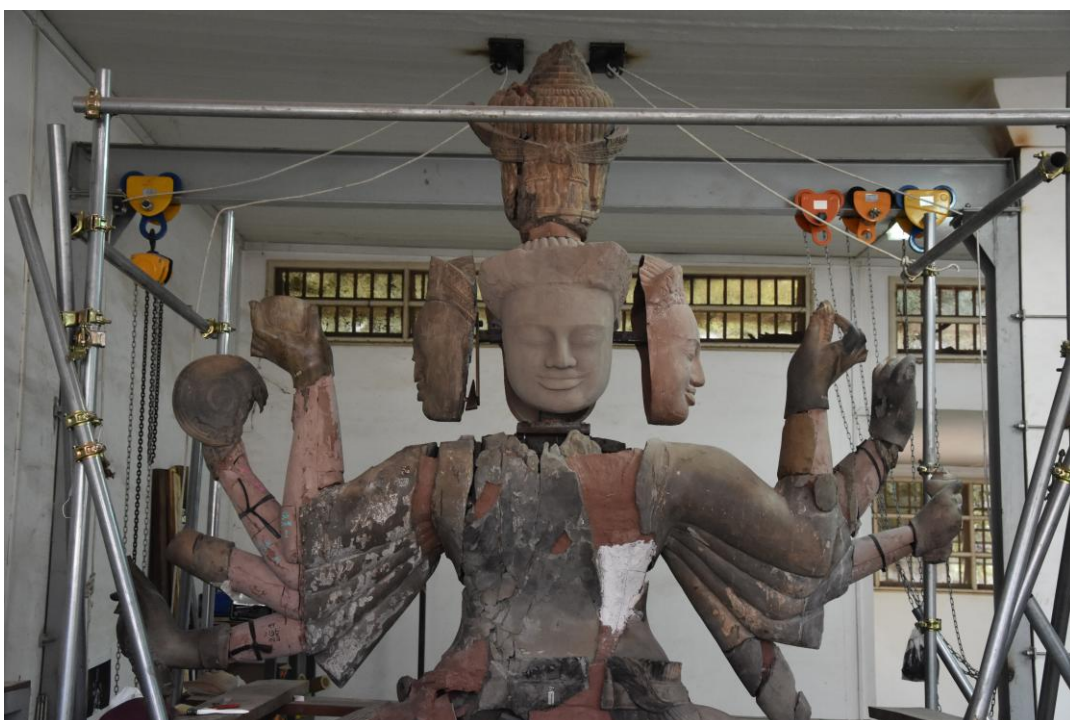
These principles led to several concrete decisions.

The treatment of the sampot reflects this approach. The internal mast now assumes the structural role once played by the carved fall between the legs. As no fragments of this element survive, its sculpted decoration was not recreated; the mast is simply cased to integrate it visually.

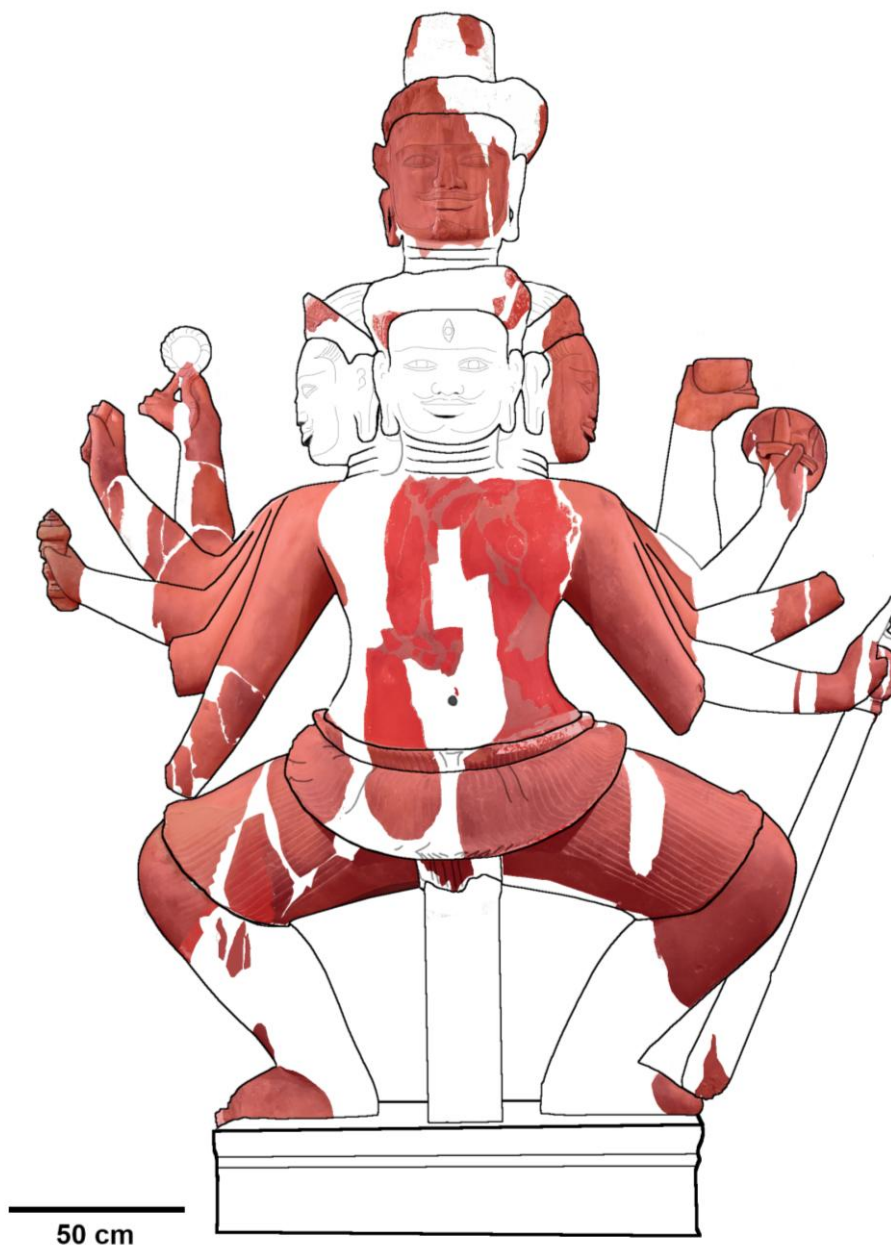
By contrast, the lower legs and feet proved essential to the statue's balance, dynamism, and proportions. Their reintegration was supported by preserved fragments, clearly readable break lines, and strong formal parallels within the Koh Ker corpus.

