Digging for Shakespeare
In Stratford-upon-Avon and London

Divine boy
Hadrian’s lover who died young and was deified

Good news from Afghanistan
Cultural hope amidst civil unrest

Bronzed & beautiful
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All the world’s a stage

From the Age of Bronze to Elizabethan England we bring you a wealth of information on ancient art and archaeology

As you will see from the magnificent statue of Mercury on our cover, anyone interested in bronze is in for a treat this autumn. This gilded god is one of the fine pieces going on show in *Bronze*, which opens at the Royal Academy of Arts on 15 September. Its curator, Professor David Ekserdjian, describes some of the other star exhibits in the show, including the extraordinarily powerful Etruscan masterpiece the *Chimera of Arezzo* and the amazing early Hellenistic Portrait of King Seuthes III, on pages 12 to 16. My favourite, though, is one of the oldest – the magical bronze and gold *Chariot of the Sun* that dates from the 14th century BC. It is on loan from the National Museum in Copenhagen, which has one of the most stunning collections of Bronze Age artefacts I have ever seen.

Although she had never visited Troy, two Bronze Age heroes from *The Iliad*, Achilles and Patroclus, fascinated Latin scholar Madeline Miller all her life, and inspired her to write her first novel. It took her 10 years to complete but it was worth it, as earlier this year her book *Circe* won this year’s Orange Prize for Fiction – not bad for a novice. She then rewarded herself by taking a trip to the site where the Trojan War is believed to have taken place. Moving further east, our travel feature takes us to one of the newest destinations – Burma, or Myanmar, if you prefer. Now that Aung San Suu Kyi is finally free, we can all visit that fascinating country with open eyes and a clear conscience.

As part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, Shakespeare is very much in the news this year, so we asked Rev Dr Paul Edmondson of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust to tell us how much archaeology has contributed to our knowledge of our most illustrious playwright. With digs on-going in Stratford-upon-Avon and London, there are bound to be more finds that can shed light on the man and the theatres where he worked – and, at the British Museum, you can find out more about the times in which he lived in a brilliantly illuminating exhibition called *Shakespeare: Staging the World*.

We also investigate the glories of Anglo-Saxon art and the androgyneous world of the ‘Bearded Goddess’ of ancient Cyprus, and we hear how three men devoted their lives to deciphering ancient scripts and, in so doing, enriched our understanding of the Ancient Egyptian, Minoan and Mayan civilisations.

To conclude we have our auction reports (this time from New York), book reviews, and Calendar to let you know what is going on and where.

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Some 13th-century Turkish delights

As Editor of *Minerva* I was delighted to be invited to attend a celebration of the 40th anniversary of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Turkey in July. A total of 150 visitors from over 40 different countries – journalists, representatives of UNESCO, and travel operators – were flown to central Anatolia, where we visited the 13th-century Seljuk sites in Sivas and Divriği.

There, we were given, literally, the red carpet treatment wherever we went. Feasting, folk dancing, and traditional music all played their part in a display of the Turkish hospitality that is well-known to those familiar with this vast and beautiful country. The real treat, though was to see the wonderful Seljuk buildings – mosques, madrasahs and ancient hospitals – in Sivas and Divriği. In Sivas, there is the Buruciye Madrasah, which dates from 1271/72, as does the Cifte Minareli Madrasah with its towering twin minarets, and the slightly earlier Sifaiye Madrasah, 1217-18, one of the most important schools of medicine of the Seljuk era, and its hospital. Then, in Divriği, dating from 1228, is the Ulu (Great) Mosque with its extraordinarily ornate carved stone portal (left) and the Darussifasi, or Hospital, which was built on the instructions of Ahmet Shah and his wife Turan Melik.

The portal around the hospital's great entrance door also exhibits an amazing riot of exquisite carving, while, inside, its perfectly plain proportions exude a sense of calm. Here, both the physically and mentally ill were cared for and healed, using water and music therapy, as well more usual methods. The acoustics in the main chamber of the hospital are superb – as demonstrated by a group of musicians who played traditional music on period instruments to great and soothing effect.

Lindsay Fulcher

Founder’s day in New York

The founder of *Minerva* and founder and director of Royal-Athena Galleries in New York, Dr Jerome M Eisenberg has been awarded the Order of the Star of Italy and had the title of Ufficiale (Officer) bestowed upon him by the President of the Republic of Italy, the Hon Giorgio Napolitano. Dr Eisenberg was decorated by the Consul General, the Hon Natalia Quintavalle, at a ceremony at the New York Consulate celebrating Italian National Day on 2 June.

The Order of the Star of Italy is bestowed upon those who have provided a meaningful contribution to the prestige of Italy while promoting friendly relations and cooperation between Italy and other countries.

Dr Eisenberg was Editor in Chief of *Minerva* from 1990 to 2009, during which time he penned many articles on Italian museums and exhibitions of Italian antiquities in the United States and Europe. He also wrote extensively on stolen and illegally excavated Italian antiquities, voluntarily cooperated in the return of a number of valuable antiquities illicitly excavated in Italy and assisted in the restitution of several objects removed from Italian museums.

A renowned expert on Italian antiquities and their forgeries, especially Etruscan bronzes and Roman marbles, Dr Eisenberg, has lectured widely and written extensive articles on these subjects for *Minerva*, two of which were also published in the Italian journal *Archeo* in 2007 and 2008. Having lectured on forgeries in ancient art at New York University as early as 1969, he was a Visiting Professor on this subject at the Institute of Classical Archaeology of the University of Leipzig in 1996.

For many years Dr Eisenberg has promoted the ethical acquisition of antiquities by museums and collectors and has delivered papers on this subject at a number of international congresses and meetings. He gave an address on this topic at the UNIDROIT Convention in Rome in 1993.

A founding member of the International Association of Dealers in Ancient Art (IADAA), he served on its Executive Board from 1993 to 2002 and organised two IADAA symposia in New York on ‘public policy and the movement of antiquities’ in 1994 and on ‘the ethical acquisition of antiquities’ in 1998.

Over the past 58 years he has been elected an Honorary Fellow, Fellow for Life, Patron, Benefactor, and Life Member of numerous American and international organisations and museums.
Venus found in the bath

Found at Skupi in Macedonia, only five kilometres from the centre of the capital city Skopje, this beautiful Venus reminds us of the wealth of undiscovered art from the Roman world and the benefits of continued excavation.

Although the site of Skupi was discovered at the end of the 19th century, organised and comprehensive digs, led by the Archaeological Museum, Skopje, started only in 1966, and it was in 2008 that excavation in the centre of the Roman city led to a spectacular discovery.

In the central room of what is believed to have been a large Roman bath complex, a lifesize Parian marble statue of Venus/Aphrodite was found. The statue was lying on its back. It was fragmented and soiled, but almost completely preserved.

The condition of the statue was remarkable, particularly the head and neck, which remained mainly intact; only her metal diadem and her earrings were missing. The other losses were part of the statue’s legs and feet, its base and the head of an accompanying dolphin. But, despite the statue’s fragmented state, what had survived had sustained no serious damage.

Based on its stylistic features, the statue, belonging to the iconographic type Venus Pudica (Venus of Modesty), has been dated to around the 2nd century AD. The high quality of workmanship, particularly the modelling and treatment of the face, suggest the Praxitelean school.

Bearing in mind the statue’s great aesthetic and historical value, it was decided to restore it to its original splendour, so that it might take a prominent position in the new display of the Museum of the City of Skopje’s Greek and Roman galleries. So its restoration was entrusted to the Stone Conservation team of the Conservation-Restoration Department of the Arts Academy, Split, Croatia. Once the perhaps contentious decision to fully restore and re-fabricate the Venus was taken, replacing the parts that were missing was implemented.

These were modelled in clay, then cast in gypsum, whereas for the smaller parts (fragments of the dolphin’s tail and the fingers), artificial stone replacements were made. The stated goal of this, now rare, approach (that is, a thorough, detailed reconstruction) was to stress the monumental quality of the statue, facilitate its understanding and prepare it for its future prominent position in the museum. Although various fragments have been lost, and there is no evidence of their original appearance, research into the forms and styles of Roman statuary showed it is possible to reconstruct their anatomic form and position with great accuracy. Importantly, all reconstructed parts were made to be detachable, and can – if necessary – be removed without causing damage to the stone.

After the completion of the restoration and cleaning process, Venus was installed in the Museum of the City of Skopje, where she is now on show.

Feasting at Wolf Village in Utah

Professor James Allison and some students from Brigham Young University uncovered the largest known Fremont structure near Goshen, Utah, in June. The ancient site is named ‘Wolf Village’.

Dating from AD 700-1300, the Fremont culture got its name from the Fremont river in Utah, where the first sites were discovered. It is not clear whether the people of the Fremont culture formed a linguistic group, but their lives focused on foraging (for animals, such as deer and rabbits) and cultivating corn, beans and squash. There is evidence that they irrigated their fields using ditches, but it is likely they did not give up foraging, as farming was potentially unreliable due to the changing climate. This culture is also known for its distinctive pottery, baskets, and rock art.

The discovery adds a piece to an existing puzzle, as it consists of an 850 square foot structure carbon-dated to circa 1025-1100. Most houses from this period are 160-180 square feet. The size and contents of the structure suggest a high level of community organisation. Pottery, corncobs, and animal bones were recovered in abundance. Preliminary studies suggest that the structure was used for communal feasting and ritual (it has floor features reminiscent of Anasazi and Pueblo ritual structures). The range of finds also indicates that there was pottery from south-western Utah and northern Arizona, and shell beads from the Pacific coast.

The Fremont culture was adjacent to, but quite distinct from, the more well-known Anasazi culture. Both cultures were impacted by the drought associated with the ‘Little Ice Age’ (1300-1800). Rainfall became less predictable, falling during winter instead of the growing season. Theories suggest that climate change, growing population pressure, and perhaps the movement of new peoples into the area, led to the demise of the older cultures.

Material studies such as the recent finds at Wolf Village show that a very interesting cultural complex was lost.

Murray Eiland
Hedge funds hidden on Jersey

The last major hoard of more than 11,000 coins was recovered from Jersey in the Channel Islands in 1935 but, in June, a new hoard of Iron Age coins, from the 1st century BC and weighing about three-quarters of a ton, was uncovered there by two metal detectorists. Reg Mead and Richard Miles made their exciting discovery in the parish of Grouville, under a hedge, although the exact spot where it was found has not been revealed in order to protect the area.

The legal owners of the hoard remain unclear, but its value has been estimated at up to £10 million. The owners of the site where the coins were recovered suggest that the hoard should remain on display in Jersey. The value of each coin could range from £100 to £200, but they will have to be disentangled from a fused mass of oxidised metal for a detailed assessment to be made. This will take months of painstaking conservation. However, it is already clear that there are bits of precious metal (gold and silver) buried with the coins. Taken in the context of other finds from Jersey, the hoard suggests a high level of contact between Britain and the Continent. The coins that have been examined so far are Armorican – from a Gallic tribe that has been identified as the Coriosolitae, who submitted to Caesar in 57 BC. Corseul is a commune in the Côtes-d’Armor department of Brittany, in north-western France.

Originally known as Fanum Martis (Temple of Mars), Corseul was the capital of the Roman province of the Coriosolites. Then, during the 3rd and 4th centuries, like some other cities in the region, Fanum Martis changed its name to that of its people, the Coriosolites. However, before their resurgence, when Caesar was in France, some of its people must have made the voyage to Jersey and eventually to Britain to find shelter.

It is possible that this hoard represents a very real attempt to sequester local assets from marauding Romans, but the full story may never be known. Murray Eiland

Discovery churns up old milk debate

Important finds from a cave in the Tadrart Acacus Mountains of south-west Libya have proved that dairying in Saharan Africa was practised as early as 7,000 years ago. A team of scientists from the Organic Geochemistry Unit at Bristol University’s School of Chemistry, with colleagues at Sapienza, University of Rome, have analysed fatty acid deposits found in unglazed pottery vessels from the Takarkori rock shelter. Through lipid biomarker and stable carbon isotope analysis of the food residues in the pottery, it was found that half the vessels tested had been used to process dairy fats, indicating milk, far earlier than previously thought.

This technique had been used before by Professor Richard Evershed, of the Bristol School of Chemistry, to establish a chronology of dairying in the Fertile Crescent of the Near East and how it spread to Europe. It has interesting implications for the investigation into the evolution of the lactase persistence gene, and could help us to understand further why certain genetic groups are lactose-tolerant, while most adults in the worlds remain lactose-intolerant to varying degrees. ‘We already know how important dairy products, such as milk, cheese, yoghurt and butter, which can be repeatedly extracted from an animal throughout its lifetime, were to the people of Neolithic Europe, so it is exciting to find proof that they were also significant in the lives of the prehistoric people of Africa,’ said Julie Dunne, a PhD student at the Bristol School of Chemistry. ‘The gene is found in Europeans and across some Central African groups, supporting arguments for the movement of people, together with their cattle, from the Near East into eastern Africa in the early to middle Holocene, around 8000 years ago.’

Between 7000 and 5000 BC the Sahara gradually turned from a verdant area into a more arid, inhospitable environment. This forced its inhabitants to change from being semi-sedentary hunter-gatherers into nomads and cattle-herders. While the Neolithic rock art of Africa clearly reflects the importance of cattle to prehistoric Saharans – with many depictions of cattle and some even being milked – it has always been very difficult to accurately date these paintings. The scarcity of surviving cattle bones also hindered progress in this area. Now this research provides the first reliable dates related to this change and the development of dairying practices. Geoff Lowsley

A fresco of cattle painted in a cave at the wadi Imha (site 03/705) in the Tadrart Acacus Mountains of the Libyan Sahara. Numerous rich and vivid rock art images depicting scenes of cattle, dating from at least 7,000 years ago, are found widely across north Africa.

Roberto Cecchetti © the Archaeological Mission in the Sahara, Sapienza University of Rome Image courtesy of Jersey Heritage
Cave art gets a hands-on approach

Paleolithic paintings in El Castillo cave in Northern Spain date back at least 40,800 years – making them Europe’s oldest known cave art, according to research published in Science.

The practice of cave art in Europe thus began up to 10,000 years earlier than previously thought, indicating the paintings were created either by the first anatomically modern humans in Europe or, perhaps, by Neanderthals.

Some 50 paintings in 11 caves in Northern Spain, including the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Altamira, El Castillo and Tito Bustillo, were dated by a team of UK, Spanish and Portuguese researchers led by Dr Alistair Pike of the University of Bristol and funded by the UK’s Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

As traditional methods, such as radiocarbon dating, do not work where there is no organic pigment, the team dated the formation of tiny stalacmites on top of the paintings using the radioactive decay of uranium. This gave a minimum age for the art. Where larger stalagmites had been painted, maximum ages were also obtained.

Hand stencils and discs made by blowing paint onto the wall in El Castillo cave were found to date back to at least 40,800 years, making them the oldest known cave art in Europe, 5,000-10,000 years older than previous examples from France.

A large club-shaped symbol in the famous polychrome chamber at Altamira was found to be at least 35,600 years old, indicating that painting started there 10,000 years earlier than previously thought, and that the cave was revisited and painted a number of times over a period spanning more than 20,000 years.

‘Evidence for modern humans in Northern Spain dates back to 41,500 years ago, and before them were Neanderthals,’ said Dr Pike. ‘Our results show that either modern humans arrived with painting already part of their cultural activity or it developed very shortly after, perhaps in response to competition with Neanderthals – or perhaps the art is Neanderthal art.’

The creation of art by humans is considered to be an important marker for the evolution of modern cognition and symbolic behaviour, and may be associated with the development of language.

