

## **MCW PRESENTATION**

**MAY 14, 2015**

**Dr. Clarence Epstein, Concordia University**

### **The Diniacopoulos Collection of Antiques**

Dr. Clarence Epstein, a native Montrealer, with a background in art history and architecture is the Senior Director, Urban and Cultural Affairs at Concordia University. He was appointed by the university to direct special projects with cultural property implications, and consequently became responsible for taking inventory of the large Diniacopoulos collection.

Dr. Epstein described the daunting challenge of being faced with large numbers of crates and open artefacts stored up to the ceiling in the basement and also in various rooms of the Diniacopoulos NDG home in Montreal. The task then became to identify and inventory the numerous objects and then find suitable places such as museums to display portions of the vast collection.

When Olga and Vincent Diniacopoulos arrived in Montreal from post-war Europe, they brought with them more than two thousand antiquities amassed since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As archaeologists and conservators, they wanted to share their knowledge and passion of the old world with the new world which they now called home. Their collection included works from Greece, Italy, Assyria, Persia, Akkad, Babylonia, Egypt as well as other provenances. The collection contributed to the understanding of the development of civilisation through the study of history and cultural artefacts. This was a truly large and representative collection of old world antiquities.

The efforts of the Diniacopoulos family led to the acquisition in 1966 of a number of significant Greek and Roman pieces by the Government of Quebec thus retaining at least a fraction of their collection. In 1998, when Olga Diniacopoulos decided to sell the remainder of the collection, several of the world's better museums and private collectors competed for acquisition of the pieces.

Interestingly, Olga Diniacopoulos had kept detailed accounts of the history and origin of each acquisition as well as the manner in which each piece was acquired. This was particularly important because many dealers of unknown reputation offered opportunities for the acquisition of art works. However, the couple also acquired items from clearly reputable sources such as the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities.

Dr. Epstein shared his obvious passion for his work and left our members with a better understanding about the Diniacopoulos collection and an excitement about the adventure story behind the antiques.