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The Archive and Atelier of the Gilliéron Artists: Three Generations, a Century (1870s-1980)

Christina Mitsopoulou, Olga Polychronopoulou

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AEGAEUM 43

Annales liégeoises et PASpiennes d'archéologie égéenne

MNHMH / MNEME

PAST AND MEMORY IN THE AEGEAN BRONZE AGE

**Proceedings of the 17th International Aegean Conference,
University of Udine, Department of Humanities and Cultural Heritage,
Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Department of Humanities,
17-21 April 2018**

Edited by Elisabetta BORGNA, Ilaria CALOI, Filippo Maria CARINCI and Robert LAFFINEUR



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PEETERS
LEUVEN - LIÈGE
2019

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THE ARCHIVE AND ATELIER OF THE GILLIÉRON ARTISTS: THREE GENERATIONS, A CENTURY (1870s - 1980s)*

Introduction: the Project [C.M.]

The Research Project of the French School at Athens (EFA) entitled “Archives Gilliéron” (2017-2021) is devoted to the rich legacy left by three generations of artists: Émile Gilliéron *père*, his son Émile Gilliéron *fils*, and his less known grandson Alfred Gilliéron. The bequeathed ensemble comprises material remains of archaeological interest, as artistic equipment, molds, impressions, original replicas or later generations of copies, in several materials (galvanoplastic replicas, plaster, clay, wood etc.), of a multitude of periods, styles, themes, categories and sizes (Pl. CCXXXVIIa). These are combined with an extensive archive, comprising correspondence with clients and relatives, diverse biographic data, artwork, photographs, catalogues and other files linked to the family enterprise.

Both the material rests as the archive compose a diversified heritage of exceptional originality, a precious source of knowledge concerning the history of archaeology in Greece. It was made accessible for research through an important donation by the artist’s fourth generation descendant Émile Gaston Gilliéron towards the EFA, which subsequently hosts the project. Initial attempts to study the archive were due to Dr. Veit Stürmer (Winckelmann Institute, Alexander von Humboldt Universität zu Berlin).¹ After his unexpected loss in 2013, É.G. Gilliéron entrusted the legacy to the EFA – following former scientific exchange between Veit Stürmer and the school’s Director, Alexandre Farnoux. The decision was partly due to the French origins of the Swiss family, as to the extensive collaboration of the first two Gilliérons with the specific institution. Archival material was handed over in three phases (2015 to 2018).

The “Fonds d’Archives Gilliéron” (FEG) will allow the pursuit of several axes of research, concerning the artists: Bronze Age archaeology, Classical archaeology and later periods, Byzantine art, folklore and modern history of Greece, with emphasis on archaeology, conservation and tourism (elaboration of souvenirs), techniques and technologies of replication and all sorts of archaeological reproductions. The collaboration with the Department of Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art (University of West Attica) will enhance the study of their role as conservators of antiquities, as they were the founders of the scientific profession in Greece. Material remains of their laboratory provide ample possibilities for scientific investigation of their infrastructure and technical skills. The main aim of this five-year long project is to prepare this bequest for further use by the scientific community.

Three generations of artists [C.M.]

Father and son Émile Gilliéron contributed fundamentally to the early phases of discovery, interpretation, restoration, replication of antiquities, as to the propagation of new knowledge produced by the ancient civilizations unearthed in Greece between 1876/77 and 1939. The quantity and unparalleled quality of their work led the artists to process major finds, as prominent museum objects or replicas of educational character.² They can both be considered as pioneering conservators of antiquities in Greece.

* Acknowledgements: Sincere thanks are addressed to Émile Gaston Gilliéron, as to Alexandre Farnoux, Director of the EFA and to Marie Stahl, Archivist of the EFA.

¹ V. STÜRMER, *Gilliérons Minoisch-Mykenische Welt. Eine Ausstellung des Winckelmann-Instituts. Katalog* (1994); IDEM, “Gilliéron als Vermittler der ägäischen Bronzezeit um 1900,” *Studia Hercynia* 8 (2004) 37-44.

² E. BÉNÉZIT, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs* (nouvelle édition, 1999) vol. 6, *s.v. Gilliéron Émile*, 123; STÜRMER (*supra* n. 1, 2004); C. MITSOPOULOU, “Die Künstlerfamilie Émile Gilliéron. Zur Vermittlung archäologischer Forschungsergebnisse an den Beispielen der Aquarellkopien aus Pompeji und Demetrias,” in S. LEHMANN and H. LÖHR (eds), *Antike Wand- und Marmorbilder in Aquarellkopien des Archäologischen Museums, von Otto Donner von Richter und Émile Gilliéron*, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg (in print).