‘We see evidence for earlier human symbolism in the form of perforated beads, engraved egg shells and pigments in Africa 70-100,000 years ago, but it appears that the earliest cave paintings are in Europe,’ explained Dr Pike. ‘One argument for its development here is that competition for resources with Neanderthals provoked increased cultural innovation from the earliest groups of modern humans in order to survive.

‘Alternatively, cave painting started before the arrival of modern humans, and was done by Neanderthals. That would be a fantastic find, as it would mean the hand stencils on the walls of the caves are outlines of Neanderthals’ hands, but we will need to date more examples to see if this is the case.’

The findings are particularly significant because cave art has always been extremely difficult to date accurately.

‘Engravings and, in many cases, paintings lack organic pigments or binders suitable for radiocarbon dating. Where suitable material – such as charcoal pigments – does exist, only small samples can be dated to minimise damage to the art. This magnifies the effects of contamination and produces less accurate results. Instead, we measured uranium isotopes in the thin calcite flowstone growths that formed on the surfaces of the paintings and engravings to date the art. This technique, known as uranium-series disequilibrium, is used extensively in Earth Sciences and avoids the problems related to radiocarbon dating,’ commented Dr Pike.

Team member and dating expert Dr Dirk Hoffmann, of the National Centre for the Investigation of Human Evolution (CENIEH) in Burgos, Spain, said: ‘The key development was our method to date tiny calcium carbonate deposits similar to stalactites. We can now date samples of just 10 milligrams – about as small as a grain of rice. This has allowed us to find samples that had formed directly on top of hundreds of paintings, whereas the larger stalactites were much less frequent.’

Cave art specialist Dr Paul Pettitt of the University of Sheffield, UK commented: ‘Until now our understanding of the age of cave art was sketchy at best; now we have firmly extended the earliest age of European cave art back by several thousand years, to the time of the last Neanderthals and earliest Homo sapiens.

These earliest images do not represent animals, and suggest that the earliest art was non-figurative, which may have significant implications for how art evolved.’
ever since the discovery of ‘Shakespere’s first theatre’, The Rose, in the summer of 1989, archaeology and Shakespeare have enjoyed a prominent place in the modern popular imagination. Eight years later the Globe Theatre opened, a living reconstruction informed in part by archaeology and leading the way for the regeneration of London’s South Bank. During the last four years archaeologists have exposed the remains of The Theatre and The Curtain and, for the last three, ongoing excavations have been carried out at New Place, the site of Shakespeare’s home from 1597 in Stratford-upon-Avon. What have these projects yielded and to what might the excavations lead?

Shakespearean archaeology really began in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1862. The scholar James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps obtained the site of New Place. Archaeology was in its infancy and Halliwell-Phillipps was something of a pioneer. He uncovered the well in the central courtyard (as well as two others nearby) and exposed the remains of the front cellars and fragments of other walls. The project was written up and published, together with transcripts of many of the documents pertaining to New Place, in a large handsome volume: *An Historical Account of the New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, the Last Residence of Shakespeare* (1864).

But eventually the stone bases, identified by Halliwell-Phillipps as Shakespeare’s bay windows, were forgotten about and were turned into flower-beds. The edges of the cellars were left visible and caught the attention of Virginia Woolf, who, after her visit on 9 May 1934, wrote (not without gentle irony): ‘No doubt the solidity of the place was comfortable. No doubt he saw the cellars with serenity.’

The teasing relationship between
Shakespeare

Nature had blessed him with.

One sketch of New Place survives, drawn from memory by George Vertue in 1737, half a lifetime away from when he had last looked on the home as Shakespeare himself had known it.

In March 2009, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust started its Dig for Shakespeare. Led by Birmingham Archaeology, the project is now in its third and final year. Its focus was always threefold: to find out as much as possible about New Place when Shakespeare lived there; to present the archaeological process itself as an engaging visitor experience; and to allow volunteers to work alongside and learn from the archaeologists themselves.

The cultural history of New Place and its role in Shakespearean biography is a curious one. Time and again the story is repeated making the lazy assumption that the playwright left Stratford to work in London and that he (anachronistically) ‘retired’ back to New Place. Had Shakespeare’s New Place not been significantly renovated in 1702 and demolished in 1759, the chances are we would feel differently about his relationship to his home town. We would know it to be a compellingly large and wealthy-looking dwelling, a family seat for a man of considerable wealth and social standing, a house that its owner would want to spend as much time in as professional circumstances might allow.

So far the archaeology has been able thoroughly to question and correct parts of Halliwell-Phillipps’s interpretation. The size of the central courtyard seems bigger than was assumed and the ‘bay window’ needs to be reinterpreted. Artefacts from Shakespeare’s own time found
in Halliwell-Phillipps’s backfill include pottery and glassware, a rowel spur, a belt mount, a cabbage peg and pins, a knife handle of carved bone, and several trade tokens (such as have been found at the site of Elizabethan theatres in London). Two brick foundations from Shakespeare’s period have also been discovered. Trial pits dug towards the back of the site, in what is believed to be the inmost part of his dwelling, have revealed a section of Elizabethan flooring and what might be an indoor fireplace.

The archaeology will contribute to a major representation of the site that aims to reposition New Place in Shakespearean biography. The idea of a commuter Shakespeare, who returned to Stratford to see his wife and family, who sought the necessary solace and library he needed to write his (on average) two plays a year, means that any of his work from 1597 onwards could have been written in New Place.

What can archaeology tell us of the theatres for which he was writing? The excavation of The Rose Theatre in the summer of 1989 created an international frenzy. Thousands of people came to look at the site as archaeologists uncovered as much as they could before a new office block was erected. The moment was a high-water mark of cultural protest. Dame Peggy Ashcroft came and sat down firmly on the site, like Lady Constance in Shakespeare’s King John. The dying Lord (Laurence) Olivier made an impassioned speech over the visible remains, imploring the government to intervene and preserve the site (‘Cry God for Harry, England and The Rose!’). The protests grew, the architectural design of the office block was adapted to allow access to the site, and The Rose Theatre Trust was founded.

The Rose was the fifth purpose-built theatre in London and the first on Bankside. It was also the venue where some of Shakespeare’s earliest plays were performed: Titus Andronicus and Henry VI Part One, as well as Christopher Marlowe’s Dr Faustus, The Jew of Malta, and Tamburlaine the Great. In descending order, the genealogical line of professional theatres runs like this: The Red Lion (1567); The Theatre on Shoreditch (1576); the nearby Curtain (1577); The Rose (1587); The Swan Theatre on Bankside (1595); The Globe (1599) built in part from the timbers of The Theatre, whose lease had expired; The Fortune Theatre in Cripplegate (1600), and The Hope, also on Bankside (1613). A new Globe was built in 1614 following a devastating fire the year before.

More is known about The Rose than any of the other theatres. Philip Henslowe, who built it, renovated it substantially in 1592. The archaeology has been able to relate closely to Henslowe’s business records in order to estimate audience capacities and their responses. As a building it was an irregular-shaped polygon with 14 sides, measuring 72 feet in diameter. In 1592, the whole of its north side was
removed, substantially remodelled, and the shape of the stage reduced, making the overall size of the auditorium and receipts larger (the difference meant that up to 39 per cent more people were able to stand in the yard, from 530 groundlings in 1587 to as many as 740 after 1592). Until the uncovering of The Rose there was no archaeological evidence for the exact placing of any early professional stage.

We still do not know where the stage in The Globe was positioned. Three trial pits were dug in the northern part of the 1614 Globe in 1991, not quite enough properly to establish its diameter or number of sides. It is reckoned that a 16-sided polygon would be 86 feet in diameter, an 18-sided structure 90 feet, and a 24-sided theatre around 100 feet, which is the size of the new Globe itself. Archaeology undeniably demonstrates that the architecture of these early theatres was far from being uniform or consistent. Rather, each new building was, like each new Shakespeare play, an innovation, an experiment in form. Some 700 objects were found at The Rose in 1989, when three-quarters of the site was excavated. There are 162 ceramic money-boxes to collect takings. When full, the money-boxes would be taken and broken into a secure larger container, known as the box office. When Shakespeare’s Henry VI Part One was performed at The Rose on 3 March 1592, 78 shillings and 8d spilled out, breaking box office records. A candlestick suggests performances were lit outside daylight hours. There were found a tuning-peg for a stringed instrument, hundreds of dress accessories of varying social ranks (fasteners, buttons, pins, glass beads), spurs, shoes (men, women’s, and children’s), food remains, showing what was eaten (oysters, pears, apples, grapes, figs, sloes, blackberries, raspberries, pumpkins, plums, walnuts, cherries, hazelnuts, peaches, and almonds), a gold ring, and 17 burnished clay pipes. These were first used in England in 1573 and signified an expensive hobby until the end of the 16th century. Tobacco seeds were found near an outer wall, suggestive of an attempt at a cottage industry. The large quantity of hazelnut shells suggests they were used as filler in the construction of the theatre’s foundations. The bear and dog skulls found on the site were also used in the building’s construction rather than being evidence of baiting. The yard of The Rose was raked and Henslowe did not have a licence for baiting there.

The discovery of part of The Theatre in the summer of 2008 and The Curtain this June have helped to renew our appetite for theatre archaeology. They, too, were the sites of Shakespearean performances (we do not know precisely which) before the company he worked for settled at The Globe from 1599. An attempt to preserve some of the remains of The Theatre and incorporate them into a new theatre failed to generate the necessary funds and the site is covered over again. The excavations at The Curtain are exciting and show it to be the best preserved of all the Elizabethan theatres.

Museum of London Archaeology is now helping to inform the plans of Plough Yard Development and The Estate Office, Shoreditch, as to how the remains may be incorporated into a new development of offices, restaurants and shops. The initial reactions of the developers sound enthusiastic; they will be able to ‘showcase’ a ‘heritage feature’. But the patient perseverance of The Rose Theatre Trust, which for 23 years has kept the site of The Rose alive through exhibitions, special events, and as an increasingly popular fringe performance venue, shows that funding, however much deserved, is not always forthcoming even when it is most expected or desired. Hopefully, help will come in the not-too-distant future. Then, the archaeology of the remaining quarter of the site will be undertaken and The Rose vibrantly re-presented.

When archaeology meets Shakespeare it compellingly questions and re-affirms the cultural values of our present.

Excavated finds from the Rose Theatre site:

9. Turned oak baluster, perhaps from a safety rail around upper galleries or stage.


Bronzed &
Although the Royal Academy’s new autumn exhibition is called simply Bronze, by no means all the works in the show are, strictly speaking, bronzes – some are made of brass – but it was widely felt that the technically more accurate title Copper Alloy would not have been a big draw at the box office. The exhibition explores the history of the making of bronzes – using the term in the broadest sense – from the beginning to the present, and includes works from all over the world. They are arranged thematically, as opposed to either chronologically or geographically, which means the various rooms of the exhibition are organised around a number of simple themes: Figures, Animals, Reliefs, Objects, Groups, Gods, and Heads.

The earliest pieces on display, which are also the earliest known pieces full stop, belong to the Nahal Mishmar hoard, a cache of no fewer than 429 copper and copper alloy artefacts found in March 1961 in a cave in the Judaean Desert near the Dead Sea. They date from circa 3700 BC, and are now one of the treasures of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The most recent work on display is a bronze convex mirror, Untitled, by Anish Kapoor, which dates from 2012.

In between is a whole array of different works across the centuries and the continents. Bronze is arguably the most truly universal of media, in the sense that works made of bronze all give the impression of belonging to the same family, in a

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1. Chimera of Arezzo, Etruscan, circa 400 BC, bronze, 78.5 x 129cm. Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana. Photo: Antonio Quattrone, Florence.
way that – say – ceramics do not. Juxtaposing Attic red-figure ware with Ming blue-and-white, Meissen, Wedgewood, and Renaissance maiolica would be an aesthetic train-wreck, whereas heads from Greek and Roman antiquity, medieval Japan, Ife and Benin in Nigeria, and the European Renaissance and Baroque period can cohabit almost entirely peacefully. A show that brings them together should also have the effect of encouraging all visitors – regardless of whether they are specialists or enthusiasts – to look beyond the area, or areas, with which they are familiar and explore the unexpected. It seems safe to say that there is nobody who will have seen all these incredibly diverse and far-flung pieces before, but also that there is nobody who would be able to identify what they all are.

Indeed, it is a mark of the timeless quality that bronze, on occasion, possesses that there should be a measure of uncertainty over the dating of one of the loans, with some authorities regarding it as an ancient work and others as a late 16th- or early 17th-century counterfeit. The work in question is a statuette of a Nubian Boy, which was purportedly excavated at Chalon-sur-Saône in 1763, which would guarantee its Classical credentials. Immediately thereafter, it came into the possession of one of the greatest drawings collectors of all time, the Comte de Caylus. On his death in 1765, he bequeathed it to Louis XV, and it is now in the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. It has traditionally been suggested that it is a copy of a Hellenistic original made in Alexandria in Ptolemaic Egypt, but more recently, it has been proposed that it dates from around 1600, and was in all probability created in Italy.

Seen in the context of the exhibition, in the company of indisputable works from both periods, it may be possible to reach a definitive conclusion. Even the extraordinary Mensa Isiaca from the Museo Egizio in Turin, which is a unique survival from Ptolemaic Egypt, and which is first recorded in 1527 in the possession of another legendary collector, Pietro Bembo, has on occasion been – wrongly – denounced as a Renaissance fake.

More generally, the great bronzes of Classical antiquity and of the Renaissance form two of the high points within the long and varied history of bronze, but here it seems fitting to concentrate above all on the former. Alongside choice pieces from ancient Mesopotamia, Luristan, and Egypt, there are also spectacular early bronzes from the margins of Classical civilisation, including a Tribal Chief from the Nuragic culture of Sardinia and a splendid Winged Feline, which
originally formed the leg of a throne, from Tartessos in Spain. Even more remarkable are their northern European rivals, the two most spectacular of which are the Sun Chariot from Trundholm in Seeland, found in a bog in 1902, and now in the National Museum, Copenhagen, which dates from the 14th century BC, and the Cult Chariot of Strettwegen in the Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, which dates from around the 7th century BC.

Moving on to the Greek, Roman and Etruscan pieces, the selection is a blend of the immensely celebrated and the all but unknown. The Hellenistic Horse’s Head in the Museo Archaeologico in Florence is first recorded in 1492 in the post mortem inventory of the possessions of Lorenzo the Magnificent de’ Medici, and has been admired from that day to this. By contrast, the spectacular head of the Odrysian King Seuthes III now in the National Archaeological Museum in Sofia, was discovered in what is presumed to be his tomb as recently as 2004. It must originally have been part of a full-length statue of him, but even in fragmentary form it has enormous power, and fortunately what has survived is wonderfully well preserved, down to the exquisitely rendered and intensely staring eyes. In view of the fact that Bulgaria is not exactly a standard tourist destination, there can be only a few people in this country who have seen it. It also serves as a dramatic reminder of the fact that such stunning surprises may emerge at any time, and that the corpus of ancient sculpture in bronze is the very opposite of complete.

Another extraordinary find, this time dating from the Roman occupation of Britain, was discovered by a metal detectorist in May 2010, and sold at auction later that year. This is the Crosby Garrett Helmet, so called after the place where it was found, a magnificent example of a parade helmet of the sort
from Orsannichele in Florence provides a fascinating comparison with the Lucius Mammius Maximus, while Donatello’s Putto, although designed for the font in the baptistry of Siena Cathedral, has an energy and sense of movement that pay homage to the pagan past. In the mid-15th century, Antonio Averlino, who even took the Classical name Filarete, produced a statuette of Hector on Horseback which is a by no means slavish modern homage to the monumental equestrian group of Marcus Aurelius on the Capitol. Later on, around 1500, sculptors such as Andrea Riccio and Desiderio da Firenze would explore the world of antiquity through their representations of those quintessentially savage creatures, the satyrs, some of whose cavortings were almost alarmingly X-rated.

