

AUTOMATIKFILMS

“Secrets of the Labyrinth” – press pack

*The story of a great treasure hunt, of desire,
Fraud, and the forgery of Europe's past*



Emile Guilleron / The Snake Goddess / Arthur Evans

A documentary by Niko Dayandas and Christian Bauer
Co-produced by Anemon and Tangram Productions

For
ZDF

History TV Canada
ERT & AVRO

“Secrets of the Labyrinth” – synopsis

From the “Holy Grail” to the “Turin Shroud”, and from “Atlantis” to “El Dora do”, humans have always been searching for evidence that can turn Myth into historical fact. The quest for such evidence, real or imaginary, is in itself the stuff that legendary adventures are made of.

The film follows Dr Alexander MacGillivray in his investigation surrounding the authenticity of three controversial artefacts on which the archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans based his influential vision of the Minoan civilization. Evans' Minoans are considered as the “1st European civilisation” and “the fountainhead of modern Western culture”. But MacGillivray's research suggests that the very beginning of European history has been forged. How, by whom and why, is what we will explore in our film.

Tracing the fascinating stories surrounding the fake gold and ivory statuette of a snake goddess, the mysterious golden “Ring of King Minos”, and the reconstructed “tomb of the King of Knossos”. “Secrets of the Labyrinth” is an archaeological detective-story as well as an inquiry into the human need for both fact and fiction. A need that lies behind the popularity of conspiracy theories, Erich Von Däniken and the “Da Vinci Code”.

"Secrets of the Labyrinth" – about the film

"Secrets of the Labyrinth" will include interviews with world authorities on Minoan archaeology, newly discovered objects & archival material, fascinating reconstructions of the discoveries & forgeries made at the turn of the century during the "golden era of archaeology", as well as colorful CGI depicting Minoan ritual art which will serve as clues in our story.

The film starts in Eastern Crete, at the excavation site of Palekastro, with MacGillivray's discovery of a Minoan gold & ivory statuette of a man. Museums in Europe and the USA possess illegally exported Minoan gold & ivory statuettes, which they display today as centrepieces. The "Palekastro Kouros", however, was the first to be found in an official excavation. But why does the "Kouros" look so suspiciously different to the other statuettes?

In his effort to understand this unique masterpiece, MacGillivray comes up against Evans' "ghost". The pioneering archaeologist's overwhelming vision of the Minoans cannot provide a satisfactory explanation, so MacGillivray is forced to investigate how much of Evans' Minoan "History" is based on solid evidence. The results are astonishing. Much of what we consider to be "The Reality" of this civilisation is based on Evans' imagination and personal beliefs. Moreover, we discover that most of the ivory statuettes exhibited in museums today, are forgeries created by Emile Guilleron the Second.

Guilleron was the artist that Evans employed to reconstruct the fragmentary wall paintings of the "Palace of Minos" at Knossos, the most important source of information for the Minoans. The most famous example of a Guilleron fake was brought to the Boston Museum of Fine Art in the 20's by a mysterious "Mr. Jones" (probably Guilleron himself) and bought for a huge amount of money. This work of art, known as the "Boston Snake Goddess", provided Evans with the missing image for his beloved creation, the Mother-Goddess, a bare-breasted "Minoan Madonna", which later became the prototype for our "New Age" Gaia. But Evans' "science-fiction", supported by Guilleron's work, goes deeper.

While Howard Carter, digging in the "Valley of the Kings" in Egypt, was opening the sealed door to Tutankhamun's tomb, Sir Arthur was still looking desperately for King Minos, the son of Zeus and Europa, legendary ruler of Knossos. Guilleron provided him with an image of the mythical king, the famous "Priest-King" fresco, which MacGillivray shows to be a collage of three different wall paintings. But this was not enough. Evans, jealous of Carter's success, wanted a tomb.

His wish was fulfilled when a Cretan priest brought him a large Minoan golden Ring. This ring, baptised by Evans as "the Ring of King Minos", not only verified his theory about a single "Mother Goddess"; it also led him to the "Tomb of King Minos". But is this Ring real, or is it another Guilleron "masterpiece"? Did Minos and the Minoans, as we know them, ever exist? Can we separate the facts from the fiction surrounding the earliest and, still, the most mysterious civilisation of Europe?

"Secrets of the Labyrinth" – profiles

Alexander MacGillivray, archaeologist:

Born in Montreal, Canada. Asstnt. Professor of Art & Archaeology at Columbia University, NY; Visiting Professor of All Souls College, Oxford, UK, and University of Berkeley, USA. Former Director of the British School at Knossos and Asstnt. Director of the British School at Athens. Author of «Minotaun», a best-selling critical biography of Sir Arthur Evans. Currently co-director of the British School's excavations at Palekastro, in Eastern Crete, Dr MacGillivray is also working on the final publication of the excavation results from the site, as well as on his next book on the Minoans.

Niko Dayandas, director :

Born in Heraklion, Crete. Studied Archaeology (BA) and Documentary (MA) in London, England. Directed & Researched one 30min documentary which won first prize in the «Reportage without Frontiers» competition, 2002, as well as several 52min. docs for the Greek National Broadcaster, ERT. His last film, «**Knossos, the Labyrinth of Myth**» deals with the amazing story surrounding the discovery of Knossos. Is the co-founder of «**automatikfilms**», a London-based collective for the creation of audiovisual projects.

Christian Bauer, director:

Born in Munich, Germany. Christian has directed almost sixty documentaries and produced many more. His feature doc **MISSING ALLEN** was awarded "**Best Documentary**" in Montréal (FCMM 2001) and at Venice International TV Festival (Canal Grande 2002) and was nominated for the European Documentary Film Award 2003. **MISSING ALLEN** was followed by **THE RITCHIE BOYS**, which opened HotDocs in 2004 and was shortlisted for the Academy Awards 2005. Christian also gained recognition as producer of high budget documentaries for the international market such as **THE HUMAN ODYSSEY** and **METROPOLIS – THE POWER OF THE CITIES I and II**. His Munich based company Tangram has been listed among 100 most influential documentary production companies worldwide by Realscreen Magazine.

Rea Apostolides, producer:

Studied history at the University of Oxford. She was the researcher of Universal's **Captain Corelli's Mandolin** and Asst. Producer for the BBC2/ERT-1 doc **Are you Captain Corelli?** which was BBC's most watched arts programme in 2001. Recent work includes award-winning "**Sugartown: the Bridegrooms**", **ARTE/ZDF, ERT, BBC 2 & YLE** (producer), "**The Ring**", a documentary about looted antiquities, **Anthony and Ophelia**, a doc about the journey of a young ballet dancer from a provincial Greek town to the Kirov Ballets (Producer) and **The Garden of the Gods** a Sciencevision production for ORF, WDR and BBC (Production Manager, Greece).

automatikfilms is a new team involved in the production of documentary, short and feature length films, and other audiovisual projects.

During summer 2003 we completed our first short film, "**C**", which premiered at the 11th Raindance Film Festival, followed by a music video, both commissioned by the London-based music group The Clientele. "**On the Turn of a Card**", a three minute Super8 film was screened as part of the autumn 2003 Straight 8 event. Our first foray into DV, a comedy short entitled "**Eggs Change**", will be screened at the Portobello Film Festival in 2005.

The first **automatikfilms** documentary, "**Green Lines**", won 1st prize in the "Reportage without Frontiers" competition in 2003. Following this success, we co-produced two documentaries as part of Greek broadcaster NET's 2004 Olympics programming. This year has seen the completion of "**Knossos – Labyrinth of Myths**", which was broadcast on Greek television in February 2005.

Further information on this film

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