The forearms were reintegrated only where original wrists or hands are preserved, allowing authentic hands and attributes to be repositioned. Some attributes were fully restored when documentation justified it – such as the lasso, known from archival photographs – or when preserved fragments allowed a coherent reconstruction, as in the case of the club.



Finally, the three missing lower faces were reproduced from a mould of the preserved original face (right), faithfully following the original arrangement of the statue's multiple faces, documented by pre-loot photographs and by identical lower faces on other multi-headed sculptures in the Koh Ker style. This choice ensures a coherent reading of the five-headed iconography while maintaining consistency in the overall level of intervention.



# LOCATION OF VISIBLE ORIGINAL FRAGMENTS WITHIN THE RESTORED STATUE



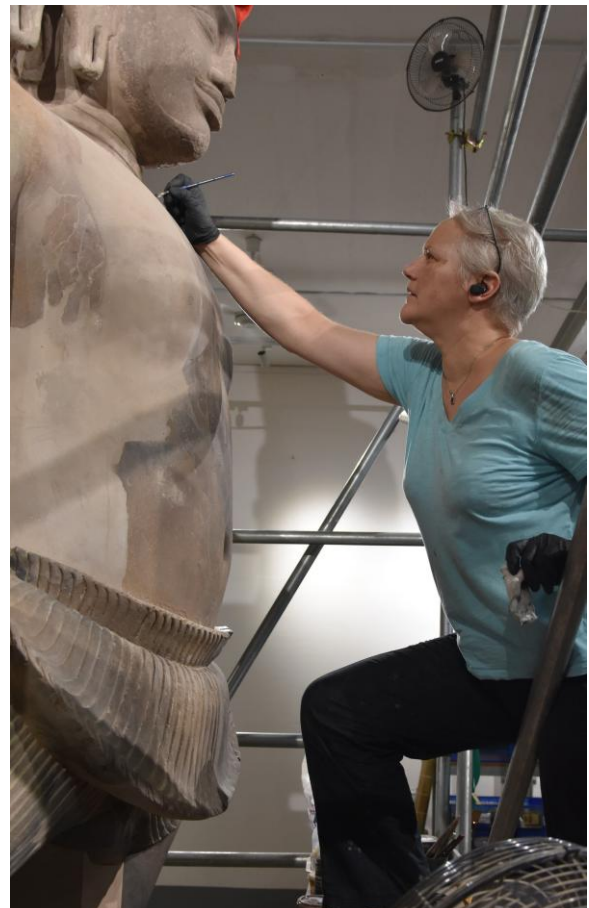
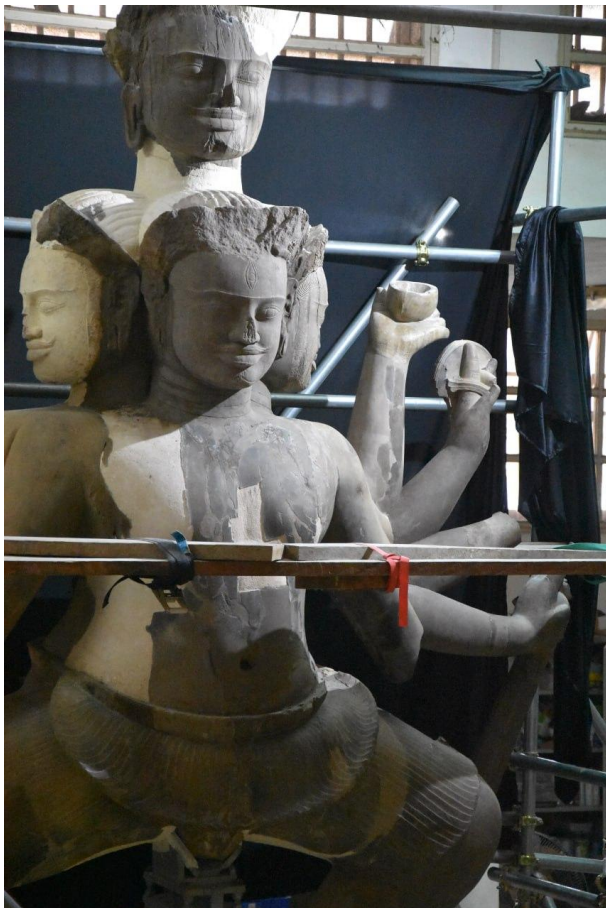
## Key