In the main, Renaissance artists employed Classical examples as sources of inspiration, but then went their own ways. Thus, the rearing attitude of the centaur in Giambologna’s Nessus and Detantra can be traced back to the poses of the horses of the Dioscuri on the Quirinal in Rome, but the overall effect is profoundly different. Every so often, however, what was required of them was a decided faithfulness to one of the canonical favourites. The most impressive instance of this species of homage in the exhibition is François Girardon’s full-scale translation into bronze of the Laocoön, which dates from the 1690s, and is one of the supreme adornments of Houghton Hall in Norfolk. The marble group had been rediscovered in Rome in 1506, and was universally agreed to be the most exciting of all the Classical finds made during the Renaissance. By a piquant irony, the bronze differs from the original in the position of the outstretched right arm, which was a 16th-century restoration, but has now been replaced by what is believed to be the original arm.

Bronze opens at the Royal Academy of Arts, Piccadilly, London on 15 September and runs until 9 December. Edited by Professor David Ekserdjian, the accompanying catalogue costs £40 in hardback, £27.95 in paperback.
Like the Trojan War, the writing of The Song of Achilles, Madeline Miller's debut novel, took 10 years to complete. 'After about five years my family and friends stopped asking me about it,' she recalls. But she remained driven by her absorption in her central theme, the relationship between Homer's young heroes Achilles and Patroclus, which she skilfully forged into a tale of a childhood friendship that matures into an intense and passionate love affair. 'Their love was the foundation of the novel. I didn't start out writing the book thinking they were friends,' she explains. 'I really wanted to tell Patroclus' story and to write something worthy of Homer's stories.' In the end her patience and determination, like that of the Greeks, was well rewarded: this year the novel won the prestigious Orange Prize for Fiction and attracted many fine reviews and plaudits.

Born in Boston, Madeline Miller, now 29, grew up in New York and Philadelphia. We may well have her mother to thank for her compelling novel. 'My mother read The Iliad to me when I was a child and I fell in love with the story. It felt very real, unlike other children's books, although there were mythical elements in it. But the crux of the story – the anger of Achilles and his all-too-human failings – was very powerful.' Her love of The Iliad became part of a larger zest for the ancient world. 'We lived in New York and on weekends we'd visit the Greek, Roman and Egyptian collections in the Metropolitan Museum. Children love old things, and these collections included so much grandeur they really captured my imagination.' Miller pursued her early interests by studying Latin and Greek in high school. At Brown University she gained a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Classics and also studied at the Yale School of Drama. Since then she has taught Latin, Greek and Shakespeare in high schools.

Initially, her absorption in modern literature remained separate from her love of the ancient world. 'I was writing some contemporary short stories but did not put the two together.' Then, in college she co-directed Troilus and Cressida. 'This was an epiphany for me,' she recalls. 'Participating in that play and talking to the actors who were playing Achilles and Odysseus totally excited me and made me connect my love of writing with antiquity.' Other modern writers inspired by the works of Homer include Margaret Atwood, who wrote The Penelopiad in 2005, and David Malouf, who in 2009 reimagined the Trojan War in his novel Ransom.

In The Iliad, Miller was particularly drawn to Homer's account of the close relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. 'There's a debate about whether they were lovers or not. Homer doesn't say. But I believe that to an ancient audience it would have been obvious. Achilles' grief when Patroclus dies is especially desperate and it is also very physical – he holds Patroclus' body all night and embraces it, horrifying those around him. I believe these things easily suggest they were lovers.' A spur to exploring this idea was, she says, John Updike's Gertrude and Claudius. 'It was written as a prequel to Hamlet. Everyone knows what is going to happen but it's wonderfully done. I knew when I read it that this was what I wanted to do with the story of Achilles and Patroclus.' While she was writing her book, Miller always had in mind the dramatic climax of the death of Patroclus, Achilles' great love for him and his intense grief.

In Athens in the 5th century BC their relationship was often viewed in light of the tradition of pederasty – the idea of an established, powerful older man being the friend, mentor and perhaps lover of a younger, beautiful man. But in the case of Achilles and Patroclus the problem was which was...
which? Achilles was beautiful – but he was also the powerful one. I couldn’t make their relationship fit a certain type of known association like that. Instead, she found inspiration for her erotically charged love story in Plato’s Symposium and in The Myrmidons by Aeschylus (of which only fragments remain), in which Achilles speaks of his ‘frequent kisses’ with Patroclus.

In the broader story, Miller drew not only on The Iliad, The Odyssey and Greek tragedies, but also on The Aeneid. ‘Virgil’s work is deeply inspired by The Iliad and The Odyssey but it is a different work. His descriptions of war, his humanism and pacifist leanings are beautiful and intricate and were a huge inspiration to me.’

A key feature of her Patroclus is the sense of decency and ethics that she feels is historically accurate. ‘There were accepted ways of behaving in different periods of history. An example is the incident that Homer relates about Chryses, the daughter of the priest Chryses, who was seized by the Greeks. According to the accepted ethics of the time, Agamemnon should have released the girl when her father offered a ransom. But he refuses and insults her father and so he and the whole Greek army are punished.’

Miller insists that she did not set out to write an historical novel. ‘I could have taken Homer’s world as the real world: in The King Must Die, for instance, Mary Renault sets Theseus in human reality. But I was trying to write not historical but mythologically accurate. I include gods in the story. When Homer created his stories about the Mycenaean world, it already lay in the distant past. So The Iliad and The Odyssey were not historical works.’

Participating in an archaeological dig in Corfu and touring Greece and Turkey helped her imagine the world of Homer. No traces can be found of some places which feature in his work. ‘You can visit Mount Pelion, which is a delightful place to go hiking, but we don’t know where Peleus’ palace was.’

Happily though, some sites, like Mycenae just as a literary location, but as a wonderful archaeological site and a place whose human history stretches back long before the time of Homer. That has been a good way for them to find their way into ancient history and mythology and to realise that they contain many great adventure stories.’

Despite the decade of effort involved in writing The Song of Achilles, Miller did not visit the site of Troy until after she finished work on the book. ‘That was my treat when I sold it. But I wanted to experience it not just as a literary location, but as a wonderful archaeological site and a place whose human history stretches back long before the time of the Trojan War.’ For her next book she is going to write about Homer’s other hero. ‘I was nervous about portraying Odysseus initially, but then I really enjoyed imagining him and writing about him. I would like to dip into The Odyssey and write about his journey home and especially about some of the women involved.’

For the moment she has given up full-time teaching and is focusing on tutoring and on promoting her book in the United States. It looks as though Madeline Miller may be preparing for another odyssey of her own. ■

The Song of Achilles is published in paperback by Bloomsbury at £7.99.

‘My mother read the Iliad to me when I was a child and I fell in love with the story ...’
Afghanistan is in the news for all the wrong reasons. Violence and religious extremism predominate in people’s images of the country – but there is another side to the story. Afghanistan is a land of myths and misconceptions, and away from the violence, archaeology and the heritage sector are developing faster than you might think.

Although traditionally described as being on the Silk Road, the ancient trade route linking Europe, China, India and the Near East, this route runs largely north of Afghanistan. Geography has dictated that, far from being at the crossroads of several different civilisations, Afghanistan was actually on the edge of them and not dominated by any of them. Different regions and peoples within the country have drawn on external cultures at different times and in different ways, often to fascinating effect.

The other great myth about Afghanistan is that it has never been conquered by outsiders. The multiplicity of ethnicities within the country clearly and visibly demonstrates the falsity of that assumption. Conquerors, cultures and religions have come and gone, and all have left their mark – culturally, linguistically and ethnically.

In reality Afghanistan has been conquered too many times to develop a coherent national identity and its historical legacy and enduring fascination are all the richer for it. The stark beauty of the landscape belies a basic geographic truth that Afghanistan is too poor
an agricultural area to support any dominant civilisation for long. Foreign conquerors (currently called liberators) have never been willing to devote the resources to maintaining a lasting presence. Greek, Islamic, Babylonian, Elamite, Mongolian, Indian, Chinese, Kushan rulers and cultures, among many others, have co-existed and sometimes mingled without any one culture dominating. Afghanistan’s uniqueness is its ability to allow individual cultures to flourish and survive, often in isolation. Even the overwhelming Islamic culture is not as deeply ingrained or monolithic as outsiders might think. While the Sunni Taliban dominates international news coverage, overlooked is the fact that about 15 per cent of the population is actually Shia. Nor is Islam itself necessarily as deep-rooted as it might seem. Culturally, Zoroastrianism has had a significant impact. And deeper-rooted still, in the province of Nuristan to the north-east of Kabul, for example, a pre-Zoroastrian religion based on animism and shamanism was maintained until its adherents were forced to convert to Islam in the 1890s. Afghanistan has always been a series of different regions and ethnicities divided by a combination of mountains and deserts.

It is telling that the most internationally known objects from Afghanistan – currently touring the world in the series of international exhibitions Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul (reviewed in Minerva Vol 22 No 3 in May/June 2011) – are all from the plains north of Kabul, in the area which was most open to foreign influence. This exhibition contains objects from the Bronze Age site of Fullo Hill, the 3rd-4th century BC Hellenistic site of Ai-Khanoum, Bactrian treasure from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD, and the Bagram treasures from the 1st-2nd century AD.

The first museum in Afghanistan, established in 1919 at the Bagh-i-Bala palace overlooking Kabul, housed a collection of manuscripts, miniatures, weapons and objets d’art belonging to the former royal families. A few years later the collection was moved to the king’s palace in the centre of the city. Then, in 1931, it was officially installed in the present building, which had served as the Municipality. The collection was enriched, beginning in 1922, by the first excavations of the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA). Through the years other archaeological delegations have added to the museum, until today the collection spans 50,000 years covering the Prehistoric, Classical, Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic periods.

The Director of the National Museum, Dr Omar Khan Masoudi, who has devoted over 30 years of his career to preserving Afghanistan’s heritage, only left his post once, when the Taliban began to destroy the museum and its contents in 2001. Dr Masoudi’s greatest wish is to staff the museum with competent Afghan graduates, and for schoolchildren to visit his museum and learn about the nation’s history, which during the decades of war they lost out on completely. He is philosophical about the fact that the country’s most well-known antiquities are on a seemingly perpetual world tour and that there are no immediate plans for them to return to Kabul. He is happy that, in an era when Afghanistan is in the news for all the wrong reasons, over one and a half million people in almost a dozen countries have seen Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul.

This exhibition also brings revenue in to the museum and, more significantly, Dari and Pashtu translations of the exhibition catalogues significantly, Dari and Pashtu translated.
that are distributed to public libraries and colleges across Afghanistan. These go some way to counteract the phenomenon that, as with the Peruvian or Khmer ancient cultures, the majority of scholarly books and articles on the subject cannot be read by the heirs to those cultures. The international outreach has worked both ways, with the National Museum benefiting from considerable international investment and co-operation with various international institutions and museums. The support received has allowed the museum in Kabul to hold a regular series of exhibitions over the last two years.

Two current exhibitions focus on Afghanistan’s Buddhist past. Sponsored by the Dutch government, The Buddhist Heritage of Afghanistan focuses on artefacts and remains from Buddhist monasteries in the south of the country; while the second exhibition focuses more explicitly on the internationally known site of Mes Aynak. Though most of the focus has been on the Buddhist artefacts and statues dating from the 5th to 7th centuries AD, the site was occupied and its copper deposits mined from the 3rd century BC onwards. Sadly the copper that led to the original occupation of the site may also lead to its destruction: in 2007 the Afghan government signed a contract to develop the area fully.

Currently rescue excavations are taking place there with the help of the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan. There are grounds for hope: a conference held in Washington last month confirmed that major mining operations will not start for five years, and the Chinese mining company involved is working closely with archaeologists on plans to manage the excavations as sensitively as possible.

Dr SM Raheen, Minister of Information and Culture, is not content with these successes. In conjunction with the American Embassy, the Ministry of Information and Culture has launched a competition to find a new design concept for the National Museum. The competition winner will be announced later this summer. The competition is part of ambitious plans to redevelop the National Museum next to its current site in the Darulaman district on the edge of Kabul. The intention is to provide a modern climate-controlled facility with secure storage, display and conservation facilities. Once these are all in place the plan is that ultimately all the treasures from the National Museum now touring the world will return and be displayed securely in the new museum.

The National Museum is currently the best place for visitors wishing to understand the cultures and history of Afghanistan. While the landscape is magnificent and inspires ideas of romantic ruins and ancient buildings, the reality is that most of the best evidence of the country’s past is now below the ground. The fortress at Balkh, the Minaret of Jam, the surviving structures in the Bamiyan Valley and the City of Herat are all magnificent sites but, sadly, they are only shadows of what they once were. The city of Ghazni, the past capital of an Islamic empire, was so devastated by Genghis Khan that it is said the south of Afghanistan has never recovered.

Not all of these depredations are ancient. Modern invaders have also been responsible for significant destruction. In 1879 the British army attempted to destroy the Bala Hisar Fort in Kabul, luckily with only limited success. More severe was the damage done in Herat to the reputedly magnificent Gowar Shad Mosque when, in trying to improve the city’s defences against the Russians, the British levelled the main mosque, leaving only five outlying minarets. One of the surviving minarets was destroyed by Russian artillery during the 1980s.

Political sensibilities also played a decisive role in the dynamiting of the famous Bamiyan Buddhas. Their destruction, which received
worldwide attention, was seen entirely as a product of Taliban obscurantism. Less well known was that, following a rebellion by the Hazara people, it was in part a cultural punishment, and it was planned as part of military operations against the people of the Bamiyan valley. Though none of the various schemes to rebuild the Buddhas has come to fruition, the Bamiyan Valley is recovering from the destructive effects of the Taliban.

Excavations under Professor Tarzi, which have continued annually since 2003, have led to the discovery of the world’s oldest oil paintings depicting the Buddha, dating back to the 7th century AD, and to the discovery in 2008 of a 19-metre-long reclining Buddha. But, contrary to some of the more excitable reporting, this reclining statue is not the one written about in the 630s by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang. He documents a 300-metre-long sleeping Buddha alongside the two famous statues recently destroyed. Xuanzang’s descriptions of the site and the two other statues are so accurate that he is unlikely to be wrong about the size of the 300-metre-long statue.

There are ambitious plans to turn Bamiyan into an international tourist destination. Although Bamiyan and the National Museum are the best-known sites internationally, they are not the only areas to have been developed in recent years. Both the Ghazni and Herat regional museums have recently reopened.

Despite challenging events, including looting. Supported by UNESCO, the museum in Ghazni, which contains a collection of 1,500 historical objects, reopened this year. This was helped by a successful exhibition of objects from Ghazni held in the National Museum last year.

Founded in 1966, the National Museum of Herat is housed in the old military barracks within the walled citadel. With the support of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the US State Department and the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, it reopened in January of this year after being closed for over 30 years. It has an impressive modern display of over 2,500 artefacts from the Axamanishi, Koshan, Sassanian and Islamic periods.

The support has not just been from overseas; in June of this year local jewel-dealers from Herat province donated over 520 objects to the museum. It is likely that some, but by no means all, of these objects, came from illegal excavations, but it is heartening to see that as stability increases, more and more Afghans are interested in their cultural past.

Since the looting of the National Museum in Baghdad in 2003, the smuggling of antiquities from conflict zones has received considerable attention, but the effects of this in Afghanistan are less high-profile, more ferocious and longer-term. The widespread looting of Afghan sites dates back at least as far back as the 1970s, when sales of illegally removed items in Kabul even revealed a hitherto unknown Mesopotamian-based culture in the north of Afghanistan. 

According to Dr Masoudi, 70% of the museum’s 100,000 objects were looted during the civil war period, 1992-1996. It is difficult to calculate the number of pieces plundered from under the ground, but aerial photographic surveys of sites reveal the telltale crater effects of large-scale looting.

