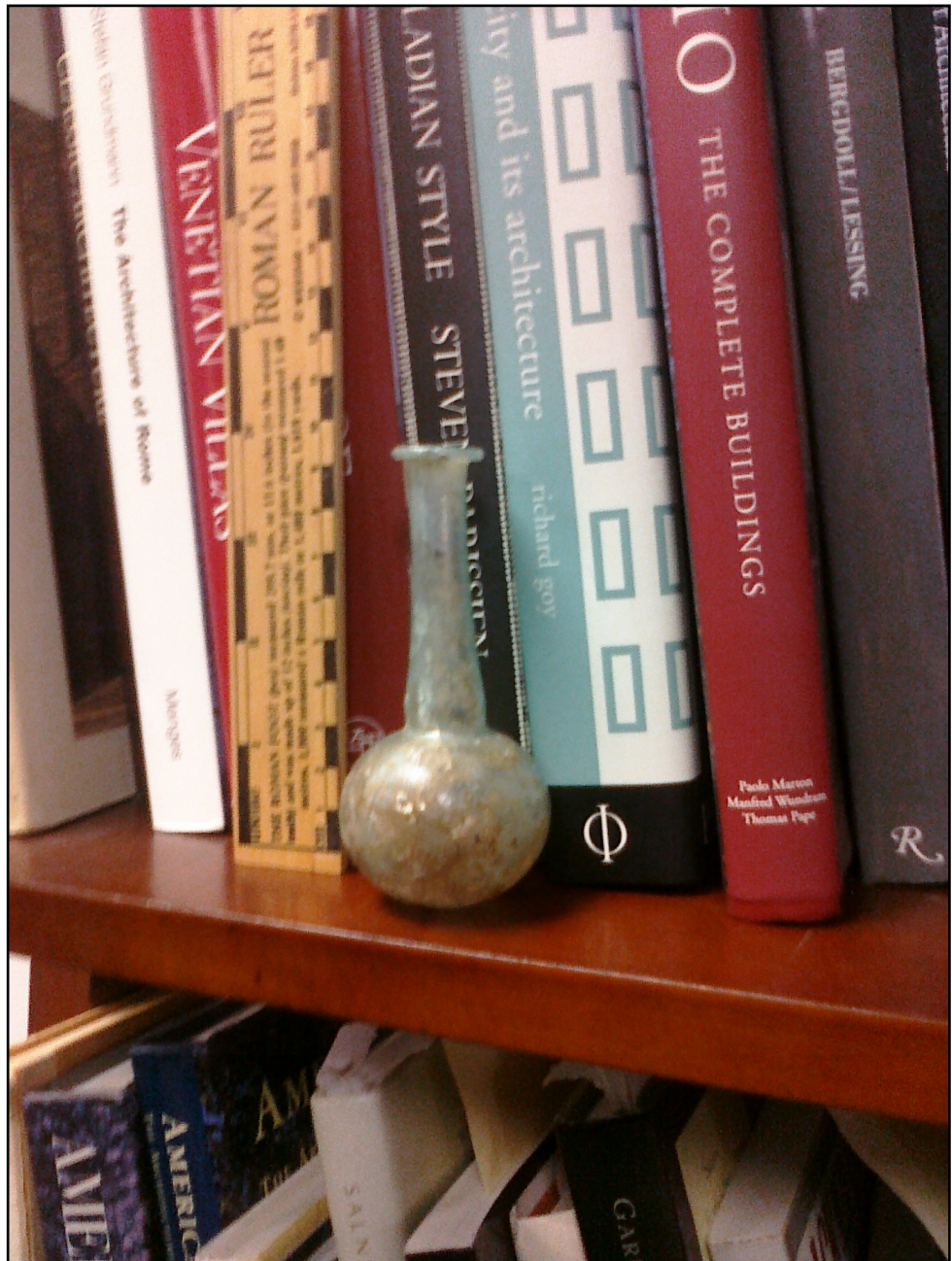


Eric Stengel Architecture

A Roman Vase: The Continuity of PHI throughout History

20-Oct-09
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A Very Exciting Discovery

This is a 2000 year old Roman Vase found in what is now Syria. It was hand blown over an open flame. Thus, the maker was free to make any shape that pleased them. There was no mold, just their aesthetic eye at work. Syria was a Roman province, annexed in 64 BC by Pompey, as a consequence of his military presence after pursuing victory in the Third Mithridatic War. It remained under Roman, and subsequently Byzantine, rule for seven centuries, until 637 when it fell to the Islamic conquests.