-  Original fragments visible on the surface
-  Original chest block reconstructed from smaller fragments

## Techniques and Materials of Restoration

Missing volumes were first reconstructed using lightweight resin shells, designed to limit additional weight on an already fragile structure while providing a stable base for surface treatment. These shells were then covered with restoration mortars composed mainly of sandstone powder mixed with lime.

Careful attention was given to color integration. Natural pigments were incorporated into the mortar, and final adjustments were made using thin lime-based washes applied with brushes to achieve subtle tonal harmonization. All additions remain identifiable on close inspection through subtle surface differentiation, while preserving the unity and overall legibility of the sculpture.



# THE DANCING ŚIVA OF KOH KER

## PROJECT Q&A



### Why Was Preparation Essential Before Restoration?

In the late 20th century, looters cut into the statue's torso to detach the lower faces that remained in place. Their blows shattered the stone into thousands of fragments. More than 10,000 pieces were collected and secured in 2012. Over 2,750 sculpted fragments were recorded and grouped according to formal similarities. Three-dimensional scanning allowed specialists to test how the largest blocks

might fit together — like assembling a digital puzzle — before moving them. Through patient teamwork, nearly 700 joins were identified. It gradually became clear that a substantial portion of the original surface could be reassembled, making restoration feasible.

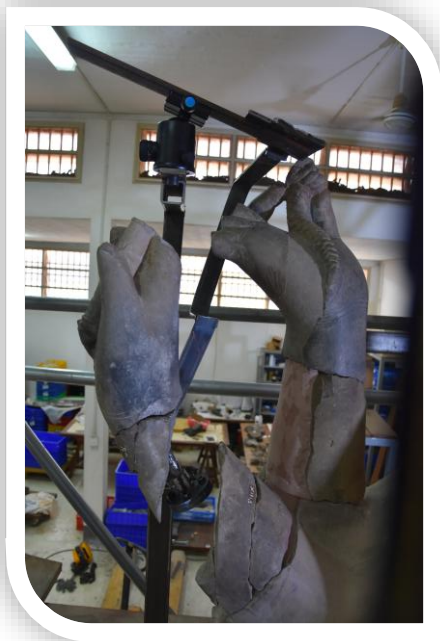
### Raising the Statue: How Could It Stand Again?

When nearly 70% of the torso surface could be repositioned, a new challenge emerged: how to make the seven-ton sculpture stand securely again. Before mounting, fragile blocks were examined and stabilized. Cracks were consolidated, and fragments reinforced with stainless-steel dowels. An internal metal framework was designed to support the sculpture while remaining largely invisible.

A steel base anchors a central mast at the statue's center of gravity, replacing the structural role of the missing carved fall of the sampot (the drapery between the legs). The torso nucleus is surmounted by a metal "cap" securing the shoulder and arm blocks and supporting the five heads. This structural solution ensured stability while preserving the sculpture's legibility and monumentality.