The picture is not, though, entirely bleak. In conjunction with Interpol and UNESCO, the Ministry of Information and Culture, has recovered many stolen items. Since 2007, 8,500 objects looted from the National Museum have been recovered from many countries, including Germany, Belgium and Japan, and a few weeks ago, Britain joined them in returning 843 of the lost artefacts, including a 1st-century AD Bagram ivory, medieval coins and a fine statue of the Buddha. This year the National Museum in Kabul hopes to welcome over 30,000 visitors — a 15-fold increase since 2002.

So, for all the problems and difficulties in the Afghan heritage sector, there is cause for hope. Though hardly holiday destinations, Kabul, Herat and Mazari-Sharif are all open for tourism. Hotels are flourishing and there are six flights a day from Dubai to Kabul. The areas north and west of Kabul, including ancient Balkh, Mazari-Sharif and the Bamiyan Valley, can be visited, and while the author would not recommend any but the most experienced traveller in post-conflict zones to come to Afghanistan, it is possible to visit this fascinating country.

The dramatic scenery that dominates Kabul and the Panjshir Valley alone makes a visit worthwhile and is the key to understanding Afghan history and the multiplicity of cultures that have flowered in this harsh, but beautiful, land.

• The National Museum of Afghanistan, Darulaman Road, Kabul (+93 75 201 42 59; www.nationalmuseum.af) is open from 8am to 3.30pm Saturday to Wednesday, and 8am to 12 noon on Friday. Closed on Thursday.

• Afghanistan: A Cultural History by St John Simpson (British Museum Press, £9.99).

• Lost World of the Golden King: In Search of Ancient Afghanistan by Frank L Holt (University of California Press, £27.95) will be published in October.

• Hinterland Travel (www.hinterlandtravel.com) runs two or three tours of Afghanistan a year.
A stroll through the Palatine Gardens

At this time of economic crisis, when culture and artistic heritage are considered a redundant luxury by most short-sighted politicians in Italy, Orti e Giardini: Il cuore dell’Antica Roma (Gardens in the Heart of Ancient Rome), a remarkably inexpensive exhibition, simple yet cost-efficient, is the archaeological event in the Eternal City this summer. Far from the madding crowd and the heavy traffic of the capital, the exhibition lures visitors into the spectacular ruins and gardens of the Palatine, the seat of the mighty rulers of the Roman empire.

When you visit, wear comfortable shoes and a sunhat, take a picnic and a good guidebook and stroll at a leisurely pace through the park of the Palatine, where acanthus leaves flourish under tall umbrella pines, refreshed by the subtle scent of roses and mock orange blossom. The successive stages of the exhibition’s displays provide the often elusive pleasure of ruins evoked by the travellers of the Grand Tour of bygone days.

Some 12,000 flowering plants and shrubs have been planted at specific points in the park to recreate the play of colours – white representing marble while shades of blue echo the rippling water of the fountains and nymphaea that graced the mansions of Roman emperors who wanted to live among greenery and water features in the Hellenistic fashion. The plants – plumbago, petunia, convolvulus, Solanum jasminoides, Verbena hybrida pendula – were all chosen with micro-climatic conditions and the time when they bloom in mind. They also had to fit in with the archaeological structures. An unobtrusive and imaginative way to bring monuments alive with minimal effort, this is a brilliant idea to enhance the most enchanting, but perhaps the least visited, of Rome’s archaeological sites.

Walking upwards from the entrance to the Palatine ruins, the first floral display appears deep
down at the bottom of the so-called stadium, a huge rectangular space enclosed by a portico. Its perimeter was marked out by a track (gestatio) running around it, with smaller paths and flower-beds branching out from the track, originally intended for people on foot, in litters or on horseback.

The magnificent statues found here show that the area was also used as a sculpture gallery. On one of the long sides was an exedra with a view of the entire garden and, at each end, there was a semicircular marble fountain with an open space in the centre in which statues stood. The presence of channels that carried water to the centre of the ‘stadium’ and the absence of any kind of pavement provide additional proof that this was a garden area occupying a section of the Domus Augustana, the great palace of the last emperor of the Flavian dynasty, Domitian, who ruled AD 81–96.

The next displays are found along the path leading to the Museo Palatino. These are the upper and lower peristyles of the Domus Augustana that featured flower-beds, small basins, perhaps for ornamental fish, and much sculpture. They were surrounded by numerous living rooms and nymphaea, to provide coolness on hot days.

At the centre of the lower peristyle was a grand fountain several metres high. Its base was decorated by four peltae, crescent-shaped shields said to be used by Amazons, separated by semi-circular channels.

The upper peristyle included a miniature temple set within a large rectangular marble basin; it may have been a shrine of some kind, a place of retreat for the emperor, or a water feature. Excavations have identified a complex arrangement of varied rooms, including a porticoed diaeta (terrace) and more basins to the sides of the peristyle.

At the centre of the great peristyle in the public part of the Domus Flavia was an octagonal fountain in the form of a labyrinth. This is where, in AD 193, rebels assassinated Emperor Pertinax (AD 126–193). The great fountain was surrounded by porticoes and flanked by a series of rooms from which the inhabitants could enjoy a view of the fountain and the flower-beds.

Water ran through the channels that formed the octagonal shape, shown by the remnants of their waterproof cocciopesto lining. There were two elliptical and symmetrical nymphae in the Domus Flavia, one now visible and the other recorded during the 19th-century excavations but now hidden beneath the...
Museo Palatino. The two fountains flanked the *triclinium* (dining-room), called the *Coenatio Iovis* (‘Room for the Feasts of Jupiter’), described by the Latin writer Juvenal (circa AD 55-138).

A cluster of lovely pomegranate trees leads to the entrance of the Museo Palatino, a small but choice museum, with objects documenting prehistoric settlements on the Palatine from the 13th century BC onwards until, according to the city’s foundation myth, Romulus founded Rome here in 754 BC. It is, however, outstanding objects from later centuries that warrant a visit to the museum.

Pride of place is rightly given to the painted terracotta reliefs and the exquisite black basalt herms from the area of the Temple of Apollo, probably the portico of the Danaides, built in the reign of Augustus, who was particularly devoted to this god. The original layout of the eastern peristyle of the House of Augustus is unknown, but, for the purposes of the exhibition, the area has been used for a real-life reconstruction of the garden shown in large murals (11.70 x 5.90 metres) painted on the walls of the underground winter dining-room of the House of Livia. The flora depicted is local and includes quince and pomegranate trees, viburnum, oleander and rose bushes packed together in flower-beds bounded by cane grillages.

According to Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79) in his *Naturalis Historia* (12.13), it was Gaius Martius, a friend of Emperor Augustus, who devised ‘the art of trimming shrubbery into various shapes’. Thus the *ars topiaria* flourished ‘to adorn gardens; scenes of hunting, naval flotillas and other figures’ were shaped by pruning cypress, myrtle, box, ‘Jupiter’s beard’ (*Anthyllis barba-jovis*) and the ‘laurel of Thasos’, (*Ruscus aculeatus*, or butcher’s broom). It became fashionable to grow plants with flexible branches, such as ivy and periwinkle, over trellises to form various shapes and even to cover entire walls. In his *Letters* (1.55) Cicero (106-43 BC) writes to his brother Quintus about his gardener’s skill in covering the terrace of his villa in ivy to give the impression that the statues were actually alive and inhabited a wood.

The importance of the art of gardening in the Augustan period (27 BC - AD 14) is emphasised by the number of paintings in which trees, flowers and landscapes are shown in a precise and realistic manner. Indeed, it was a painter called Studius, or Ludius, who is said to have invented garden paintings during this period (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 12.13 and 35.116).

With the expansion of the empire new species arrived, including peaches, lemons and cherries, and the use of greenhouses, invented by Tiberius’ gardeners, spread. Terraces covered with greenery, true ‘hanging gardens’, were common during the reign of Nero. Suetonius’ biography of Claudius describes an isolated pavilion in a garden, with a tent to provide shade from the sun; the sources also refer to a *praepositus velarium* (an official in charge of the tents) on the staff of the palaces on the Palatine.

In the course of time the Palatine ruins became covered by vineyards and orchards until, in the 16th century, a fine garden in the Renaissance style was created over the Roman ruins. This was made between 1542 and 1560 under the direction of Cardinal Alexander
Farnese, nephew of Pope Paul III, for the use of the Farnese family, who wanted to lay claim to imperial Roman ancestry. The Farnese introduced newly discovered plants from the New World into their gardens. The substructures of the Domus Tiberiana supported an aviary and two pavilions at the top of a spectacular complex of terraces, ramps, passageways and crypto-porticoes, culminating in one of the finest panoramas of the city. From here there is still a breathtaking view over the Forum, from the Capitol to the Basilica of Maxentius, from the Colosseum to the Lateran, out to the Alban Hills.

When the Farnese family died out, their gardens were abandoned, then rented out. Cypresses, laurels and holm oaks were replaced by vines and artichokes. Nevertheless the fascination with Horti Farnesiani continued, along with an interest in the ancient ruins beneath the ground. The earliest excavations were conducted in 1720 by Monsignor Francesco Bianchini (1662-1729), who uncovered sections of the Domus Flavia.

The Palatine ruins became a garden once again as part of LM Berthault’s plan (1809-1814) for a Jardin du Capitole linking the Colosseum and the Capitol. Then, in 1861, Napoleon III acquired the gardens so that excavations should be carried out. During the 19th century archaeologists led by Giacomo Boni (1859-1925) began to seriously excavate the monumental ruins overlooking the Forum. A somewhat eccentric character and a friend of John Ruskin, Boni supported a return to pagan religion in Italy. Yet despite this esoteric turn of mind, he was down-to-earth enough to be one of the first archaeologists to introduce the study of stratigraphy into excavation. He is buried on the Palatine in the garden which he designed. This is a charming garden made up of ancient stones, columns, and Roman brick, and old-fashioned roses, Judas trees and box hedge.

From 1985 to 1997, excavations were undertaken in collaboration with the École Française de Rome on the large terrace of the former Vigna Barberini, on the eastern side of the Palatine overlooking the valley of the Colosseum. Although there is no excavation evidence to confirm it yet, the hypothesis is that the Gardens of Adonis were located here. This idea comes from a passage by Philostratus (circa AD 170-247) who in his Life of Apollonius of Tyana describes the Adonaea Gardens created at the time of Emperor Domitian to commemorate the death of the beautiful god Adonis.

Adonis is an annually renewed, ever-youthful vegetation god, a life-death-rebirth deity whose nature is tied to the calendar. Broken amphorae used as flower-pots have been discovered around statues of Adonis and Venus. The potted plants that grew in them, flowered and then died, symbolising the ephemeral nature of beauty, youth and life. But, as well as representing a myth, this practice also restricted the growth of the plants and prevented water loss, maintaining the dampness of the soil.

So, true to his story, the beauty of Adonis was reborn temporarily in the flowers that then faded, as all beauty must.

Orti e Giardini: il cuore dell’ Antica Roma (Gardens in the Heart of Ancient Rome) is on show on the Palatine Hill in Rome until 14 October. A ticket to the Gardens also gives admission to the Forum and the Palatine. Further reading: Pompei Verde: Il tempo, la moda, le piante by Annamaria Ciarallo (Electa, Naples, 2006).
Matilde de Chantrain looks back at the life of the Emperor Hadrian’s favourite, Antinous, who is currently being celebrated in an exhibition at Villa Adriana in Tivoli.
ach summer for the last few years an exhibition has been held focusing on different aspects of the complex personality of the Emperor Hadrian (r. AD 117-138), his life and patronage, and Villa Adriana, his magnificent pleasure palace, built AD 118-133, a few kilometres outside Rome. Staged in 2004, for example, Adriano, le Memorie al Femminile (Hadrian and the Women in his Life) was a fascinating study which showed outstanding portraits of his wife and female relatives. Then in 2007 came Vibia Sabina: From Augusta to Diva, celebrating the restitution to its homeland of the large statue of Empress Vibia Sabina by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Theatrical performances held to coincide with these exhibitions always add an extra dimension to the event and allow visitors to enjoy the torch-lit ruins and park at night. Favourite choices are the plays and ballets inspired by the highly evocative 1951 biographical novel Memoirs of Hadrian by the French writer Marguerite Yourcenar (1903-1987). This year it is the turn of Antinous, Hadrian’s beloved beautiful young lover, with the exhibition Antinous: The Fascination of Beauty, on view at the Antiquarium of the Canopo (2) of Villa Adriana.

Antinous was born, circa AD 110-112, into a Greek family living in Bithionion-Claudiopolis, in the Roman province of Bithynia on the north-west coast of Asia Minor, in present-day Turkey. It is likely that he was taken up by Hadrian when the emperor visited Bithynia in AD 123 – he would have been about 12 or 13. There are early portraits of Antinous from around this time, an indication that he was fast becoming the emperor’s favourite companion and lover. For the following seven years, Antinous lived at court and accompanied Hadrian (11) on his many journeys throughout the empire.

When Antinous came to Rome with the emperor in AD 125, Villa Adriana was under construction and some of its main buildings, such as the Teatro Marittimo (3) and the thermae, were already built. This meant that Hadrian and his court could live at the villa away from the capital and rule the empire from his extraordinary rural retreat located at Tibur (present-day Tivoli). More importantly, the emperor could personally supervise the building work and shape it to his liking.

Then, five years later, tragically and mysteriously, the beautiful Antinous died in Egypt in AD 130, before reaching the age of 20. There are various theories as to what happened, but it seems unlikely that he simply drowned in the Nile after an accidental fall. Although there is no proof, there is another theory: that he may have deliberately sacrificed himself by staging a ritual mors vicaria to prolong the emperor’s life.

According to the historian Cassius Dio (circa AD 150-235), himself a Bithynian, Hadrian simply wrote in his own memoirs: ‘He fell into the Nile’ (Historia Romana). What is certain is that the emperor was prostrate with grief at the loss of his friend. ‘... He lost his Antinous while sailing along the Nile and wept for him like a woman. Concerning this, there are various reports: some assert that he sacrificed himself for Hadrian, others what both his beauty and Hadrian’s excessive sensuality make obvious.’ (Aelius Spartanus, 4th-5th century AD, Historia Augusta – Vita Hadriani, Chapter 14). Cassius Dio also
advanced the theory that Antinous had followed various magical practices and, during some esoteric ritual, sacrificed himself because a victim was needed to prolong the emperor’s life. Aurelius Victor, a 4th-century historian, was of the same opinion. According to Graeco-Egyptian tradition, in some circumstances, death by drowning would lead to divinisation, since the victim would have followed the example of the god Osiris, lord of the Underworld, who had sacrificed himself for the benefit of the land and peoples of Egypt.

Whatever the truth of the matter, a grief-stricken Hadrian founded the city of Antinoopolis in Egypt, where Antinous had died, in his memory and transformed the young man into a god. Temples for his worship were erected and statues carved. In Roman practice divinisation was usually reserved for emperors and for members of the imperial family, so Antinous’ Egyptianised cult is quite exceptional. A special coin was even minted portraying the handsome youth.

When the emperor came back to Tibur in AD 133 he had a funerary monument built near the stately entrance to the Villa Adriana complex in memory of his young lover. This is the Antinoeion, a large exedra with two temples separated by an obelisk. The temples were decorated with statues of humans and animals in the Egyptian style that pervaded the artistic production of the last years of the reign of Hadrian. The Antinoeion was excavated between 2002 and 2005 and its finds are displayed in the current exhibition.

The obelisk (7) now positioned on the terrace of the Pincio, above the Spanish Steps in Rome, is believed to have been at the centre of the Antinoeion, since it bears a hieroglyphic inscription listing the deified Antinous together with other Egyptian gods.