Renowned mostly as collaborators of star excavators like H. Schliemann and A. Evans, they also appear at the sides of R. Seager, L. Pernier, G. Karo, Chr. Tsountas and many others. The list of their missions is long, comprising institutions, projects or archaeologists from almost all the countries involved in excavations in Greece. Even if their most famous creations concern Bronze Age artifacts, there is hardly any style of art, from Neolithic to Byzantine,³ or even folklore or modern, which is not to be found amidst their repertoire. Their missions range from Greece to Egypt, Asia Minor and Italy, at least.

The Gilliérons repeatedly attracted scholar attention, mainly from Bronze Age specialists, an interest due to their close relationship to the major sites of Crete and the Peloponnese. Their influence and contribution to later phases of Greek Archaeology is however not less significant.⁴ The artists have to be considered under a diachronic gaze, in order to be fully understood as a phenomenon. Concerning ancient art, their work has visually shaped the perception of their contemporaries, as of later generations. A first attempt to reconstitute their genealogical tree intends to contribute towards the individual consideration of each artist and his own career (Pl. CCXXXVIIb).⁵ The similarity in names and succession at the same sites and projects has often led to confusion of their work and life stories.

Louis Émile Emmanuel Gilliéron (1850-1924) (Pl. CCXXXVIIc), later known as Émile Gilliéron *père*, was born in Villeneuve/Neuveville, Switzerland (24-10-1850). An exceptionally gifted artist, he started his technical art studies at the Gewerbeschule Basel (*ca* 1870-1872), continuing to higher education at the Kunstakademie München (1872-1874). He completed his experience at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris (*ca.* 1875-1876), in the atelier of Isidore Pils (†1875).

At least since 1877 Émile was permanently installed in Athens, employed as artist painter, conservator and draughtsman by Heinrich Schliemann until the latter's death in 1890. He settled for his entire lifetime in the family house on 43, Skoufa Street. During the following three decades he led a full professional life, collaborated with the Greek state, major scientific institutions, projects and archaeologists. Since the 1880ies he offered painting lessons to the princes of the Greek royal family, became collaborator of the Athens Archaeological Society, and therefore acquired access to high social and scientific circles. In 1894, taking advantage of the rare privilege to be in position to reproduce accurate copies of recent archaeological finds, he launched his private business of replica production, in collaboration with the WMF Geisslingen (see below). After *ca* 1910 he progressively introduced his son Édouard Émile into his workshop and professional circle. He got known as Émile *père*, while the son acquired the nickname *fil*s. From 1917 onwards he rarely appears in action and died in Athens at age 74 (13-10-1924).

Édouard Émile Gilliéron (1885-1939) (Pl. CCXXXVIIId), known as Émile Gilliéron *fil*s since he entered business at his father's side towards 1910, was born in Athens (14-07-1885). He studied Art at the Polytechnic School in Athens (*ca* 1902-1906), continuing at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts Paris, in the atelier of Fernand Cormon (1906-*ca* 1909/10?). Towards 1910-1912 he appears in Knossos and Demetrias/Volos, and will gradually replace *père*. In 1925 he acquired the honorary status of "Artistic Director of all the museums of the Greek nation",⁶ and reorganized the restoration cabinet of the National Archaeological Museum. The list of his collaborations is long, and will be enriched via his archive. He died in Athens at age 54 (30-09-1939), leaving his son Alfred an orphan.

³ X. ΤΣΟΥΝΤΑΣ, *Αι προϊστορική ακροπόλεις Διμηνίου και Σέσκλου* (1908) ii; Σ. ΛΑΜΠΙΡΟΣ, "Ο Ιησούς του Πανσελήνου," *Παρνασσός* 5 (1881) 445, Pl. 4.

⁴ One of *père*'s most renowned collaboration with classical archaeologists was the Athenian Acropolis. He worked on polychrome sculpture, pottery, small finds, as well as topography and landscape: MITSOPOULOU (*supra* n. 2).

⁵ Detailed biographical data and bibliography for the scheme in MITSOPOULOU (*supra* n. 2).