## PROJECT Q&A



### How Were Missing Parts Carefully Reintegrated?

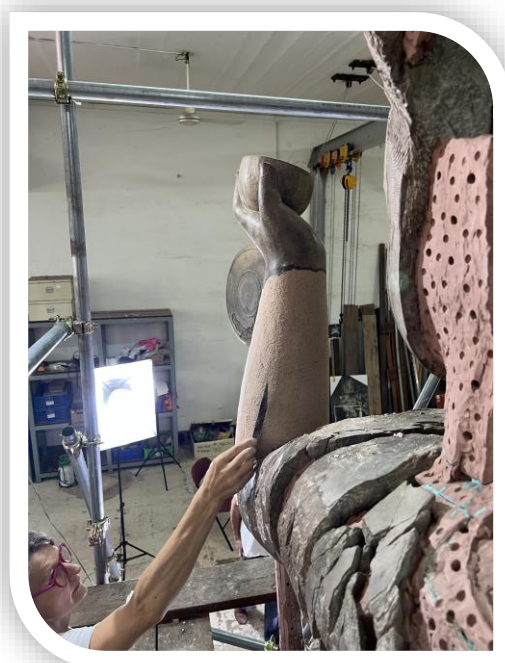
Decisions were made case by case, based on archival documentation, material evidence and close comparison with the Koh Ker sculptural corpus. Missing parts were reintroduced only when supported by preserved fragments, readable break lines, and structural logic. Where evidence was lacking, no elements were recreated — as with the fall of the sampot, now structurally replaced by the internal mast. Where strong evidence existed, reintegration restored dynamism and iconographic

coherence. The lower legs were reconstructed, their position guided by surviving foot remains. The three missing lower faces were reproduced from a mould of the original preserved face (right), faithfully following the original arrangement of the statue's multiple faces (an arrangement documented by pre-loot photographs and other multi-headed sculptures in the Koh Ker style). All additions remain identifiable on close inspection through subtle surface differentiation, while preserving the statue's unity and monumentality.

### What Techniques and Materials Were Used?

The scale and fragmentation of the sculpture required tailored technical solutions. Reassembling hundreds of fragments involved developing restoration materials and structural techniques through close collaboration between highly experienced conservator-restorers, specialist art mounters, and the project's scientific director. Missing volumes were reconstructed using lightweight resin shells, providing

structural support for mortar reintegrations while minimizing load on the fragile stone. These were then shaped with mortars composed mainly of sandstone powder and lime, formulated to match the original stone. Colour integration was achieved by incorporating natural pigments into the mortar and refining tones with thin lime-based washes. All major restoration choices were validated by the scientific and technical committee, ensuring conservation ethics and long-term durability.



# ព្រះតិស្សរាំនៅកោះកេរី

## គម្រោង សំណួរនិងចម្លើយ



**ហេតុអ្វីបានជាការរៀបចំជាមុន  
មានសារៈសំខាន់ដើម្បីឈាន  
ដល់ការជួសជុល?**

នៅចុងសតវត្សទី២០ ក្រុមចោទ  
បានដាច់ផ្តាច់ដងខ្លួនរូបបំណង  
លួចយកព្រះភក្ត្រកណ្តាលទាំង  
៣ដែលនៅស្តួ។ ការវាយ  
បំផ្លាញដងខ្លួននេះបានធ្វើឱ្យថ្ម  
បែកជាប្រាប់ពាន់បំណែក។  
បំណែកច្រើនជាង ១០,០០០  
ដុំត្រូវបានប្រមូល និងរក្សាទុក  
ក្នុងឆ្នាំ ២០១២។  
ក្នុងចំណោមនោះ បំណែកជាង  
២,៧៥០ ដុំបានចុះបញ្ជី និង  
កំណត់ប្រភេទជាក្រុមតាមទម្រង់

ដែលលក្ខណៈស្រដៀងគ្នា។  
បច្ចេកទេសស្ថេន3D ជួយឱ្យ  
អ្នកជំនាញសាកល្បងផ្តុំបំណែក  
ធំៗ ងាយស្រួលក្នុងការលសាក់  
ល្បួងតាមប្រព័ន្ធគីធីថល មុន  
នឹងការផ្តុំសម្រេច។  
ការសហការយ៉ាងតស៊ូអត់ធ្មត់  
របស់ក្រុមការងារ បានរកឃើញ  
បំណែកប្រមាណជាង ៧០០  
កន្លែងភ្ជាប់ត្រូវគ្នា។ បន្តិចម្តងៗ  
ក៏ឈានទៅលេចទម្រង់ផ្ទៃដើមធំ  
មួយរបស់រូបចម្លាក់ហើយចេញ  
ជារូបរាង អាចត្រូវផ្តុំគ្នាឡើងវិញ  
បាន។

**ប្រតិការៈអណ្តែតឡើង ៖ ធ្វើ  
ដូចម្តេចដើម្បីឱ្យលោកអាច  
ក្រោកឈរឡើងវិញ?**

នៅពេលផ្ទៃខ្លួនផ្តុំបានប្រហែល  
៧០% ផ្តាច់គ្នាមកទីតាំងដើម  
រូប បញ្ហាប្រឈមថ្មីមួយកើត  
មានគឺ៖ តើត្រូវធ្វើដូចម្តេចដើម្បី  
ឱ្យចម្លាក់ទម្ងន់ប្រមាណ ៧  
តោន អាចឈរនឹងបានដោយ  
សុវត្ថិភាព។  
មុនពេលដំឡើង បំណែកធំៗ  
ដែលងាយផុយស្រួយត្រូវធ្វើ  
អាគរិនិដ្ឋយ និងពង្រឹងឡើងវិ  
ញ។ ស្នាមប្រេះទាំងឡាយត្រូវ  
បានជួសជុលពង្រឹងហើយ  
បំណែកខ្លះត្រូវដាក់បន្ទុកដៃកម្ពុ  
ណុក។  
យើងបានរចនាក្រោងឆ្អឹងលោ  
ហៈបញ្ចុះខាងក្នុងដើម្បីទ្រទ្រង់  
នេះ ដោយលាក់ពីក្នុងមិនឱ្យ