There is also mention of a burial in a park belonging to Emperor Hadrian, where some scholars believe there was a monument to Antinous. These ruins would be in the Vigna Barberini on the Palatine, which was later transformed into a temple, the Elagabalium by Emperor Heliogabalus (r. AD 218-222). It might be at this time that the obelisk was moved to the amphitheatrum castrum where it was found in the 16th century. Then, in 1822, it was transported and re-erected on the Pincio by order of Pope Pius VII (1742-1823). The eight rounded reliefs reused on the arch of Constantine in Rome, where Antinous is represented several times, may have also come from the Antinoeion in Tibur.

An esoteric reading of Antinous’ life and death was favoured among intellectuals of the Renaissance like cardinal Pietro Bembo (1470-1547). A keen antiquarian, Bembo acquired a splendid marble statue of Antinous that became part of the collection of Alessandro Farnese and was known thereafter as the ‘Antinoo Farnese’ (5), one of the most beautiful of all the surviving marble portraits of the handsome youth.

Tragically and mysteriously, the beautiful Antinous died in Egypt in AD 130, before reaching the age of 20.
the likeness of somebody who was not a statesman or a philosopher but who was simply a man who has been loved’.

Contemporary and later portraits of the young man came to represent the popular ideal of perfect beauty and were copied for centuries. The many marble and bronze statues and reliefs, as well as the image of his face on medals, coins and carved hardstone are clear proof of the iconic status of Antinous. Quite a number of these, among a total of 50 objects, are now on view at Villa Adriana.

Antinous is always represented as a beautiful, pensive, somewhat melancholy, young man. Usually naked, he is often crowned with vine leaves as if he were Dionysos or Apollo, or Pan Aristeus or Silvanus (1) – all gods linked to fertility cults. A very beautiful portrait of Antinous crowned as a priest of the imperial cult was found in Ostia on the site of a temple dedicated to the Great Mother, Cybele. There are also depictions of Antinous wearing Pharaonic garb, the nemes (headdress) and (apharao) skirt. An outstanding example is the pink quartzite bust (6), on loan from Dresden’s Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, which has pride of place in the exhibition.

Other portraits include a splendid bronze head and a cameo (4) from the Medici collections, the newly restored marble portrait from Palazzo Pitti in Florence, and an outstanding bust from the Venetian collection belonging to Giovanni Grimani.

The ‘Marlborough sardonyx’, a gem formerly in the Marlborough collection and now in a private collection, bears an incomplete signature on the border indicating that Antonianus from Aphrodisia carved it. This is one of the very rare antique portraits of Antinous to be signed. The back was gilded in Byzantine times. It is just conceivable that the first owner of this gem was actually Hadrian himself (10). And to show the interesting play between antiquities and later copies, there is a superb Art Deco black marble portrait of Antinous (8) on loan from a private collection.

A place of power and a place of memory, Villa Adriana was recently in the news because it was under threat when there was a plan to install a rubbish dump and incinerator next door to it. But, after a massive public outcry, the plan was scrapped and the villa was saved in the nick of time.

Although it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, at the moment Villa Adriana gets no money from the Italian government for its upkeep. As a result these splendid ruins and its park are unkempt, strewn with plastic bags for lack of adequate rubbish-bins, and its elegant pools are murky (9).

The site is badly signposted – there are no information panels to indicate the function and layout of its once magnificent buildings. The underground pathways built to link each building to the next, facilitating the supply of goods and the activity of servants doing their duties away from the eyes of the court, are choked with weeds and humid with seepage.

Nor is there a café or restaurant to provide welcome rest for visitors to this huge site. Where there was once a paradigm of culture and beauty, all is decay: this is another sad example of the suicidal governance of Italian artistic resources.

Emperor Hadrian believed himself to be ‘... the custodian of the beauty of the world’. It seems obvious that his political successors do not take their cultural responsibilities seriously, nor do they deserve their fine heritage.

Unless a worldwide international campaign intervenes to shame politicians who allow the constant and increasing erosion of Italy’s works of art and landscape, little will be left for future generations to enjoy.

It would not surprise me if, in sheer despair, the UNESCO board decided to cross Villa Adriana off its list of World Heritage Sites.

Antinous: The Fascination of Beauty is on show at Antiquarium del Canopo, Villa Adriana, Tivoli (00 39 06 39967900; www.pierreci.it) until 4 November. The catalogue, edited by Marina Sapelli Ragni, is published by Electa, €29.
Andrew Robinson investigates the lives of three men who spent their lives obsessed with deciphering the ancient languages of the Maya, the Egyptians and the Minoans.

Michael Ventris, the Englishman who, in the 1950s, deciphered Minoan Linear B, the earliest readable writing of Europe; Yuri Knorosov, the Russian who deciphered the Mayan glyphs of Central America, also in the 1950s, and Jean-François Champollion, the Frenchman who, in the 1820s, deciphered Egyptian hieroglyphs. Although their three approaches to decipherment differed considerably and their personalities were remarkably unalike, Ventris, Knorosov and Champollion had at least one characteristic in common: each was obsessed for many years with the archaeological problem he was trying to solve. Each decipherer could, in my opinion, justifiably be called a genius because his work of changed the history of the world.

Michael Ventris’ decipherment gave Europe a history half a millennium older than the earliest Greek inscriptions. Yuri Knorosov’s showed that the New World had a literate and artistically sophisticated civilisation – that of the classic Maya – more than a millennium before the arrival in America of the Spanish conquistadors. Jean-François Champollion’s doubled the span of recorded history from 600 BC to circa 3000 BC – the beginning of the pharaonic dynasties.

In some ways, Ventris is the greatest of the three decipherers. He had to make do with by far the smallest corpus of inscriptions, compared with the treasure troves from Egypt and Central America. He had no bilingual inscription (such as the Rosetta Stone used by Champollion or the 16th-century Spanish-Mayan ‘alphabet’ available to Knorosov) to provide a clue to the meaning of those unknown signs. And he had no access to a known living language that could be historically related to the unknown ancient language of Linear B – nothing like the Coptic language of Egypt, which was thought to be descended from ancient Egyptian, or the Mayan languages of modern Mexico, which were almost certainly related to the language of the ancient Maya. Although, eventually, Ventris proved that the language of Linear B was an archaic dialect of ancient...
Greek, 500 years older than Homer, this relationship with Greek was absolutely unknown at the time of the ancient script's discovery.

In addition, unlike Champollion and Knorosov, Ventris was not a professional linguist with a university training in languages; he never attended a university and, in fact, trained as a modernist architect in London. For him decipherment was always a distracting hobby that had gripped him as a boy at the public school Stowe in the mid-1930s.

Yet it was architecture that in a sense came to his aid. In the true words of Ventris' later collaborator, the Cambridge University classicist John Chadwick: 'The architect's eye sees in a building not a mere façade, a jumble of ornamental and structural features; it looks beneath the appearance and distinguishes the significant parts of the pattern, the structural elements and framework of the building. So, too, Ventris was able to discern among the bewildering variety of the mysterious [Linear B] signs, patterns and regularities that betrayed the underlying structure. It is this quality, the power of seeing order in apparent confusion, that has marked the work of all great men.'

So, what exactly is Linear B? Its full name, 'Linear Script of Class B', was given by its discoverer, Evans, when he began excavating what he believed was the 'Palace of Minos' at Knossos on Crete in 1900. The signs of the newly discovered ancient script were fairly primitive characters scratched on clay tablets – with none of the aesthetic appeal of Egyptian hieroglyphs and Mayan glyphs – which are nowadays dated to around 1450 BC. The 'Class B' label was to distinguish the characters from similar-looking but, nevertheless, distinct characters on archaeologically older tablets (now dated to 1750-1450 BC) that Evans had labelled 'Linear Script of Class A', which had been found at Knossos but chiefly at another Minoan palace excavation in southern Crete. (Minoan Linear A remains undeciphered even today.) 'Linear' – not because the symbols were written in sequence but because they consisted of lines inscribed on a surface, as opposed to the three-dimensional, engraved images of a third, pictographic script, found chiefly on seal stones and only in the eastern part of Crete, which Evans dubbed 'hieroglyphic' but which actually did not much resemble Egyptian writing. (Cretan Hieroglyphic is also still undeciphered.)

And who was Michael Ventris? If there is one word that sums him up, it is 'unconventional'. Almost everyone who knew him remarked on the ease and charm of his company, but he could also be exceptionally withdrawn and uncommunicative. He was a dazzling polyglot who.
took pride in speaking most major European languages, yet he felt close to hardly anyone, and these few were mainly English speakers. As an architect and decipherer he believed firmly in collaboration and cross-fertilisation, yet he kept his many personal relationships in remarkably separate compartments. His tastes in architecture were thoroughly modern (Bauhaus) and anti-Classical, but his interest in Linear B required an intimate knowledge of the Classical world; he had a substantial private income, but he was not interested in living the lifestyle of the rich and had socialist tendencies; even physically he looked much more like a tanned, glamorous sportsman (he was an avid skier) than an etiolated scholar, a City gent far more than an absent-minded professor. It would be easy to continue with this list of paradoxes. Above all, Ventris showed a modesty that verged on diffidence – ‘almost alarmingly so’, according to an architect friend, despite having as much (indeed more) to boast of than a Nobel prize-winner. When he died, aged only 34, in a car accident outside London, his undoubtedly disturbed mental state at the time led some to conclude that this brilliant man may have taken his own life, apparently in despair at his lack of creativity as an architect.

Champollion, by total contrast, dedicated his life to one goal with the passion, courage and indeed arrogance of a French intellectual born during the Revolution. Despite coming from a modest provincial family, at the age of 15, after some early exposure to Egyptian monuments and manuscripts brought back to France by the savants of Napoleon Bonaparte’s expedition, Champollion declared to the father of a school friend in Grenoble: ‘I wish to devote my life to knowledge of ancient Egypt.’

His English rival, the polymath Thomas Young, who had began the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone in 1814, had no desire whatsoever to visit Egypt. In founding an Egyptian Society in London in 1817, to publish as many ancient inscriptions and manuscripts as possible, Young remarked that funds were needed ‘for employing some poor Italian or Maltese to scramble over Egypt in search of more’. Compare this statement with Champollion’s excited description of entering the temple at Abu Simbel of Rameses the Great – a pharaoh whose hieroglyphic name Champollion was the first to translate, in 1822 – on his pioneering Franco-Tuscan expedition to Egypt in 1828-29, funded by Charles X of France and Grand Duke Leopold II of Tuscany. Writing to his elder brother and mentor back in Paris, Champollion enthused:

‘The great temple of Ibsamboul is worth the voyage to Nubia all by itself: it is a marvel that would stand out as wonderful even at Thebes. The labour that its excavation must have cost frightens the imagination… But it is a tough business to visit it… I undressed almost completely, down to my Arab shirt and long linen underpants, and pushed myself flat on my stomach through the small opening in the doorway that, if cleared of sand, would be at least 25 feet in height. I thought I was entering the mouth of a furnace, and, when I had slid entirely into the temple, I found myself in an atmosphere heated to 52 degrees: we went through this astonishing excavation, Rosellini, Ricci, I and one of the Arabs holding a candle in his hand.’

Perhaps the strangest fact about our third code breaker, Knorosov, is that he deciphered the Mayan glyphs without any personal contact with original Mayan inscriptions, Mayanist scholars or Mexico. For he was a Marxist student of linguistics and anthropology in Moscow and Leningrad in the...
years immediately after the Second World War, during the final years of Stalin’s regime and the depths of the Cold War, when foreign travel to the Americas, or even correspondence with American scholars, was completely forbidden, on pain of being sent to the Gulag. Knorosov was able to visit Mexico only after the fall of Communism in 1989.

His isolation may, however, have been a blessing in disguise, because it liberated him from the dominant Western scholarly perception that the Mayan glyphs were not a writing system at all but, instead, a system of mystical symbols devised by a Maya theocracy of star-gazing astronomer-priests. (A somewhat similar misperception had hamstrung the efforts of scholars of the Egyptian hieroglyphs before the time of Young and Champollion.) Knorosov did, however, have access to relevant Western publications on the Mayan script, including reproductions of Mayan manuscripts. One of these was the Relación de las cosas de Yucatán (An Account of the Things of Yucatan) by the 16th-century Spanish bishop of Yucatan, Diego de Landa, which contained what claimed to be a Mayan ‘alphabet’ with equivalent Spanish sounds. Knorosov wrote his doctoral dissertation on Landa’s Relación, and came to the contrary conclusion that the so-called Mayan ‘alphabet’ was in fact a syllabary.

His supervisor at Leningrad State University encouraged him: ‘If you believe that any writing system produced by humans can be read by humans, why don’t you try to crack the Maya system?’ By intelligent sleuthing, Knorosov went on to discover many syllabic signs in Mayan manuscripts and inscriptions. In 1952, he proposed that the basis of the Mayan glyphs, like that of the Egyptian hieroglyphs, was a system of phonetic signs, combined with a much larger number of non-phonetic, often pictographic signs. Many of his phonetic readings of ancient words could be confirmed by consulting dictionaries of living Mayan languages. The official announcement of Knorosov’s decipherment was couched in obligatory Soviet phraseology, attacking Western scholars for their ‘bourgeois idealism’ and ‘reactionary’ approach. Inevitably, the leading Western Mayanist, Sir Eric Thompson, ridiculed the Soviet decipherment in return. But some of the younger Mayanists in North America, such as Michael Coe, who were less enamoured of the perception of the Maya as mystical priests, were convinced by Knorosov’s basic argument, if not by all of his detailed claims. It would take another three decades and more (until the late 1980s and 1990s) for the decipherment of the Mayan glyphs to become firmly established, as had also been true of Champollion’s Egyptian decipherment, which was incontrovertibly confirmed only in 1866.

But as Coe, the historian of the Maya decipherment, rightly remarked in 2011: ‘The articles and studies that Knorosov published from 1952 through the end of the decade establish him as an innovative decipherer in the tradition of Jean-François Champollion, Henry Rawlinson, and Michael Ventris.’

- Cracking the Egyptian Code: The Revolutionary Life of Jean-François Champollion (hb, £19.95) and The Man Who Deciphered Linear B: The Story of Michael Ventris (pb, £8.95) – both by Andrew Robinson – and Breaking the Maya Code (pb, 2012, £14.95) by Michael D Coe are all published by Thames & Hudson.
Murray Eiland finds a treasure trove of intricate knowledge, multilayered examples and stunning illustrations in Leslie Webster’s new reference book about Anglo-Saxon art.

Most of our most precious and beautiful objects made during the Anglo-Saxon period, the high point of Early Medieval art, can be found in the British Museum. So it is refreshing to find that Leslie Webster’s new reference book on the subject is such a page-turner, when it could easily have been more of an encyclopedia. Leslie was formerly Keeper of the Department of Prehistory in the British Museum and is an Honorary Professor at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL.

Because Anglo-Saxon art does not follow a naturalistic style, it may appear naïve to those living in a post-Renaissance world. The Anglo-Saxons followed their own artistic conventions, and used symbols from a variety of sources. Anglo-Saxon art does reflect some...
there is hardly any attempt to represent a human or divine form in anything approaching a naturalistic way. But this is not due to an inability to handle a difficult subject matter; there may have been cultural factors that discouraged it. Cultural factors have a considerable role to play even in modern art.

Textual evidence is sparse, of course, and many observations appear weak because of a tendency to fill in blanks with ‘rules’ or mores that are unwritten. But these are some of the most interesting areas to address. After Christianity became widespread, human figures were shown in a variety of contexts that illuminate how the new religion was understood; Anglo-Saxon artists portray religious figures more readily than secular ones.