⁶ N. MARINATOS, *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete. Creating the vision of Knossos* (2015) 83; K. PASCHALIDIS and V. PLIATSIKA, "Replicating Masterpieces at the National Archaeological Museum. A Chronicle of the Early Years," in F. SATTTLER, A. SIMANDIRAKI-GRIMSHAW and K. ANGERMÜLLER (eds), *Replica Knowledge. International Conference, February 2-4 2017, Tieranatomisches Theater der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin* (in print).

Alfred Gilliéron (1920-2010) (Pl. CCXXXVIIe), is far less known. He was born in Athens (17-10-1920) to Gilliéron *filis* and the Italian painter Ernestina Rossi.⁷ Due to the early loss of his father he was deprived of the artistic education within the family, and missed the opportunity to be introduced into the archaeological milieu, or the family business of replica production. However he followed the tradition and studied art (sculpture) at the Athens Polytechnic School (± 1939-1940 and 1945); interrupted by WWII, he pursued his studies in Italy since 1941, at the Academia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milano. He returned to Greece in 1945, after the war, where his studies had still to be completed. He soon turned towards the familiar profession. In the late 1950s he made efforts to reconnect to WMF Geislingen, in vain. Due to negative response and the simultaneous development of post-war tourism in Greece,⁸ he responded to the revived interest in souvenirs inspired by antiquity; since the early 1960s he launched himself into the booming business. His creativity drew from motifs, themes, shapes and *memorabilia* conserved in the family workshop, which he either reproduced from the inherited molds, or used as inspiration for new products, adapted to the demands of his time. He remained active until the late 1980s, but continued to create art privately for another decade, after retirement. Souvenir types produced in his atelier still survive, being reproduced and sold all over Greece, even if now under other brands; the memory of the direct relation with the famous Gilliéron artists and their century-old tradition seems to be forgotten, and shall be re-introduced through the study of the archive. Alfred died in Athens (February 2010), aged 89.

The Gilliéron phenomenon expands towards numerous periods, stylistic studies, collaborations and projects. Following the outline of the project's frame, we propose a case study as an example for the kind of knowledge that may be drawn from it. For Aegaeum, the topic of re-use of the Aegean past in the 19th and 20th cent. is chosen under the scope of preservation politics of material cultural heritage.

The Vapheio replicas case [O.P.]

The pair of gold cups, discovered in 1888 by Christos Tsountas in the Vapheio tholos tomb (Laconia)⁹ figured first among Gilliérons replicas (Pl. CCXXXVIII).¹⁰ The relief representations with the embossed (*repoussé*) technique depict scenes of bull chasing. On the first (NMA 1758) a bull is captured by a man who ties a rope around the bull's leg, while the animal mates with a cow. Three grazing bulls complete the composition. The second cup (NMA 1759) shows one bull caught in a net while another attacks the two hunters as a third hunter flees.

From late 19th cent., Gilliéron *père* was making metal copies of important gold objects using molds taken from the originals. In 1894 among his first reproductions were the Vapheio cups for Salomon Reinach,¹¹ then curator of the National Archaeological Museum in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Both Gilliérons were inventive artists, painters, restorers and excellent replica makers for half a century. Through his collaboration with Schliemann, Émile *père* was responsible for the metal replicas of objects from the Shaft Graves of Mycenae.¹² He developed a new type of replication of artifacts made of precious metal, based on the principle of electro-typing or galvanoplastic replicas.

For the manufacture and sale of the copies he set up a company (E. GILLIÉRON - ATHÈNES) in collaboration with the Württembergische Metallwarenfabrik, WMF factory in Geislingen Germany.¹³

⁷ In addition to STÜRMER (*supra* n. 1), much is owed to oral information kindly provided by his son Émile Gaston Gilliéron (2015-2107). The archive will lead to a detailed biography.

⁸ Y. AISOPOS, "Tourism Landscapes: Remaking Greece," in Y. AISOPOS (ed.), *Tourism Landscapes. Remaking Greece* (2015) 107.

⁹ X. ΤΣΟΥΝΤΑΣ, "Ἐρευνᾶν ἐν τῇ Λακωνικῇ καὶ ὁ τάφος τοῦ Βαφειοῦ," *AEphem* 28 (1889) 130-151 (159-163), Pl. 9-1-2; E. DAVIS, *The Vapheio Cups and Aegean Gold and Silver Ware* (1977); N. KALTSAS, *The National Archaeological Museum* (2007) 120-121 (online).

¹⁰ G. RICHTER, "Notes: Reproductions of Mycenaean Metal Work," *BullMMA* 1.9 (1906) 123-124.