មើលឃើញ។ ជើងតាំងដៃកជា  
គ្រឹះដ៏សំខាន់ក្នុងការទ្រទ្រង់ទី  
ប្រជុំទម្ងន់នៃរូបទាំងមូល ហើយ  
ក៏ជាផ្នែកមួយជំនួសនូវតួនាទីនៃ  
រចនាសម្ព័ន្ធដែលបានបាត់ ត្រង់  
ផ្នែកសំពត់ ដែលគេធ្លាក់ធ្លាក់  
ចុះមកក្រោមនៅចន្លោះភ្នៅទាំង  
ពីរ។  
បង្គោលនៅកណ្តាលដងខ្លួនរូប  
គ្របដោយ “បន្ទះគម្របលោ  
ហៈ” ដែលមានខ្នាតស្មើភ្ជាប់  
បំណែកស្នា, ព្រះហស្ត និងទ្រ  
ព្រះសិរីប្រតិមាទាំងមូលនេះ។  
ដំណោះស្រាយផ្នែករចនាសម្ព័ន្ធ  
នេះធានានូវស្ថេរភាពរូប ហើយ  
នៅតែរក្សាបាន ភាព  
ច្បាស់លាស់ និងអស្ចារ្យនៃ  
ស្នាដៃចម្លាក់ដ៏ធំមហិមា។



# គម្រោង សំណួរ និង ចម្លើយ



## ការបំពេញបន្ថែមនូវផ្នែកដែលបាត់ ត្រូវធ្វើដោយប្រយ័ត្នប្រយោជន៍ដូចម្តេច ខ្លះ?

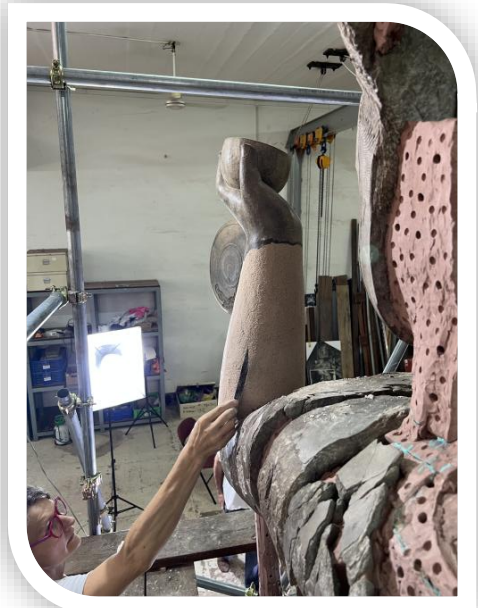
រាល់ការសម្រេចចិត្តនីមួយៗត្រូវបាន ធ្វើឡើង តាមករណីជាក់ស្តែង ដោយ ផ្អែកលើឯកសារបណ្ណសារ ភស្តុតាង នៃសម្ភារៈ និងការប្រៀបធៀបដ៏ប្រុង ប្រយ័ត្ននៃចម្លាក់សិល្បៈនាសម័យ កោះកេរ្តិ៍។ ផ្នែកដែលបាត់ត្រូវបំពេញ ឡើងវិញ កាលណាមានភស្តុតាង ងានបំណែកដែលនៅសេសសល់ ក៏ ដូចជាស្នាមបែកដែលអាចសម្គាល់ បាននិងស៊ីគ្នាជាមួយស្ថានភាពដើមនៃ ចំណុចដែលបាត់ ព្រមទាំងមាន តុល្យភាពលើរចនាសម្ព័ន្ធ។ រីឯនៅកន្លែងដែលភស្តុតាងមិនគ្រប់ គ្រាន់ គ្មានផ្នែកណាមួយត្រូវបាន បង្កើតឡើងវិញឡើយ — ដូចជា ផ្នែក សំពត់ ដែលធ្លាក់ចុះនៅចន្លោះ ភ្នំ ដែលបច្ចុប្បន្នត្រូវបានជំនួសតួ នាទីរចនាសម្ព័ន្ធដោយសសរខាងក្នុ ង។ នៅកន្លែងដែលមានភស្តុតាង ច្បាស់លាស់ ការបំពេញឡើងវិញ