Continental empires, such as the Carolingian or Ottonian, had no such strictures about representing secular figures. For example, while Emperor Charles the Bald (r 840-877) is depicted in manuscripts, Alfred the Great (r 871-899) is not. This is not to suggest, however, that...
Anglo-Saxon art could not convey complex messages, as can be gleaned from reading lines 1687-1698 of Beowulf, which describe in detail a sword and scabbard:

‘Hrothgar spoke: he examined the hilt, that ancient relic; on it was engraved the beginning of age-old war. Afterwards the Flood, the rushing sea, destroyed the race of giants; they fared badly. That was a people estranged from the eternal Lord; the Ruler gave them retribution in the surging of the water. On those bright gold casings it was also properly marked in runic letters, set out and stated, for whom that sword was made, the best of blades, with its interlaced, snake-patterned hilt.’

The time when Beowulf was written was on the cusp of a great change – when an oral culture, in which bards transmitted the knowledge of the past, was being transformed into one where scribes were copying out and illuminating the written word. Hrothgar states that the name of the sword’s owner was expressed in runes, while the blade itself was decorated with a scene that conveyed much more information.

The snake-patterned hilt would have been familiar to the audience because of the availability of similar military hardware close to hand (1, 2a, 2b, 3). Much of the story was based on scenes from the Bible, which again was viewed through the distinctive lens of a warrior society. It is a common refrain that Anglo-Saxon literature deals with drinking and fighting. This is true, but there is much more that underpins the society. The Dream of the Rood (a poem that probably dates from the 8th century) contains a variety of motifs, some of which have Christian origins. According to the poem, Christ and the tree suffer, both are pierced with nails, mocked and tortured, and, like Christ, the tree refuses to surrender and they fuse to become one. Christ is ultimately resurrected, while the tree is decorated with gold and silver. The sacred tree has a long pagan pedigree and a ‘talking tree’ is certainly not a biblical image – it is more at home in an animistic world.

This and many other avenues of study will be fodder for academic debate long into the future. What is certain is that – like Anglo-Saxon literature – the art of the period is many-layered. Many compositions are supported in a floral matrix, with part-human, part-animal figures. Perhaps no better example can be found than on a brooch found in a woman’s grave at Chessel Down (7). The brooch is divided into fields by borders, and the head plate clearly has two crouching animals back-to-back at the
At first it may appear to be a welter of designs, but if it is turned upside down the parts resolve into animal/human hybrid creatures. As Leslie Webster states: 'The central image on the foot-plate – the bearded face with bird-like creatures forming a protective shield above – is quite possibly to be read as an image of Woden/Odin, chief among the Germanic gods, accompanied by his two ravens, known from later Scandinavian sources as Huginn and Muninn.'

In Anglo-Saxon times, men as well as women wore jewellery in order to impress although, of course, the adornment of the elite tended to be the most impressive (8). Bracteates (gold sheets impressed with a die) can be formed into pendants (12, 13). At first these follow Roman models, but with the image of the emperor replaced by a god (such as Woden/Odin) and animals as supporting devices. Roman issues bore Latin inscriptions, but bracteates are embellished with runes, which have more of a magical function.

The assimilation of artistic styles had been going on for a long time. Roman gold medallions and coins were used to buy peace on frontiers, and were quickly turned into heirlooms that circulated on the northern frontier and went on to inspire countless copies over many generations.

The origins of the Saxon relief style can be found in the early 5th century in Saxon areas of northern Germany between the Elbe and the Weser. It is even possible that 'Roman' craftsmen made some of the early brooches. These designs continued to be produced in Britain. It is no surprise, then, that some of the geometric and animal motifs on brooches follow a late Roman model.

Anglo-Saxon art is well known for its intricate-carving, and arguably the most impressive example is the Franks Casket, that is named after Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826-1897). Made of whalebone, the casket is from Northumbria, but because nothing like it survives, parallels are hard to find (6). The front of the box shows the adoration of the Magi, as well as a scene of Weland the smith. It is a black mixture of copper, silver and lead sulphides used as an inlay on engraved or etched metals. Silver was more commonly used than gold, and whatever the reason – probably economic – this bold style spread throughout Britain (5).

The end of the Anglo-Saxon period was not a time of cultural decline. The art was every bit as creative as before, as can be seen in an elaborately carved walrus ivory pen-case dating from the mid-11th century (4), in which men and animals echo the designs found in the borders of manuscripts. Images of power and authority were made as well, with seals following the overall design of coins (9, 10, 11).

Anglo-Saxon art did not cease with the defeat at the battle of Hastings, and much remained to influence and infiltrate the Romanesque style of the Normans (14). In ecclesiastical art in particular, Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian styles of illumination continued for several centuries. The British Library is a major repository for this evidence.

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On a low-lying promontory lapped by the sea on the Côte d’Azur, a part of ancient Greece lives on. Built between 1902 and 1908, the Villa Kérylos was the inspired creation of the devoted Hellenist Théodore Reinach. Modelled on the remains of luxurious villas found on the island of Delos, it reimagines the refined lifestyle of ancient Greek nobles in every aspect – from its large, central court and lofty rooms to its statues, furniture, frescoes and fabrics. Here, under clear blue skies, Reinach established a serene, cultivated retreat. The villa was the perfect home for a man whose life was devoted to the study of ancient Greece and to the glory of its legacy.

Born in 1860 into an eclectic, intellectual household, Reinach was a child prodigy who went on to gain doctorates in law and literature and to become one of the most exotic and learned products of the Belle Epoque. After a brief period practising law, he devoted himself to history, numismatics, archaeology, music and philology and soon became known as an outstanding scholar. The first person to translate Aristotle’s *The Athenian Republic* into French, he also translated Plutarch, wrote books on ancient history, edited journals and, as part of one of his many archaeological projects, transcribed ancient music including from two *Hymns to Apollo*, discovered during excavations of the treasury at Delphi.

Reinach enjoyed an affluent lifestyle; he came from a banking family and his second wife, Fanny Kann, was a member of the extremely wealthy Ephrussi clan. At the turn of the 20th century, he bought a piece of land a short distance from Nice, on the Baie des Fourmis promontory in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, as a site for his sunny haven. ‘At the time, wealthy people were flocking to the Riviera as it was a very good place in which to spend the winter, so Reinach decided to build a villa there,’ explains Pacôme de Galliffet, the Director of Villa Kérylos.
When Théodore Reinach built his ancient Greek-style villa on the Côte d’Azur at the beginning of the 20th century, it was not just a luxurious home but a tribute to a culture he venerated, discovers Diana Bentley.

Kérylos. This was to be no ordinary villa but a house that would be a testament to his love of ancient Greece. Armed with funds provided by Fanny, he recruited the young Nice-born architect and archaeologist Emmanuel Pontremoli to work on his project. As someone who had worked at Pergamum and Didyma and who was a winner of the Grand Prix de Rome in 1890, Pontremoli was the ideal choice.

‘Reinach and Pontremoli had the same passion for ancient Greek culture,’ explains Pacôme de Galliffet. Both had in mind the grand villas from the 2nd century BC the remains of which had been found on the island of Delos. But though Pontremoli shared Reinach’s enthusiasm for the creation of an ancient Greek villa, he felt that it could not be simply a reproduction.

‘The house is not a pure copy of a Hellenistic villa but a reinvention of the past and a very serious creation in its own right,’ says Pacôme. Pontremoli was interested in the way things were built from 300 BC to 50 BC, but his work contains a number of different styles.’

Reinach named his new home Villa Kérylos; kerylos means ‘king-fisher’, which in Greek mythology is also known as the halcyon bird and is thought to lay its eggs in a nest floating on the sea and to have the power to charm and calm the winds and waves. So it was the perfect name for a peaceful haven.

Inside the villa’s bronze gates, vines, papyrus plants and olive, carob, pine, pomegranate, myrtle and cypress trees all thrive in a lush setting inspired by the garden at the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum. One side slopes down to a bay filled with sailing boats; the other two are bordered by stone walls that stretch down to the sea, whose rushing waves can be heard throughout the villa. A collection of marble busts of famous figures from antiquity, such as Sappho, line the path to the villa’s entrance while fine copies of Greek and Roman statues stand elegantly along its wide, sunny terraces.

Walk inside Villa Kérylos and you immediately enter a unique and enchanted place. On the floor of the lofty thyroeion, or entrance hall, with its dramatic red and black murals, is a striking mosaic of a cockerel and hen, dating from 2nd-century BC that was discovered in Rome. Further on, an impressive statue of Sophocles leaves you in no doubt that the ancient past is being recalled to life here.

The hall leads to an airy central courtyard. ‘This is one of my favourite places in the villa,’ says Pacôme. ‘The peristyle courtyard lies at the heart of much of Greek architecture and at the heart of this villa too.’ Framed by 12 white marble Doric columns, the courtyard’s walls are decorated with murals depicting scenes from mythological tales that were copied from antique vases.

Reinach particularly loved this part of his home, says Pacôme, in which he would entertain his royal neighbours, King George of Greece and King Gustaf of Sweden, celebrities such as Gustave Eiffel, and glamorous women, like Isadora Duncan and Sarah Bernhardt. It is not hard to imagine Reinach – shown in his portraits to have strong but genial features – enjoying himself here.

On one side of the courtyard is a place for study dedicated to Athena, the airy east-facing Library one and a half storeys high overlooking the sea. Here, Reinach liked to work standing up at one of his upright desks, surrounded by his collection of books and ancient artefacts dating from the Archaic Period through to early Christian times: statuettes, small bowls, rhytons, strigils, oil lamps and amphorae are displayed in glass cases which fit neatly into the walls. Inscribed on the south wall in Greek is: ‘It is here in the company of Greek orators, scholars and poets that I have found a peaceful retreat in immortal beauty.’

A great favourite with visitors, says Pacôme, is the Balaneion, or
Villa Kérylos

spa room, where pride of place is given to a very large, one-metre-deep octagonal sunken bath. Grey and white Carrara tiger marble covers the walls, while the bath itself, also of marble, contains a mosaic showing frolicking sea creatures. This room is dedicated to the Naiads – the ancient Greek nymphs that presided over running water. Cool, with muted lighting, it is the perfect place to relax.

‘The villa is inspired by ancient Greece, but the family didn’t live like ancient Greeks here. They had heat and electricity, but it is all concealed,’ Pacôme explains. In the large bath, for example, the hot and cold taps are hidden under bronze plates. Bronze lights with opaline bowls and alabaster cups hide electrical wiring and create the soft effect of oil lamps throughout the villa.

Sun pours through the windows into the Triklinos, or dining-room, where there is an ancient Greek-style couch and plates decorated with antique scenes and patterns. Next door lies the most spectacular of all the downstairs rooms, the Andron, or salon for men only, which has walls clad in several types of marble, a household altar dedicated to an unknown god, and a mosaic of the Cretan Labyrinth with Theseus fighting the Minotaur which was reproduced from an ancient drawing. Christofle, the legendary Paris-based silversmiths established in 1830, made the huge silver krater displayed here, a replica of a 1st-century BC original.

Reinach and Pontremoli’s dedication to the spirit of antiquity and to detail was also wonderfully played out in the creation of the furniture and other objects in the villa which follow Greek, Roman and Egyptian designs. The master cabinet-maker Louis-François Bettenfeld made all the furniture, either drawing on designs by Pontremoli based on pieces in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, or shown on ancient

7. Théodore Reinach’s bedroom is dedicated to Eros, who can be seen playing among the vines in a high painted frieze.
8. A mosaic of the Cretan Labyrinth, with Theseus fighting the Minotaur at its heart, decorates the floor of the Andron, a salon for men only.
9. Bordering a dozen Doric columns of white Carrara marble, the peristyle, or central courtyard, forms the peaceful, airy heart of the house.
They may have fallen victim to the ravages of time, devastating earthquakes and the Mongol forces of Kublai Khan, but more than 2,000 pagodas and temples survive to this day on the plain of Bagan. If you arrive in this dusty, scrubby region of the central Irrawaddy Valley by plane, as most people do, the visual feast starts as soon as you drive from the airport to Old Bagan. Dozens of brick pagodas lining both sides of the road glow reddish-gold in the morning sunshine. There are so many that most do not even have a name, only an Archaeological Department number.

Marco Polo arrived in Bagan as the official envoy of Kublai Khan in AD 1278, a year after the Mongol army had inflicted the first of a series of defeats on the king of Myanmar and plundered many of its temples. Yet there was plenty left to impress the Venetian. He described Bagan as ‘a gilded city alive with tinkling bells and the swishing sounds of monks’ robes’.

‘The towers are built of fine stone, and one has been covered with gold a finger thick, so that the tower appears to be of solid gold,’ Marco Polo wrote. ‘Another is covered with silver in a similar manner and appears to be made of solid silver. The King of Mien Guo [the Chinese name for Myanmar] caused these towers to be built as a monument to his magnificence and for the benefit of his soul. They make one of the finest sights in the world, being exquisitely finished, splendid and costly. When illuminated by the sun they are especially brilliant and can be seen from a great distance.’

Today, there is much less gold on display, but the temples and pagodas are still a breathtaking sight, especially when the sun is low in the sky and the temperatures are cooler. Visitors can stay in Old Bagan within walking distance of many of the sights. Bicycles, horses and carts or cars with drivers can be hired to go further afield. And those who can spare about £300 in cash can take a memorable early-morning flight...
in a hot-air balloon above the hazy plain, getting a uniquely romantic view of monuments scattered across an area of some 30 square miles.

The man who sparked the frenzy of religious building in Bagan was King Anawrahta, an 11th-century hero revered to this day. During his 30-year rule (AD 1044-1077), he brought Theravada Buddhism to Burma, conquered many rivals, unified the land and created the first Burmese empire, centred on Bagan. He pursued his spiritual construction programme ruthlessly. After defeating his neighbour to the south, King Manuha of Thaton, he is said to have taken 30,000 captives back to Bagan, including King Manuha himself, monks, scholars, and thousands of craftsmen to work on his temples. Anawrahta also took 32 sets of sacred Buddhist scriptures.

The empire-building carried on under his son King Kyanzittha and his descendants, until the borders of Burma were roughly where they are today. They continued to build dazzling temples and pagodas, too, so that at its peak between the 11th and the mid-13th centuries, Bagan was an international centre of trade, scholarship, agricultural prosperity and architectural brilliance that rivalled the Khmer empire based at Angkor Wat. But the dominance of religion sowed the seeds of Bagan’s destruction. After 250 years, the dynasty ended in 1287, when a force of 7,000 Mongols sent by Kublai Khan defeated the Burmese, and King Narathihapate, whose name is still a byword for cowardice, fled
Bagan for Lower Burma. By then the region had already become home to so many religious monuments – as many as 13,000 according to some estimates, including 1,000 stupas, 10,000 small temples and 2,000 monasteries – that the kingdom had been severely weakened by the loss of tax revenue, since donations of land to the religious authorities were exempt.

At the centre of Anawrahta’s new empire was the Shwesandaw Temple, which looks almost Mayan, with a stupa on top. Built after his conquest of Thaton in 1057, it is said to enshrine hairs of the Buddha and is known as the Sacred Hair Relic Shrine. It was the first temple in Bagan to have staircases built in the centre of its façades, which give it that Mayan look. Although it is frequently deserted during the day, every evening dozens of tourists jostle to scramble up the steep steps so as to view the sunset from one of the five receding terraces.

For a quieter place to enjoy the sunset, climb a hill or go to one of the less crowded monuments, such as the golden Lawkananda Pagoda on the banks of the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy).

Before Anawrahta consolidated the practice of Theravada Buddhism, the prevailing religion contained elements of Tantric Buddhism, Hinduism, and the worship of nats (spirits) and nagas (serpents). Anawrahta succeeded in eliminating the serpents, but was less successful in banning nats. To this day Burmese still pay their respects to these spirits when they pass the two nat shrines incorporated in the Tharabar Gate, the last surviving gate of Bagan’s city walls, which dates back to 1020.