¹¹ S. HEMINGWAY, "Historic Images of the Greek Bronze Age. The Reproductions of E. Gilliéron & Son. Exhibition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17 May to 13 November 2011," (2011) no 19 (online).

¹² G. KARO, "Gilliérons Nachbildungen Mykenischer Altertümer," *JdI* 17 (1903) 157-162.

¹³ P. WOLTERS, "Introduction," in E. GILLIÉRON and WMF, *Galvanoplastische Nachbildungen Mykenischer*

Renamed É. GILLIÉRON ET FILS - ATHÈNES when his son entered business around 1911, and É. GILLIÉRON FILS - ATHÈNES after the father's death in 1924, it continued until 1939. By 1903 the firm published a catalogue of 90 electrotypes manufactured by the WMF and by 1911 the catalogue had grown to 144 pieces.¹⁴

By the end of the 19th and during the first part of the 20th cent., museums and institutions in Europe, USA and further acquired Gilliéron reproductions. Electrotype copies of the Vapheio cups can be found in museums and University collections around the world, such as the Winckelmann Institute at the Alexander von Humboldt Universität Berlin, the Musée d'Archeologie Nationale in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (Paris), the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York,¹⁵ the Harvard Art Museum (Cambridge, Ma), and in private collections. These gained a high price in the art market: in a 1918 price-list the copy of a Vapheio cup is proposed for 75 Reichmarks (approximately 1500 pounds in current prices).¹⁶

The French School collection [O.P.]

The Gilliéron collection in the French School of Athens holds twenty Vapheio cup replicas of varying sizes and materials. Specimens comprise a galvanoplastic copy, numerous painted plaster or terracotta reproductions, three molds, as small contemporary terracotta touristic souvenirs. This group covers the period from Gilliéron *père* to his grandson, Alfred Gilliéron.

The exceptional feature of the Gilliéron collection is that it illustrates perfectly the entire range of replica making evolution: from the molds, the experimental studies, to the more or less exact replica of the original. The Vapheio cups series offers an example of this sequence (Pl. CCXXXVIIIa-i).

The study focuses on two major research areas: first the technological question that concerns the identity of materials, the technology of the molds, the electrotyping construction technology, which will lead to the biography of the objects. The second will focus on answering questions in the historical and archaeological consideration regarding the extent to which the replicas contributed to the understanding of Minoan and Mycenaean culture at the early 20th cent., the impact of the replicas, their use during different periods, the recreations and the reinventions through the ages, as well as their contribution to the reception of the arts of the so called pre-classical periods by the public, as the scientists.¹⁷

Christina MITSOPOULOU
Olga POLYCHRONOPOULOU

Altertümer (1903); H. SCHEIFFELE, "Geschichte und Fertigungsmethode der Galvanoplastischen Kunstanstalt der Württembergischen Metallwarenfabrik (WMF) in Geislingen/Stg.", in SATTLER *et al.* (*supra* n. 6) (in print)

¹⁴ S. HEMINGWAY, "Les reproductions par galvanoplastie d'objets mycéniens par Émile Gilliéron et fils," in A. BOUCHER and P. DARQUE (eds), *La Grèce des origines, entre rêve et archéologie* (2015) 74.

¹⁵ HEMINGWAY (*supra* n. 11, 2011); S. HEMINGWAY, "Bringing the Golden Age of Aegean Archaeology to America: the Role of Replicas at the Met", in SATTLER *et al.* (*supra* n. 6) (in print).

¹⁶ C. HAYWOOD, *All that Glitters ... An Exhibition of Replicas of Aegean Bronze Age Plate* (2000).