បានជួយស្តារជាថ្មីនូវ ភាពរស់រវើក និងភាពស្របគ្នានៃប្រដិមាសាស្ត្រ របស់រូប។ ផ្នែកព្រះបាទខាងក្រោម ត្រូវបានកសាងឡើងវិញ ដោយផ្អែក លើភស្តុតាងបំណែកព្រះបាទដែល នៅសល់ដែលបានរកឃើញនៅទីតាំង ដើម។ ព្រះភក្ត្រខាងក្រោមចំនួន ៣ ដែល បាត់បង់ ត្រូវបានបង្កើតឡើងវិញ ដោយប្រើ ពុម្ពចម្លង ពីព្រះភក្ត្រដើម ដែលនៅសល់ (ខាងស្តាំ) ដោយ គោរពតាមលំនាំដើមនៃព្រះភក្ត្រជា ច្រើនរបស់រូបចម្លាក់ (ការរៀបចំនេះ ត្រូវបានពិនិត្យផ្ទៀងផ្ទាត់ជាមួយរូបថត បណ្ណសារមុនពេលការលួចបំផ្លាញ និងរូបចម្លាក់មានព្រះសិរច្រើនផ្សេង ទៀតក្នុងសិល្បៈរចនាបថ កោះកេរ្តិ៍។ ការបន្ថែមថ្មីទាំងអស់នៅតែអាច សម្គាល់បាននៅពេលពិនិត្យឱ្យជិត តាមរយៈភាពខុសគ្នាបន្តិចបន្តួចនៃផ្ទៃ ថ្មដើមនិងការបន្ស៊ុតពណ៌នៅកន្លែង បន្ថែមថ្មី ខណៈនៅតែរក្សាបាន ភាព រួម ភាពដើម និងភាពអស្ចារ្យនៃរូប ចម្លាក់ដ៏ធំមហិមា។

## តើបច្ចេកទេស និងសម្ភារៈអ្វី ខ្លះដែលយកមកប្រើប្រាស់?

ទំហំដ៏ធំ និងបំណែកដ៏ច្រើន របស់រូបតម្រូវឱ្យមានដំណោះ ស្រាយបច្ចេកទេសត្រឹមត្រូវ និងសមស្រប។ ការផ្តុំបំណែក រាប់រយឡើងវិញ ត្រូវប្រើប្រាស់ សម្ភារៈនិងបច្ចេកទេសជឿន លឿនចុងក្រោយ ដើរស្រប តាមអ្នកអភិរក្ស អ្នកជួសជុល ដែលមានបទពិសោធន៍ខ្ពស់ អ្នកជំនាញផ្នែកដំឡើងស្នាដៃ សិល្បៈ និងប្រធានគម្រោងគត់ មត់។ ផ្នែកដែលបាត់ បានបន្ថែមមក វិញដោយ ជីវស្រាល (lightweight resin shells) ជាជំនួយជន្មល់ទល់ ទ្រទ្រង់រចនាសម្ព័ន្ធនិងកាត់ បន្ថយទម្ងន់ផ្ទៃដែលងាយផុយ ស្រួយ។ បន្ទាប់មក ផ្នែកទាំង

នេះត្រូវបានបំពេញដោយ បាយអដោយផ្សំពីម្សៅថ្មភក់ រួមជាមួយ កំបោរ ជាសមាស ភាគចម្បង ដើម្បីឱ្យស្របទៅ នឹងលក្ខណៈថ្មដើម។ ការប្រដេញពណ៌ធ្វើពី ដីលែង ធម្មជាតិ ចូលជាមួយកំបោរ រួចក៏ប្រដេញពណ៌បន្ថែមមួយ ស្រទាប់ស្រាលៗលើផ្នែកបោ រ។ រាល់ដំណាក់កាលជួសជុល នីមួយៗ សុទ្ធតែជជែកពិភាក្សា ពិនិត្យនិងអនុម័តដោយ គណៈ កម្មាធិការបច្ចេកទេស ដើម្បី ធានាថា ការអភិរក្សគោរពតាម គោលការណ៍ក្រុមសីលធម៌វិជ្ជា ជីវៈនៃការអភិរក្ស ព្រមទាំង ភាពធន់រឹងមាំយូរអង្វែង។





# ABOUT THE EFEO

## **The École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)**

is an institution under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, whose scientific mission is to conduct humanities and social sciences research on classical and local Asian civilisations. The geographical area covered by this research, which extends from India through China to Japan and takes in all of Southeast Asia, is home to virtually all of the societies that have come under Chinese or Indian influence in the course of their history.

Networks of local and international researchers have grown up around its centres, which the school has built on to continue its development. With an approach to Asia based on multidisciplinary and comparative research, which combines expertise in archaeology, history, art history, anthropology, philology and religious studies, the EFEO is also increasingly engaged in projects that address questions affecting the contemporary world.