One of the temples not to be missed in Bagan is the mighty Ananda, the masterpiece of Anawratha’s son King Kyanzittha. Its Indian-style ‘corncob’ stupa, which was gilded to mark the building’s 900th anniversary in the 1990s, gleams above its whitewashed terraces. Built in 1105, and heavily restored since it was badly damaged in the earthquake of 1975, the beautifully proportioned Ananda is still in use as a monastery and place of worship – and a place for eager vendors to vie for the visitor’s attention. At the centre of the temple, which is shaped like a Greek cross, are four huge gilded Buddhas facing in different directions. Each one is some 30 feet high, and the ones facing north and south are original. The expression on the face of the south-facing Buddha mysteriously changes depending on the angle from which he is viewed. Close up he looks sad; from further away he is smiling.

One of the loveliest temples in the city, the tiny Abeyadana, named after the Bengali wife of King Kyanzittha and built in AD 1102-3 close to the now ruined royal palace, has a mixture of Hindu, Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist motifs. Running along the exterior is a frieze of repeating figures of dancers holding lotus flowers aloft. Inside are hundreds of murals depicting the previous lives of Buddha, and even Hindu deities paying homage to Buddha. Most beautiful is a seated image of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara – a figure revered in Mahayana Buddhism who renounced nirvana so as to save all sentient creatures – seated on a lotus throne.

Abeyadana’s frescoes were cleaned with help from UNESCO in 1987. Because they are so fragile, there is no lighting inside, so be sure to take a torch. Restoration is a thorny issue in Myanmar: ‘unhistorical’ restoration by the old military regime is the reason UNESCO pulled out of the country and refuses to grant
Maugham noted that it ‘rose superb, glistening with its gold, like a sudden hope in the dark night of the soul...’.

Bagan World Heritage Site status.

Perhaps the city’s earliest surviving frescoes – dating from the 11th century – are at Phatothamya. This is a dark, single-storey temple that is typical of early designs, with its small, perforated stone windows. One fresco depicts the ascetic Rishi Kaladevita foretelling the life of Prince Siddhattha (who became the Buddha). Another shows the prince on a boating trip being punted by seven men with poles.

Nowhere illustrates Burma’s enduring love affair with gold better than the country’s holiest site, the Shwedagon Pagoda, in the capital, Yangon (formerly Rangoon). Built on a hill, the giant stupa, allegedly covered in some 60 tons of gold, acts as a beacon for miles around, day and night, and the faithful in search of spiritual kudos continue to add their contributions of gold to the mighty structure.

Legend has it that the Shwedagon is 2,500 years old and enshrines eight of the Buddha’s hairs. Archaeologists maintain that it was constructed by the Mon people in the 1st to 14th centuries; the first dated inscription is from 1485. Whatever its origins, it was rebuilt several times from the 14th century onwards, gaining in height with every reconstruction, so that today it measures a towering 325 feet (99 metres) and is surmounted by a finial encrusted with thousands of diamonds and precious stones. At the very tip is a single diamond of 76 carats.

The tradition of gilding the stupa began in the 15th century with Queen Shinsawbu, who provided her own weight in gold. Her son-in-law and successor Dhammazedi upped the ante by providing four times his own. Since then it has survived countless earthquakes, repeated pillaging and a serious fire in the 20th century.

In February/March of this year, the faithful celebrated the annual Shwedagon Pagoda Festival for the first time since 1988, when the practice was outlawed for political reasons. The Shwedagon, which has long been a focus for political dissent as well as religious worship, is not a place for the aesthetic purist. The site is a forest of pagodas, spires, temples, pavilions, shrines and statues surrounding the main stupa. A temple of Indian design rubs shoulders with highly carved Chinese structures. Prayer-halls are covered in mirror mosaics and some Buddhas are even adorned with revolving neon halos.

In Somerset Maugham’s words, ‘...shrines and pagodas were jumbled pell-mell... They had been built without design or symmetry.’

But what is striking amid this exuberance is the atmosphere of quiet devotion. Everywhere the faithful say their prayers, families process silently around the complex, children are remarkably restrained, and tourists are well-behaved. Visit in the early morning, or in the hours before sunset, and the marble pavilion will be cool enough to circumambulate the main stupa barefoot, and the low rays of the sun burning all that gold will make you understand why Kipling called the Shwedagon ‘a golden mystery’ and, after criticising the architectural jumble, even Maugham noted that it ‘rose superb, glistening with its gold, like a sudden hope in the dark night of the soul...’.

FACT BOX

Useful information:
- Burma is quite ill prepared for the huge influx of visitors it has experienced since official restrictions were loosened and Aung San Suu Kyi gave tourists the green light to visit her country after years of urging them to stay away.
- There are no ATMs and credit cards cannot be used, so everything must be paid for in cash; crisp new US dollars are the only notes you can exchange for local currency, the kyat. Officially only $2,000 can be taken into the country, which may not trouble those on pre-booked tours, who can pay for almost everything before leaving home, but can be a problem for independent travellers on the one-month tourist visa now available. Carry a mixture of large dollar bills, which fetch a higher exchange rate, and smaller ones for entrance fees and tips.
- There are no car rental companies so, if you want to travel by road, you must hire a driver.
- During my month-long stay I took an excellent two-week tour (including hotels, flights, boat trip, rail journey, and my own guides and drivers) tailor-made by Mya Thiri Travels (+95-1-526593/525609; www.myathiri.com).

BAGAN
- Bagan Hotel River View (www.baganhotelriverview.com) is unrivalled for its setting on the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River. The beautiful eight-acre gardens contain two small 12th-century temples.

YANGON
- The Strand Hotel (+95-1 243 377; www.ghmhotels.com), on the banks of the River Ayeyarwaddy, opened in 1901, at the height of the British Empire – this is where Kipling wrote part of The Jungle Book and George Orwell stayed. Restored to its former grandeur, it is rather pricey for all but the well-heeled to stay, but is a must to visit for drinks or coffee.
- East Hotel. No. 234-240, (1) Quarter, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada, is a stylish new three-star boutique hotel close to the Sule Pagoda. Book in advance through a travel agent or via the booking service Agoda (www.agoda.com).

Photographs: Susana Raby.

10. The 30-foot-high South Buddha at Ananda. Photographed from this angle, he is smiling. Viewed more closely, he looks sad.

Travel
Ancient Greek and Roman writers saw Cyprus as a kind of idealised dream island: fertile, fruitful, and covered with sweetly scented flowers and fragrant herbs. Perhaps this image was fuelled by the presence of the famous sanctuary of the goddess Aphrodite at Old Paphos, in south-west Cyprus, to which people made pilgrimages from many countries around the Mediterranean. The air of this sacred site hung heavy with the aroma of myrtle, the flower of Aphrodite.

Situated between Europe and Asia,
the island of Cyprus has always been a crossroads of civilisations and a meeting place, an intermedi-ary between the cultures of Greece, the Ancient Near East and Egypt. Cult objects often passed through Cyprus en route to other countries.

From the earliest times the principal deity was always the great Mother Goddess, and the worship of a fertility goddess always remained supreme in Cyprus. The fertility of mankind was connected with the seeding, cultivating and harvesting of the fruits of the earth, while the Mother Goddess, or Great Goddess, and her retinue of deities were propitiated in order to sustain life, which was dependent on the fertility of the soil itself. The female deities protected the fields and domestic animals without which human beings could not survive.

As early as 3000 BC, there may have been public sanctuaries where people devoted themselves to fertility rites. But on Cyprus the Mother Goddess had an added dimension in that ‘she’ was often also a ‘he’, displaying characteristics of both sexes.

On Cyprus there is an unbroken tradition involving these bisexual figures. Since prehistory, circa 6000 BC, people have carved figurines and fetishes in stone, some of which have both female and phallic features, representing fertility. Perhaps these portraits of bisexuality, without distinction between male and female, can be regarded as images of wholeness or perfection, and a bi-gendered nature was considered to be more powerful, since it was complete and self-sufficient. This continued into antiquity, with many gods in the Greek pantheon exhibiting bisexual traits, while in the Roman era Cyprus was widely known for its local cult of the bearded Aphrodite.

Although the Great Goddess was worshipped on Cyprus under different names and her character was extremely complex, in essence she was probably the same. The cult and myth of Aphrodite are acknowledged to be essentially Semitic, although at first this view was met with scepticism, and some scholars attempted to establish that the cult of Aphrodite was a native Greek development.

The name Aphrodite, which does not occur in Cypro-Syllabic inscriptions until the 4th century BC, may have derived from the Semitic Attart, the Canaanite name for the Oriental goddess Ishtar, or from the western Semitic Ashthoreth, who can also be identified with Ishtar.

Oriental goddesses and gods provided the prototypes for Cypriot divinities. Most powerful were those promoting fertility, sexuality and warfare. Ishtar (her Sumerian name was Inanna) was the love goddess and Queen of Heaven in Mesopotamian mythology. To begin with, the Phoenician Astarte very much resembled Ishtar, the blood-stained goddess of warfare and the battlefield who also protected love in all its aspects – from the purest and most innocent to deep, dark passion in its most violent and aggressive forms. Aphroditus had strong connections with Semitic cults and iconography, particularly in her role as Aphrodite Ourania, the Queen of Heaven. The cult of a bearded goddess occurred mainly in Syria and Cyprus. The god/goddess Aphroditos has his/her counterpart in a version of Ishtar with a beard that has no known separate name. This bearded female deity is also referred to as Aphroditus, or as Venus Mylitta.

Another important parallel between Ishtar and Aphrodite is that they were identified with the Evening Star, the planet Venus, which Babylonian astrology linked to Ishtar. During the 8th to 5th centuries BC, the sacred area at
Old Paphos was dedicated to the Phoenician Astarte, and later to the Greek goddess Aphrodite, as were sites where people had devoted themselves to the cult around a fertility goddess since prehistoric times. Like Astarte, Aphrodite was worshipped at altars where incense was burnt and doves were sacrificed. At Paphos, Greek-speaking Cypriots and Phoenicians worshipped Aphrodite Paphia in the same sanctuary.

Cypriot mythology is complex because local goddesses and gods often acquired their names and characteristics from foreign deities. Around 1600 BC, a new type of goddess, an ambassador of the Great Goddess of the Near East, bringing pleasure and love, arrived in Cyprus from Syria. Small fertility figurines with obviously erotic features appeared, and this new goddess was also later represented on several gold-sheet plaques, which were probably part of diadems worn by priestesses of Astarte. This Oriental goddess was responsible for the fertility of both humans and animals and her magic powers also protected the home from evil.

The naked Astarte was the most important deity in the Phoenician pantheon and dominated Cypriot religion for more than five centuries. A source of life and fecundity, she was the protectress of prostitutes – like Ishtar, she had power over all forms of life, love and desire.

The Temple of Astarte in ancient Kition (Larnaca) is the most monumental to the great Phoenician goddess ever found. From about 850 BC this temple was one of the most significant sanctuaries on the island. Standing close to the ruins of this sacred place, you can almost hear the murmur of the swarms of devotees who came from all over the Mediterranean world to pay tribute to Astarte, and the breeze carries the heady fragrance of myrrh, coriander and other aromatic herbs.

The discoveries at the rural cult site at Ayia Irini show that it was almost exclusively populated by male adorants, with only a few female figurines being found among the male warriors, priests and riders. These votive statues show how important it was to the Cypriots to be continuously represented in front of the deity. Gods and goddesses were normally worshipped in separate sanctuaries, and the offerings reveal the character of the god venerated at the site. Worship always took place under the open sky and gods were honoured with votive offerings close to the altar, where people left statuettes of all sizes. Adorants praying or carrying offerings, musicians and bulls replaced the female figurines of the Bronze Age around 850 BC.

Cypriots, believing that the god or goddess actually dwelt in the sanctuary, attended religious rites, including holy banquets, offerings and the burning of incense. They danced to music around sacred trees, shaking their branches while waiting for the epiphany of the deity. The air was full of the overpowering scent of thyme, oregano and basil and the singing of cicadas. The priests put on bull masks and began their processions and dances to the sound of cymbals and flutes, with dust swirling round their bare feet.

The famous hermaphrodite from Ayia Irini is one of the largest statuettes with upraised arms ever found and may represent the Mother Goddess. The figure's head is round and oversized, with a broad protruding nose and big ears. The lips and eyes are painted on, black vertical stripes indicate the hair and a big black beard is
women dressed as men, and by men dressed as women. Aphroditus was thought to originate in Amathus, but was also celebrated in a transvestite rite in Athens. Aphroditus was portrayed as having a female shape and clothing like the goddess, but also a beard and phallus, and was given a male name.

The idea of bisexuality seems to have been of particular interest to the ancient Greeks, many of whose deities were androgynous characters. Dionysus is frequently represented as a hermaphrodite, and Adonis and Eros are androgynous figures in the Greek myths. Hermaphroditos, the son of Aphrodite and Hermes, a god with bisexual traits, regularly accompanied Dionysos. and in Greek sculpture Apollo was often represented with very feminine features. Androgy nous gods and the concept of being an androgynous occurred in many ancient religions and philosophical discussions in ancient literature. Texts mention the androgy nous aspect of the Great Goddess and hint at prehistoric origins. Plato, writing in the 5th and 4th centuries BC, thought that sexual attraction originated from the desire for wholeness of three sexes: male, female, and hermaphrodite. He expands on this in *The Symposium*, written in 360 BC, in which the participants discuss the perfection of the sphere, which symbolises the ideal of wholeness. According to these ideas, the ovoid cult stone from Ayia Irini could have been a symbol of the god proper. The ovoid shape, expressing symmetry and harmony, symbolises the union of male and female. This bisexual deity could be compared with the cosmic egg, from which the first divine couple was born. The egg as a metaphor is found in many other religions and creation myths.

In several religions it symbolises the union of two opposite principles – male and female, heaven and earth – incarnated in the first divine couple. This stone fetish also recalls an earlier tradition of aniconic representation from the Neolithic period’s phallic figures. Dual-gendered beings may have been looked upon as mysterious and powerful beings possessing supernatural, even divine, powers.

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, suggested that all individuals are born with an unconscious androgy nous nature and considered sexual repression to be the result of the ‘structures of morality and authority erected by society’. On ancient Cyprus this repression had clearly not yet been imposed.

IN THE SALEYROOM SOTHEBY’S NEW YORK

New York, New York

Dr Jerome M Eisenberg reports on two Antiquities Sales held in New York in early June

Treasures from the Mitchell Collection

The Antiquities Sale held on 7 June at Sotheby’s New York featured seven ancient masterworks from the collection of the late Jan Mitchell (1913-2009), the famed New York collector and restaurateur, especially known for the Pre-Columbian gold he donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1991. All of the pieces in this sale had been on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1964-66 to 2011.

The star of the show was a well-published Attic marble grave stele of a youth named Onatoridas with a small dog (1), *circa* 350-325 BC (H. 97.2cm), found in Athens in 1877 and sold by Sotheby’s London in 1964 for a mere £1100! Estimated at $300,000-$500,000, it was actively contested, finally selling for $902,500, an impressive £583,878, to an American collector.

Three lots of ancient gold also from the Mitchell Collection were in the sale. A Greek gold olive wreath (6), *circa* 4th century BC (W. *circa* 24cm), estimated at just $40,000-$60,000, climbed to a surprising $332,500, selling to a European collector.

Next, a Roman gold armlet decorated in *repoussé* relief with theatre masks and rosettes (10), late 3rd-early 4th century AD (W. 23cm), with an inexplicably low estimate of only $20,000-$30,000, finally drew a winning bid of $230,500, also from a European client. While a pair of unusually large (L. 11.7cm) Etruscan gold earrings of the *grappolo* type, decorated in *repoussé* relief with a centaur fighting a warrior and heads of goddesses below (7), late 4th-early 3rd century BC, sold to an American collector, for $182,500, well over the estimate of $50,000-$80,000.