In the Roman period, the great city of Antioch (called "the Athens of the east" at that time) was the capital of Syria. It was the third largest city in the empire after Rome and Alexandria.



With estimated population of 500,000 at its peak, Antioch was one of the major centres of trade and industry in the ancient world. As one of the wealthiest and more populous provinces of the Roman Empire, it is estimated that the population of Syria in the early Roman Empire was only exceeded in the 19th century. Syria is also significant in the history of Christianity; Paul was converted on the Road to Damascus and established the first organized Christian Church at Antioch in ancient Syria, from which he left on many of his missionary journeys.

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I did a geometric analysis of the vase to test a theory.

The theory is that PHI (1.618...), nature's prime building block ratio of "part to whole" is intrinsic to our souls. So much so that when one wants to make a thing that's beautiful, they will employ the tools of nature.

Beauty being a sound or thing that resonates with the naturally occurring ratio, PHI, found in all of nature and the heavens. Plato (428/427 BC–348/347 BC), said PHI was the "Soul of the Universe".

I believe that a person making something to be beautiful, will inherently make the thing a progression of PHI because the eye or ear will resonate with it. And in so doing it's appeal will be universal and a pleasure.

The analysis indicates that this is true for this object. As you can see it is a Root 5 rectangle; that is 1 unit by the square root of 5; Or 1 unit (the base width in this case) by 2.336 units tall.

This is a classic proportion used extensively by the Greeks and Romans in art and architecture.

For example:

Parthenon's plan shape is a Root 5 rectangle. The elevation is a slightly more complex progression but the root 5 rectangle is used for establishing the width and the height to the top of the freeze.