## **An international network of excellence**

Over the decades, the EFEO has developed numerous collaborations with Asian and Western partners and researchers. Today, alongside its own independent centres in Chiang Mai, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Jakarta, Kyoto, Puducherry, Shanghai, Siem Reap and Vientiane, and it also maintains offices within prestigious Asian scientific institutions: universities, research centres and museums. These include Bangkok, Beijing, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Pune, Seoul, Taipei, Tokyo and Yangon.

In some of its centres the EFEO welcomes researchers from other French and foreign institutions for periods of one or more years. These colleagues, who are generally involved in research programmes led by the EFEO, benefit from access to the school's documentary resources as well as its local scientific partnerships. Finally, the EFEO's centre in Kyoto, is also home to the Italian School of East Asian Studies.

The EFEO is thus at the heart of an extensive collaborative network of international specialists on Asia. At the same time, the school is a member of the Écoles françaises à l'étranger network and is an academic partner of Université PSL (Paris Sciences et Lettres).

## **Cross-disciplinary research and new technologies**

The originality of the EFEO also lies in its ability to carry out large-scale cross-disciplinary projects in its fields of excellence – such as the history of urbanisation in Asia and the formation and spread of Hinduism – which have brought together the work of a range of specialists and several of its different centres throughout Asia.

Research is broadly divided between two themed groups: one on the construction of 'Centres of civilisation' and another on 'Systems of thought and practices: diffusion, adaptation, and exchange'.

The use of innovative technologies for research on the Far East is also an important objective for the EFEO, as it is for the school's Asian partners. The development of new digital tools and innovations in physical and environmental sciences - such as LIDAR - have paved the way for powerful new methods of analysis, particularly in archaeology. The provision of online access to EFEO centre library catalogues, its scientific journals and databases of manuscripts, printed materials, domestic statuary and rubbings, have also made a major contribution to the dissemination of knowledge produced by the school.

## **The transmission of knowledge**

While fundamental research remains the EFEO's primary vocation, its teacher researchers also take charge of the task of passing on skills that require a high degree of specialisation, as well as their extensive knowledge acquired in the field. The EFEO therefore actively provides research training and supervision in France, within the doctoral schools of several universities and major institutions such as the EPHE and the EHESS, as well as in its centres in Asia, with field-study grants for master's and doctoral students and funding for post-doctoral researchers.

At the same time, the EFEO's headquarters at the Maison de l'Asie, which houses its central library and photo library, is also a lively centre for scholarly activity (teaching, lectures, colloquia, book launches, etc.).



EFEO

École française d'Extrême-Orient

# ABOUT THE ALIPH FOUNDATION

## ALIPH Foundation

The International alliance for the protection of heritage (ALIPH) is the main global fund dedicated to its protection in conflict, post-conflict, and crisis areas.

ALIPH supports the people on the ground who take concrete measures to protect or restore museums, sites and monuments, and intangible heritage in the most challenging contexts. ALIPH is a first responder in times of conflict and crisis, providing quick and flexible support within hours or days to prevent heritage from being lost forever.

Since its creation in Geneva in 2017, ALIPH has supported around 600 projects in 64 countries.

The Foundation carries out its mission thanks to the support of its nine member States (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Morocco, France, China, Luxembourg, Cyprus, and Uzbekistan), its three private members (Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan, Getty Trust, and Fondation Gandur pour l'Art), and a dozen other donors.

ALIPH is committed to supporting professionals, communities, and their legacies to ensure sustainable development and to build peace.

## ALIPH Projects in Cambodia

ALIPH has been active in Cambodia since the adoption of its first project in the country in October 2020. Since then, the Foundation has supported a portfolio of projects reflecting the diversity and richness of Cambodian heritage, ranging from the conservation of monumental sculptures to the restoration of major temples and the safeguarding of important museum collections. These initiatives combine support for national institutions, strengthening of local capacities, and the transmission of traditional know-how.

To date, ALIPH has committed close to **USD 1 million** to support **five projects in Cambodia**, several of which have now been completed.

## Restoration of the Monumental Dancing Shiva

ALIPH supported the complex conservation of the fragmented sculpture, including the training of 20 Cambodian professionals in stone conservation. Through a separate project, ALIPH is also supporting the restoration of the temple in Koh Ker from which the sculpture originates.

## Restoration of Prasat Kraham in Koh Ker

ALIPH supports the National Authorities of Preah Vihear (NAPV) in the conservation and structural stabilization of Prasat Kraham, the principal temple within the Prasat Thom complex at the Koh Ker World Heritage Site. Dating to the 10th century and built of sandstone and brick, the temple holds major historical significance and was the original location of Dancing Shiva statue.

