

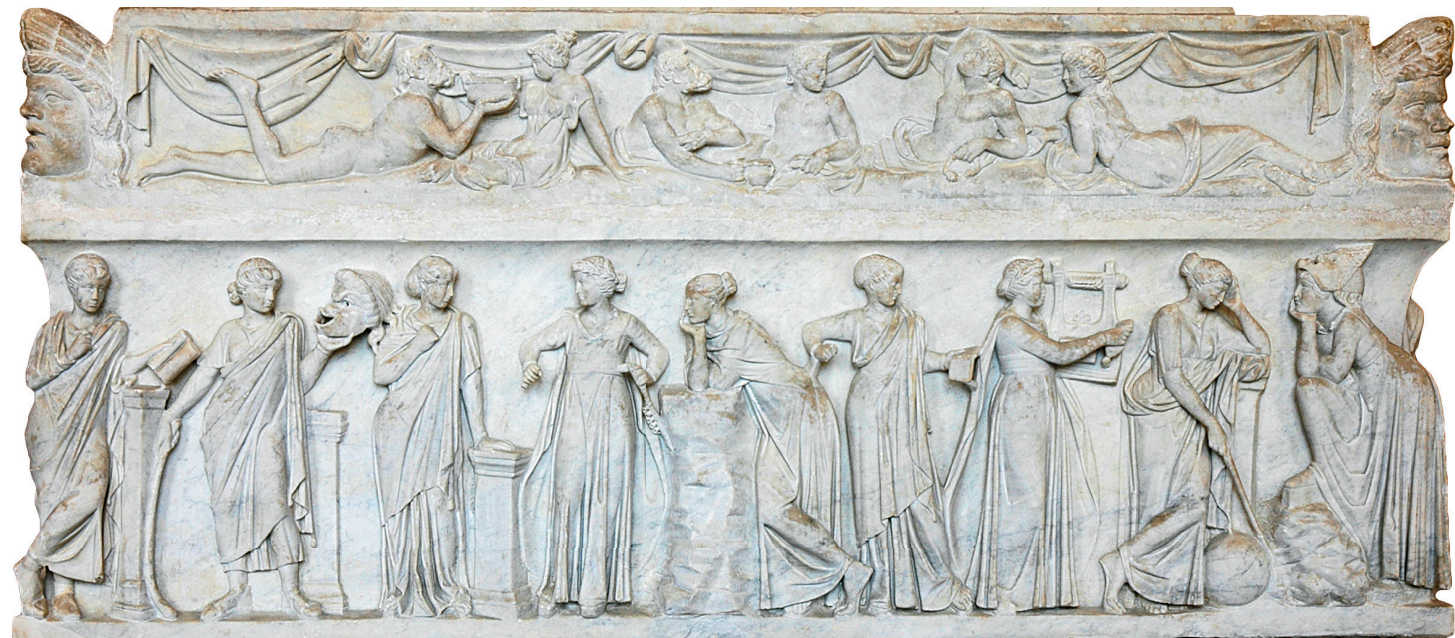
Alexander the Great? His great role model was Homer's Achilles, and Alexander went on to conquer the known world at that time. Julius Caesar looked back to Alexander the Great, and when he reached the age of 30, he wept because he hadn't conquered the world as Alexander had.

Disavowing the Past and Memory
Perhaps this may seem somewhat academic: talking of a Titaness whom few “remember” or know about. But her relevance today could hardly be clearer. Unfortunately, Ezra Pound, an extremely influential poet (most of whose poetry might charitably be described as incomprehensible), defined in the early 20th century one of the guiding principles of all modernist art. He said, “make it new.” In other words, Pound said to forget the past and turn our backs on tradition, ignore the achievements of the greats who came before, and be original by intellectually fiddling with language. He suggested negating memory. This could be said of every other modernist art form. The result? Create elitist products that no ordinary person wants to read (or view or listen to). Then, in a coup de grâce of irony, because they have abandoned all rules, modernists call this kind of art democratic and empowering. The recipes of modernism have had a hundred years or so to flower, and they have largely produced non-art. The reason is clear: They have no memory of what went before, which, at its best, was good, true, and beautiful. Of all things that the greats before had, preeminently—we remember—they had form. We remember these forms: the forms of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Spenser, Shakespeare, and others we could name. If we are to have art—poetry—that will be remembered in the future, then we all now need to remember the art that has gone before us, and its forms, rather than denouncing or deconstructing form to irrelevance. If we could but remember Mnemosyne now, we should bring to life again all of her primeval energy and beauty. To be clear, our civilization depends on remembering all that is great—the good, true, and beautiful—from what went before, not trashing it and believing forlornly that we can create from the rubble of our own ideas.

