



Exhibition «Founding the City. Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome»
06/04/2000 - 23/07/2000

The Founding Myths

Every city is born from a story. A story which gives it the legitimacy of origins. A legend which anchors it to the territories of the primordial, of the organic, of the sacred, to overcome the vertigo the city produces. The appearance of the *polis* marked a break. In the city, unity crumbled in the hands of plurality; memory—tradition—is subject to the exigencies of change; the dissociative laws of the *Logos* reduce mythical thought to shreds; organicity is lost in freedom; the individual becomes citizen. In the city, the world reaches adulthood. Man takes the reins of his destiny and thinks that everything may not be assigned once and for all.

However, the citizen calls for meaning. Because, despite the fact that the being does not have meaning, meaning is necessary for life. He needs to find an explanation for the place he belongs to, so that meaning will not be precariously built. Being from a city involves becoming part of a story, because starting from scratch would be unbearably dramatic. This exhibition is about these stories. It is about the legends found in the origins of the urban world in Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome. Legends giving rise to a story which will continue, which is the memory woven by the inhabitants of a city. Later, in order to exorcise the danger of these cities which, as places of memory, freedom and change, have always been viewed with mistrust by single powers, the church will assign them patron saints. The church attempts to rewrite onto cities what has already been written: to Christianise the pagan. However, the legend is in another place. The story which gives rise to a city comes from a long way off. And, in some cases, it is still alive, albeit as just an icon—the she-wolf for instance—of a city which spread around the world.

Founding myths are not Arcadies or lost paradises. In the end, they are gestures of the will, of power. The impulse which triggers an adventure. The enduring imprint left by the sacred before man embarks on his journey. With this exhibition, the CCCB evokes the mythical territory on which the city of men emerged, among the founding rituals which bade farewell to the gods.