

Press release

15 September 2015

Sicily and the sea

Living history for centuries

From 9 October 2015 to 17 April 2016, the Allard Pierson Museum will be hosting an exhibition entitled *Sicily and the sea. A dive into the past*. Sicily has been a popular berth for maritime heroes, pirates, ambitious Phoenicians, wine merchants, adventurers, migrants, pioneering Greeks and fishermen for many centuries. It was a place where different cultures and civilisations gathered, and where ideas were exchanged as easily as goods. But the sea gives and the sea takes away. The waters around this beautiful Mediterranean island are strewn with shipwrecks full of secret and extraordinary objects. It is quite literally an invitation to take a dive into history.

Wim Hupperetz, Director of the Allard Pierson Museum: 'As in centuries past, Sicily is once again the focus of attention for migration and a clash of cultures. The history lying on the sea bed has been brought to the surface in recent decades. This international project puts the treasures on display for the very first time.'

Over the years, underwater archaeologists have steadily been revealing the sea's secrets. Hundreds of shipwrecks have been identified and explored. *Sicily and the sea* is all about the treasures found in six of these wrecks. The special exhibition gives unique insight into the life, work and sometimes death of people including Ulysses, Justinian I and the Dutch Michiel de Ruyter, who was killed at the Battle of Augusta on 22 April 1676.

The unique objects and mysterious atmosphere of the rooms takes you on a voyage to the bottom of the seas around Sicily. The exhibition shines the spotlight on countless objects, including bronze helmets and weapons, as well as amphorae, statues and all kinds of utensils. Visitors are also treated to a glimpse of the work of an underwater archaeologist. Almost all the objects on loan originate from Sicily.



A view of the current situation

The *Sicily and the sea* exhibition consists of three parts. The main exhibition is accompanied by two sub-exhibitions. *Arrival on Lampedusa*, with poignant pictures of boat people taken by the Italian photographer Sara Prestianni, is raw and confrontational. History is still being written in the waters around Sicily. *Underwater heritage, keep it safe!* is a collaboration between UNESCO and the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency. The photo exhibition stresses the need to take good care of the treasures on our sea beds, including these archaeological objects.

SICILY AND THE SEA

- *A dive into the past*

- *Arrival on Lampedusa*

- *Underwater heritage, keep it safe!*

9 October 2015 to 17 April 2016

Allard Pierson Museum

Note to the editor:

Individual interviews with the curators can be arranged during the days leading up to the opening. Please contact Amber van Schagen, a.e.vanschagen@uva.nl, +31 (0)20 5252436 or +31 (0)6 3005 8181

The opening will take place on Thursday 8 October between 17.00 and 19.30. Journalists wishing to attend the opening must register with a.e.vanschagen@uva.nl before 5 October. Places are limited. The exhibition will also be open in the evening from 19.30 to 21.30. Registration via a.e.vanschagen@uva.nl is compulsory.

For more information, please contact Amber van Schagen, PR & Marketing Allard Pierson Museum: a.e.vanschagen@uva.nl, +31 (0)20 5252436 or +31 (0)6 3005 8181