## Restoration of the West Mebon Temple

ALIPH supports the major restoration of the West Mebon temple, carried out jointly by the APSARA National Authority and the Embassy of France in Cambodia, with the support of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. This 11th-century temple, standing on an artificial island in the center of Angkor's largest reservoir, is a remarkable testament to Khmer engineering and architectural ingenuity. Today, it is facing increasing pressures from climate change. ALIPH is supporting les Artisans d'Angkor to strengthen traditional stone conservation and restoration skills while building long-term resilience for this exceptional heritage site.

## Restoration of the Reclining Vishnu Statue

ALIPH supported the restoration of the monumental Reclining Vishnu statue from the National Museum of Cambodia originating from the West Mebon. The project enabled the reassembly of fragmented sections and strengthening scientific understanding of this masterpiece of Khmer bronze art.



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by **Éric Bourdonneau**

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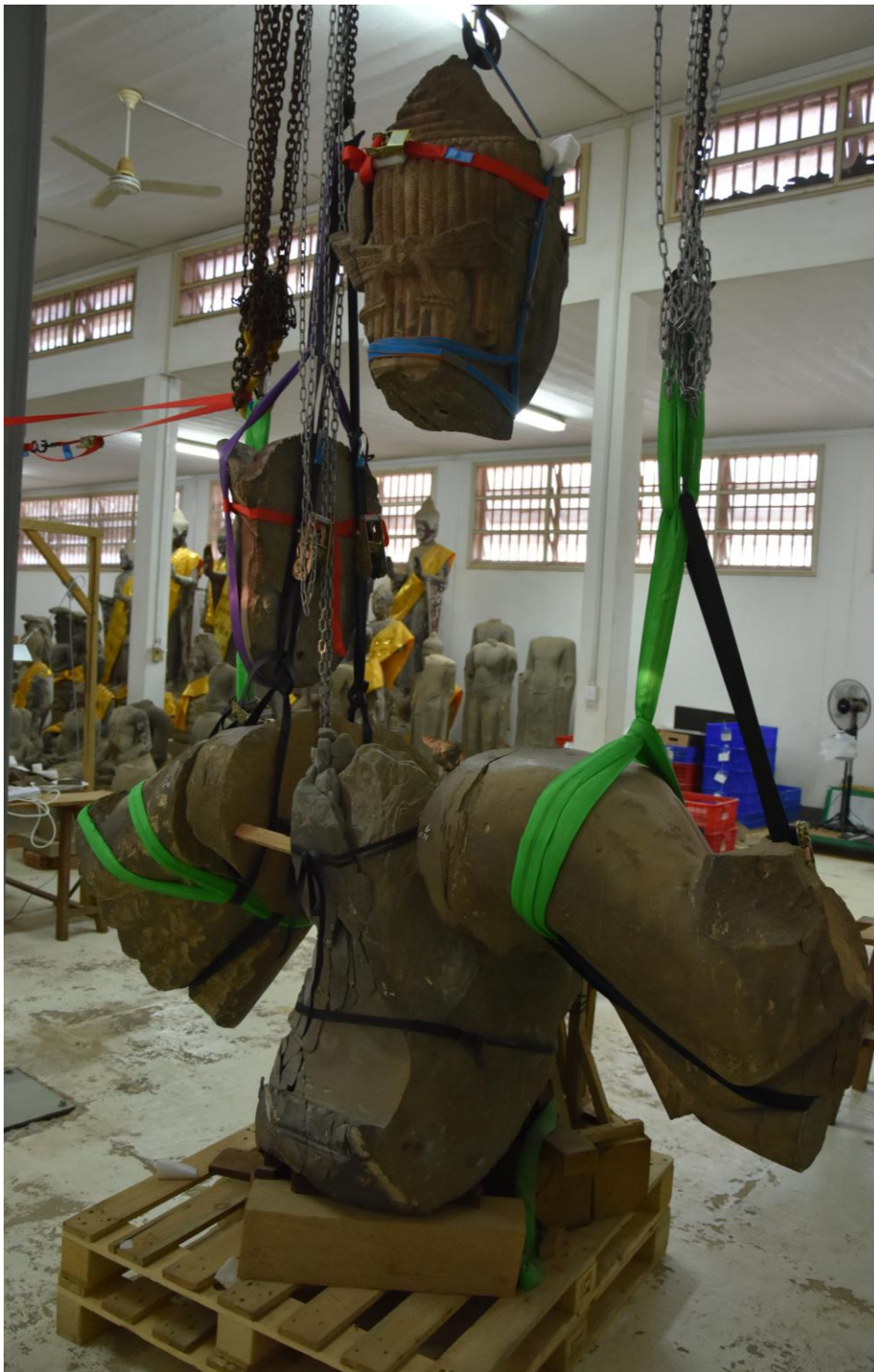
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## PRESS IMAGES

All images in this press kit are available on request (via the EFEO press contact), in a format and resolution suitable for publication, and accompanied by the required copyright credits.



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Press visits to the site can be arranged by appointment.