James Sale has had over 50 books published, most recently “Mapping Motivation for Top Performing Teams” (Routledge, 2021). He won first prize in The Society of Classical Poets 2017 annual competition, performing in New York in 2019. His most recent poetry collection is “HellWard.” For more information about the author, and about his Dante project, visit TheWiderCircle.webs.com



A mosaic mural of Mnemosyne in the National Archaeological Museum of Tarragona, in Catalonia, Spain.



Memory bore the nine Muses. A sarcophagus known as the “Muses Sarcophagus,” shows the nine Muses and their attributes. Marble, first half of the 2nd century A.D. Albani Collection, then Musei Capitolini; seized by Napoleon Bonaparte; exchanged in 1815; Louvre.

Mastering Gold-Thread Embroidery
As a teenager, Deschamps once set her heart on becoming a lingerie maker, as she loved different types of delicate lace. Her love for lace remains, but her professional lingerie-making hopes were dashed when she was 15 years old. A lack of students interested in learning to make lingerie meant the course she wanted to take didn't run that year. The school also specialized in gold-thread embroidery, and when Deschamps saw some of the finished pieces, she knew that was what she wanted to study. “The gold thread chose me, rather than me choosing the material,” she said. For six years, Deschamps learned from the best embroiderer in Lyon, Lucie Teston, at Bouvard & Duviard. Under Teston's strict tutelage, she perfected her embroidery skills, learning all kinds of embroidery techniques—some of which date back to the 15th century. In 1995, Deschamps was approached to be director of the new atelier, Le Bégonia d'Or. The atelier is the only state-funded gold-embroidery workshop in France, Deschamps said. The atelier was established to serve the local school for its gold-embroidery students to gain work experience, as per traditional training. **Meticulously Made in France**
All the materials used in the atelier are made in France. And the gold thread itself is made by the historic gold-thread maker in the country, Ets Carlhian.



GUERLAIN/COURTESY OF LE BÉGONIA D'OR

Gold thread differs from normal embroidery threads such as silk. Gold thread consists of a little spring of gold which is cut to size and then strung on a thread, like stringing pearls. The precious metal thread isn't as supple as normal thread, and it requires delicate, expert handling since it can easily be damaged, Deschamps explained. “When you touch gold thread, it's smooth and cold ... and it's wonderful to handle and have between your fingers,” she said. Many of Le Bégonia d'Or's commissions demonstrate Deschamps's exquisite skills, and indeed her patience. For instance, Swiss watchmaker Piaget approached Deschamps to make 350 limited-edition watch faces for its exclusive Altiplano ultrathin watches. The Altiplano watches are wafer-thin, and Deschamps and her assistant Rouhaud had to work with hair-fine gold thread to embroider several different designs: for instance, a rose in pink silk and white-gold thread, and a laurel branch in white-gold thread. Deschamps explained that they had to stop many times due to the gold thread snapping. Each rose took 35 hours to create, and each laurel branch took 10 hours. In 2013, the French cosmetic company Guerlain celebrated the 160th anniversary of its iconic perfume L'Eau Impériale. The company organized a competition for master artists to

create a limited-edition embellished perfume bottle or its packaging. Nine designs were selected. One of those selected was Le Bégonia d'Or's entry. Deschamps along with Rouhaud took 135 hours to embroider the bottle, which is on display in Guerlain's boutique on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. *To discover more about Le Bégonia d'Or, visit Broderieor.com* *Evelyn Combeau acted as translator from French to English.*

Sylvie Deschamps and her assistant Marlène Rouhaud took 35 hours to hand embroider each rose for this limited-edition Piaget watch.

Le Bégonia d'Or gold-thread embroiderers Sylvie Deschamps and Marlène Rouhaud took 135 hours to embellish the iconic Guerlain perfume bottle, to celebrate the 160th anniversary of Guerlain's perfume L'Eau Impériale.



PIAGET/COURTESY OF LE BÉGONIA D'OR