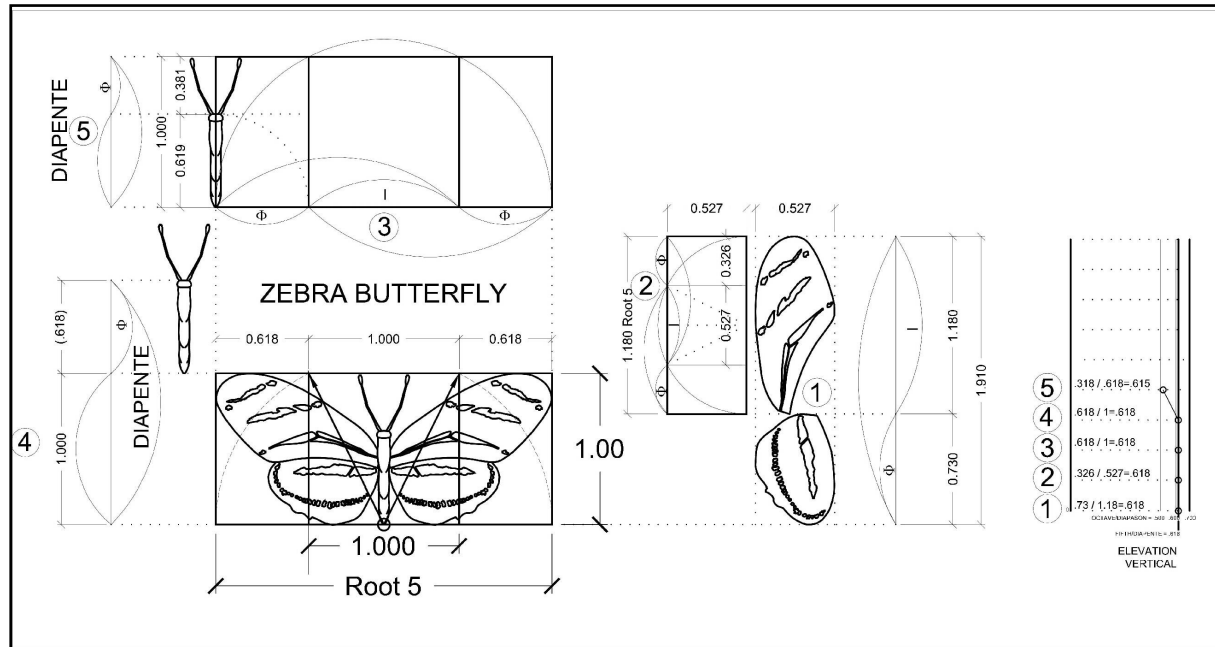
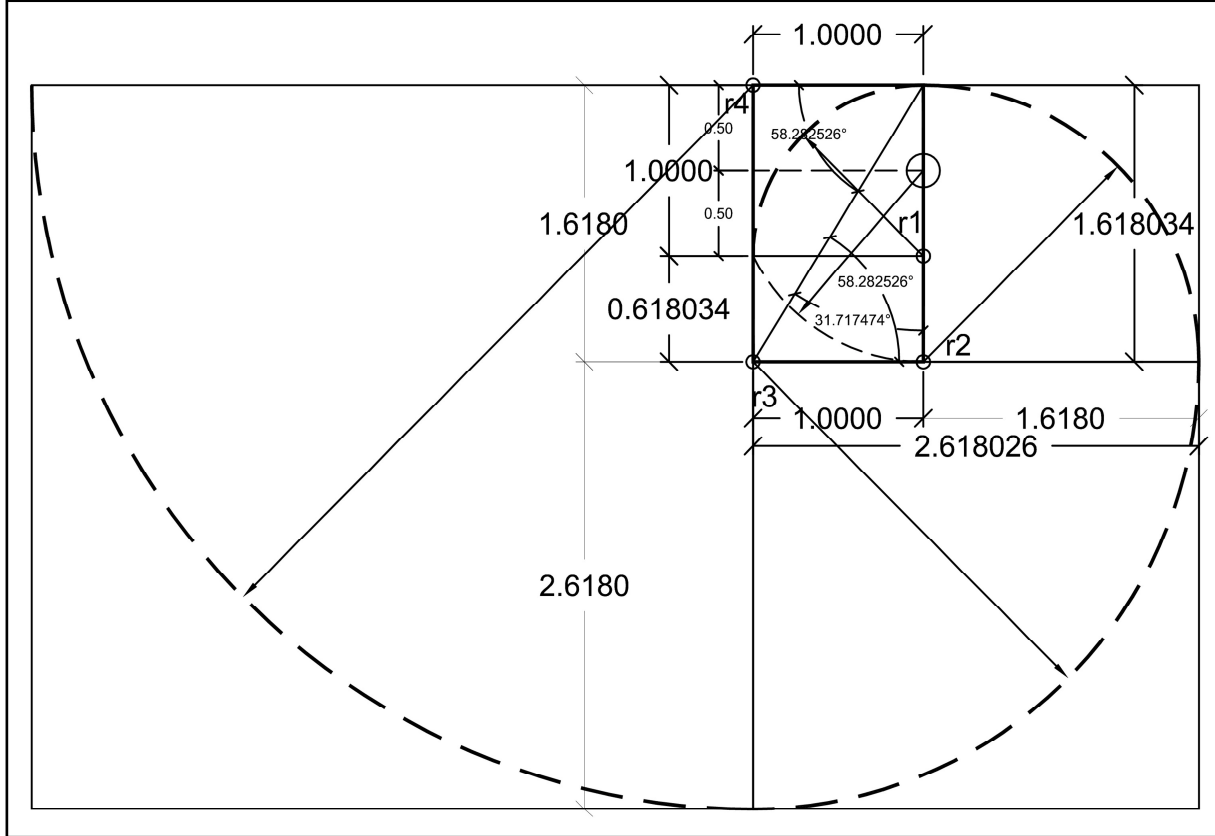
The attached shows the analysis and the inter relationship of PHI rectangles.

By the way, to make a PHI rectangle you start from a square the basic 1 by 1 static form. We say that the ratio PHI allows nature to go from the "one to the many" with harmony. The "one" is the square and the progression is the construction of PHI and growing the forms with PHI as in the famous Spiral. The Spiral is from a square progressing from one to the next by way of PHI. there for all shapes will have the same relative ratios and that number is an infinite number, never-ending and never repeating.

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