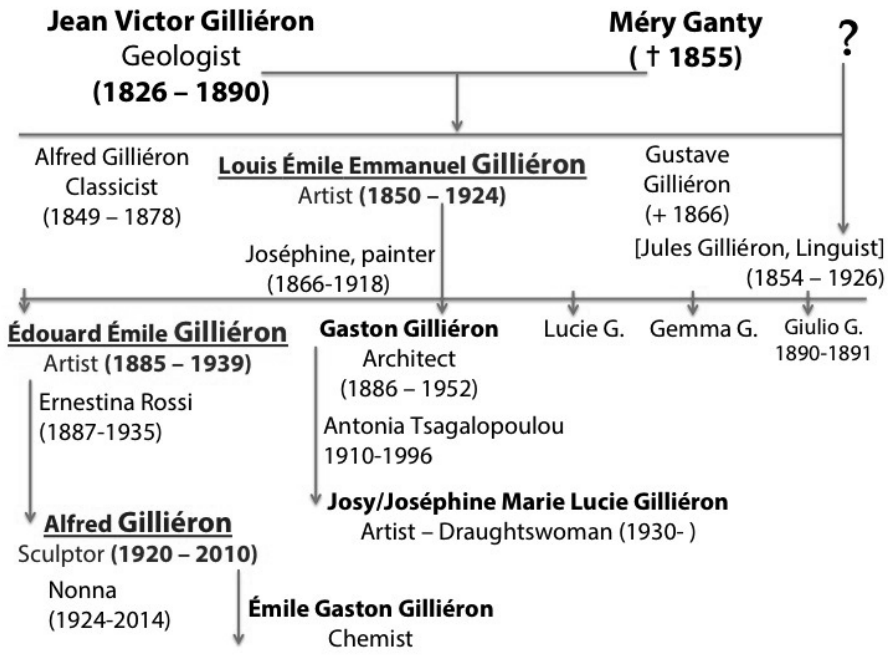
¹⁷ J.Y. CHI (ed.), *Restoring the Minoans. Elisabeth Price and Sir Arthur Evans*, Exhibition Catalogue (2017).

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Pl. CCXXXVIIa Material equipment from the workshop of the Gilliéron artists, in study at the EFA, before classification and identification of objects (C. Mitsopoulou).
- Pl. CCXXXVIIb Gilliéron's family tree: three generations of artists and their relatives (C. Mitsopoulou).
- Pl. CCXXXVIIc Émile Gilliéron père (FEG, EFA).
- Pl. CCXXXVIId Émile Gilliéron fils (FEG, EFA).
- Pl. CCXXXVIIe Alfred Gilliéron (FEG, EFA).
- Sequence of Vapheio Cups:
- Pl. CCXXXVIIIa-b Originals, NMA 1758-1759, National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Department of Collection of Prehistoric, Egyptian, Cypriot and Near Eastern Antiquities (by Klaus Valtin von Eickstedt), ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, Archaeological Receipts Fund.
- Pl. CCXXXVIIIc Drawing of the cups, by É. Gilliéron père (ΓΣΟΥΝΤΑΣ [*supra* n. 9] Pl. 9.1-2),
- Pl. CCXXXVIId Plaster copy (CEG 22),
- Pl. CCXXXVIIe Copy in galvanic molding, oval stamp E. GILLIERON ATHÈNES on bottom (CEG 11),
- Pl. CCXXXVIIIf Copy in clay, oval stamp E. GILLIERON ATHÈNES on bottom (CEG 9),
- Pl. CCXXXVIIg Copy in clay, black glaze (CEG 19),
- Pl. CCXXXVIIh Plaster mold in four pieces (CEG 1),
- Pl. CCXXXVIIi Small-scale copy, red glaze, two rectangular stamps ΑΘΗΝΑΙ and ΕΛΛΑΣ on bottom (CEG 3).



a



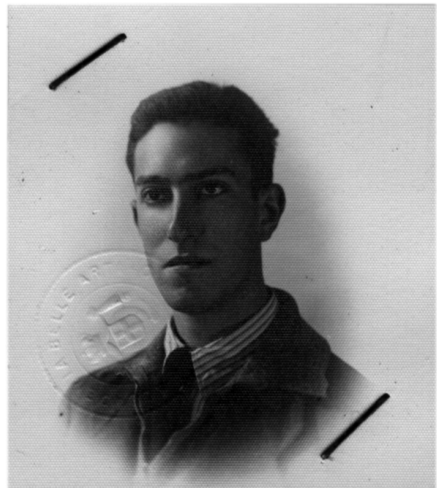
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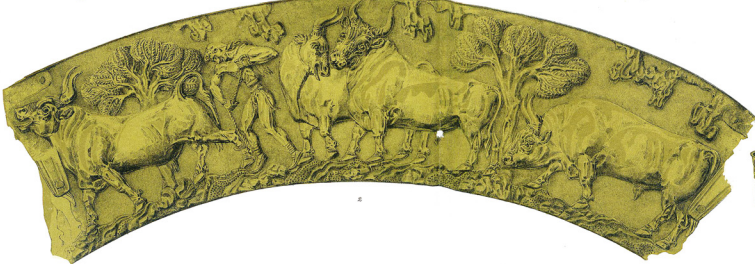
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a



b



c



d



e



f



g



i



h



h