Two South Italian vases from the Mitchell Collection also brought unusually high prices. An Apulian red-figure calyx *krater* attributed to the Painter of Athens, 1714, *circa* 375-350 BC, depicting a young reclining Dionysos and a female harpist (9) (H. 41.3cm), had originally belonged to George Waddington (1793-1869), the Dean...
of Durham Cathedral, then to William Randolph Hearst. It was sold at Parke-Bernet Galleries in April 1963 for only $1150 (the writer attended this sale – nearly 50 years ago). Now estimated at $60,000-$90,000, it was finally hammered down for a surprising $338,500 to another American collector.

On the second Apulian vase, a red-figure bell krater attributed to the Tarporley Painter, circa 410-390 BC, Dionysos holds a theatre mask and Pan dips an oinochoe into a bell krater (H. 31.7cm) (8). This vase, from the collection of Arnold Ruesch (1882-1929) of Zurich, sold in the same Parke-Bernet Galleries sale in 1963 for $850. This time the estimate of $30,000-$50,000 was soon left behind as it sold to an American client for $134,500.

A headless Roman marble figure of the Dresden Artemis type (2), late 1st century-early 2nd century AD (H. 135cm), is based on a 4th century BC Greek original, possibly by Praxiteles. It was excavated by Frédéric Pollette, a French consular agent, on his property in Porto Santo Stefano, Italy, in the mid-1880s and first published in 1889. It sold to an American collector for $398,500, well beyond its estimate of $150,000-$250,000.

A Roman marble statue of Sophocles, the ancient head probably not the original (3), 1st-2nd century AD (H. 114cm), with a number of 18th-century restorations, was acquired in Rome between 1772 and 1776 by James Hugh Smith Barry (1746-1801) of Marbury Hall. It was last sold at Parke-Bernet Galleries in December 1962 for only $550! Now estimated at $80,000-$120,000, it brought in $158,500 from an American client.

The price of an elegant Greek marble wing with finely carved feathers and much remaining red pigment (4), circa 5th century BC (L. 40.1cm), acquired in France in the early 1960s, was certainly underestimated at $10,000-$15,000, but no one could have expected it to sell for $242,500 to an ‘overseas private collector’ after a prolonged auction room battle. A banded alabaster cinerary urn of the Roman period (5), circa 1st century AD, said to have been found in Pompeii in the mid-19th century, was probably from an Egyptian workshop. It has a restored lid and a modern square base, the ancient elements being 33cm in height (total H. 45.7cm). With an estimate of $100,000-$150,000, it sold for $170,500 to a European client.

Three featured lots remained unsold: the cover lot – an Egyptian limestone block statue, a Cycladic idol, and a Roman statue of the Capitoline Aphrodite. The total was far less than their memorable 69-lot sale last December with a total of $27,588,375, including $19,122,500 for a Roman marble statue group of Leda and Zeus in the guise of a swan.
Alexander the Great has a certain exoticism about him that few historical figures can claim to match. This is one of the reasons why the tales of his travels and conquests continue to inspire and excite readers as much as they did over 2,000 years ago, when the first extant accounts of his life were written.

Richard Stoneman established himself as one of the leading authorities on Alexander with his *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend*, in 2007.

First published in 1994 and now in paperback, Stoneman’s *Legends of Alexander the Great* comprises translations of and notes on some of the most important source material through which we know about this legendary leader. Most of the book is devoted to translations of six of the Alexander legends penned by writers in antiquity. These include *Alexander’s Letter to Aristotle*, as well as *Alexander’s Great Journey to Paradise*.

These accounts are augmented with translations of two early papyrus fragments and various portions of early medieval accounts of the legends. The translations are considered to be of a very high standard and, from a layman’s point of view, are eminently readable and engaging.

The notes and introduction are exceptionally well researched – clearly the product of a mind which has complete fluency in the history and tradition of the Alexander legends. This is supported by the release of another book of Stoneman’s devoted to Alexander (also reviewed on this page).

The appeal of these accounts stretches well beyond students of antiquity. Indeed the tales of Alexander influenced and were rewritten by many late antique and medieval poets and writers, among them, Chaucer. It could be argued that these accounts should be considered mandatory reading for anyone attempting to understand the influences on Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), for instance. And Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, published in 1726, cannot be placed within the didactic tradition without acknowledging the work of Palladius, and others who chronicled the legends of Alexander over a thousand years before.

While this book should legitimately find its way on to the reading lists of many Classicists and ancient history students, it is just as accessible to the interested amateur. Stoneman’s introduction and dissection of the transmission of the Alexander legends to the medieval period is comprehensive but still engaging. The addition of a good timeline, reproduction of the *Mappa Mundi* and a small map of the Ancient Near East provide the necessary tools to properly place all we are told in context.

Stoneman provides a very well thought out and well presented explanation of the legends of Alexander, along with fluent and engaging translations. The real treat, however, lies in the material the author was working with: elements of philosophy, social history, military history, religion, Eastern mysticism and myth, so that even a cynic (not of the ancient philosophical school variety) would enjoy many parts of this book.

The book should be considered mandatory reading for anyone attempting to understand the complex social, cultural, and political world of Alexander. This book will provide the necessary tools to properly place all we are told in context.

**Legends of Alexander the Great**
Richard Stoneman
IB Tauris, 2012
184pp, two illustrations
Paperback, £14.99

**The Book of Alexander the Great: A Life of the Conqueror**
Richard Stoneman
IB Tauris, 2012
178pp
Paperback, £12.99

The acclaimed scholar on Alexander the Great, Richard Stoneman, translates into English for the first time the well-established account of Alexander the Great, the Phyllada (less exotically titled *The Book of Alexander the Great*). Published for the first time in 1680, the Phyllada has been the most popular account of Alexander’s adventures for the last 300 years and has played a vital role with Greek audiences building cultural identity and disseminating one of the most important stories of their cultural past.

Stoneman’s presentation of this account is perhaps better appreciated after reading his *Legends of Alexander the Great* (reviewed above) as it goes right back to the earliest source material and explains how this fed into the medieval accounts of the Alexander legend. This translation of the Phyllada is one of these later accounts, and among the latest ones at that.

It is by no means a pre-requisite to have read any of Stoneman’s other books – the introduction provides enough context and history to appreciate the version we are presented with. But for a more in-depth and complete analysis of the evolution of the Alexander legend, *The Greek Alexander Romance* (Stoneman, 1991, Penguin) is a suitable authority.

The Phyllada itself does not disappoint, with many of the familiar episodes from Alexander’s life recounted: his war with Darius, meetings with the Brahman (referred to here as the Blessed), the conquest of Porus and ultimately the death of the conqueror.

There are greater moralistic overtones in this account of Alexander’s life and exploits than in some others, and a heavy Old Testament presence sees greater *pietas* in the character of the great man than might be expected. This is all a reflection of the social context in which it was written and how it is a development of the Middle Greek versions of the same legend.

As usual with Stoneman, the book reads very naturally and holds the reader’s interest throughout. One highlight is the near science fiction account of Alexander the Great’s descent to the bottom of the ocean in an early diving-bell of sorts – this episode provides the surreal image chosen for the cover.

So, despite the rather downbeat ending and the message that ‘all is vanity’ and death comes to everyone, Stoneman has provided a much-needed and accessible version of this important chronicle, for scholars and the curious-minded alike.

*Geoff Lowsley*
Once again, Sam Moorhead and David Stuttard have joined forces to produce a book that is not only packed with information, but is also highly enjoyable. *The Romans who shaped Britain* follows the history of Rome's most northerly province from the first reconnoitre by Julius Caesar in 55 BC – made in order to discourage the Celtic tribes from supporting their cousins in Gaul – to the final withdrawal of Roman forces under the adventurer Constantine III in AD 407.

Using contemporary letters and speeches in great detail we are introduced to the Roman soldiers and legislators who came to our islands to govern and to colonise. Some quotations are from the great and the good – Seneca, Tacitus and Julius Caesar himself. Others, speaking to us from letters on the tablets found at Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall, talk only of everyday anxieties such as the non-delivery of goods because of bad weather and the need for more socks in order to keep warm.

As the narrative progresses we get to know and understand the problems of the governor and his military advisors as they press further north and west. We learn about their family backgrounds, their previous postings and how these may have influenced their decisions.

Equally, it is not only the Romans who shape Britain but the British themselves. Tribal kings, such as Togidubnus, who received the great palace at Fishbourne as a reward for his collaboration with Rome, and Caratacus, who continued the fight against the invaders until betrayed by Cartimandua, queen of the Brigantes. We see the bravery and tragic end of Boudicca and feel the despair of Suetonius Paulinus as he leaves Londoners behind to be massacred by her Iceni tribesmen.

Every chapter begins with a fictional reconstruction of a relevant incident in the history of these islands seen through the eyes of individuals as diverse as a German pirate about to be captured by the Roman navy, a soldier on the Wall awaiting a relief column which will not come, to Tacitus agonising over the words he would put into the mouth of another British resistance leader ‘they make a wasteland and call it peace’.

It is surprising to find out how many Roman emperors actually visited Britain: Claudius and Hadrian, of course, but others like Pertinax who lived in a villa at Lullingstone, Kent, while he was governor of Britain, and Vespasian, who was proud to have captured the Isle of Wight on his way to subdue Maiden Castle.

Some died here, such as Septimius Severus in 211 and Constantius Chlorus in 306, and their sons were acclaimed as their successors. Caracalla murdered his brother Geta within a few months, but Chlorus’s young son became the Great Constantine. Others, such as the admiral Carausius, ruled here. His British fleet protected our islands for seven years from both Saxons and Romans. His chancellor and murderer, Allectus, who may have started to build the great Saxon Shore forts, was killed in battle when the Imperial forces retook the province in 296. The legions in Britain were also quick to raise emperors and we see first Magnus Maximus taking his army to Gaul to fight his rivals and lose in 388 and later in 407 Constantine III completes the drain on Britain’s defences never to return.

The last chapter deals in detail with Rome’s break with Britain, the visit of St Germanus in 429 and, finally, the High King Vortigern’s invitation to Hengist and Horsa to act as mercenaries against their fellow Saxons. Roman Britain staggered on for a few more years in the west but, finally, others took over what had been the most northerly province.

Throughout the book there are many detailed maps, showing the advance of the Roman armies and the various military and civil settlements, as well plenty of illustrations. Detailed notes back up the text and there is a useful glossary of administrative terms and titles.

Sam Moorhead and David Stuttard are to be congratulated on producing a book which will be enjoyed by specialists in Romano-British history and the general reader alike.

David Miller
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, London

Peter Lely: A Lyrical Vision
Heavily influenced by the Classical past and a great portrait painter, Sir Peter Lely was England’s leading artist during the Civil War, as well as being court painter to the king both before and after the Interregnum (1649–60). This is the first exhibition to examine his somewhat overlooked early paintings. It includes important loans from private collections, such as The Rape of Europa (above) from the Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.
The Courtauld Gallery
+44 (0) 207 848 2526
(www.courtauld.ac.uk). From 11 October until 13 January 2013.

OXFORD

Unfolding Nature: Images Of Summer In Chinese & Japanese Fan Paintings
This is a rare chance to see part of the museum’s reserve collection – a selection of Japanese and Chinese fans. Their importance as status symbols and value as small scale works of art with miniature painting and calligraphy will be seen.
The Ashmolean Museum
+44 (0) 1865 278 002 (www.ashmolean.org). From 20 September until 6 January 2013.

YORK

Exhibition Valhalla - In Search of the Viking Dead
This show, for all the family, looks at Viking burials across Europe as well as those closer to home, including those of a man and woman from York Minster, to give an idea of Viking commemoration and their celebration of the dead. There will be hands-on areas children’s areas, involving puppetry and plays about Norse sagas.
Jorvik Viking Centre
+44 (0) 1904 615 505 (www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk). Until 5 November.

GAINESVILLE, Florida

Verdant Earth and Teeming Seas: The Natural World in Ancient American Art
A holistic view is taken of the Pre-Columbian collection at the Harn and the Florida Museum of Natural History, with exhibits from Mayan, Aztec and Inca cultures. This show focusses on the inspiration derived from the natural world represented in ceramics, stone sculptures, jade objects and textiles.
The Harn Museum of Art
+1 (0) 352 392 9826 (www.harn.ufl.edu). Until 4 November.

ATLANTA, Georgia

‘For I am the Black Jaguar’: Shamanic Visionary Experience in Ancient American Art
The shamanistic visionary experience is the focus of this exhibition with artefacts from the university’s own collection. The reflection of the trance-like state and close association with animals is seen through extraordinary art works, this is all brought up to date with contemporary shamanic input to the exhibition.
Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University
+1 (0) 40 47 27 42 82 (www.carlos.emory.edu). From 8 September until 5 January 2013.

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts

Travel and Transformation in the Early Seventeenth Century
Curated by undergraduates and graduates, this exhibition looks at the early encounters between Africans, Native Americans and Europeans. Inspired by the collections of the Peabody Museum, Houghton Library, and the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments the exhibition makes an effort to avoid a Eurocentric approach to this subject.
Peabody Museum, Harvard University
+1 (0) (617) 496 1027 (www.peabody.harvard.edu). Until December 31.

WILLIAMSTOWN, Massachusetts

Unearthed: Recent Archaeological Discoveries from Northern China
Many artefacts from the Shanxi and Gansu provinces, rarely seen outside of their native China, are on view here. Dating from the 5th to the 11th century AD they range from...
ostentatious prestige items, to ritual relics and burial goods.

The Clark Institute
+1 (0) (1267) 413 458 2303 (www.clarkart.edu). Until 21 October.

NEW YORK, New York
Colours of the Universe: Chinese Hardstone Carving
One of the oldest arts in China is represented here with examples right up to the Qing Dynasty (1644 -1911). The exhibition explores the wide range of stones carved and the myriad uses for them: including brush-holders, water-pots and seals.

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Paintings on Parchment
Italian Renaissance Illuminations from the Robert Lehman Collection
The close ties to Italian Renaissance painting are seen here in this collection, largely excised from choir books of surprisingly large size. Nearly all of the artists represented here, including leading masters from the 14th to 16th centuries, worked in both illuminations and panel painting.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
+1 (0) 21 25 35 77 10 (www.metmuseum.org). Until 30 September.

Historic Images of the Greek Bronze Age
Focussing on the work of Swiss born Emile Gilliéron (1850–1924), one of the foremost art restorers of his time, this exhibition looks at the treasures of Troy and Mycenae retrieved by Schliemann and Evans and worked on by Gilliéron. The MET bought reproductions of plaster paintings directly from Gilliéron as early as 1902 and many on display here have not been seen for decades.

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Buddhism along the Silk Road
5th–8th Century
By the end of the 5th century AD the empire of the Huns had been established in Central Asia and, with it, an unprecedented interaction between cultures and regions. This exhibition looks at how this manifested itself in Buddhist imagery, with artefacts from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Metropolitan Museum of Art

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania
Maya 2012: Lords of Time
This lavish exhibition boasts over 150 artefacts set among life-size replicas of monumental architecture. Focussing on the site of Copan, visitors follow the vicissitudes of the site, with a focus on their calendar system and the power held by their god kings. Many exhibits are on display outside Honduras for the first time and there is input from contemporary Maya, too.

The Penn Museum

WASHINGTON DC
Imperial Augsburg: Renaissance Prints and Drawings, 1475–1540
Augsburg enjoyed a brief period of artist outpouring in the early days of the Italian Renaissance as can be seen in this collection of over 100 works all from the National Gallery of Art’s collection. The first exhibition of this kind in America, Imperial Augsburg uses drawings, prints, illustrated books and early printing techniques to focus on a range of topics from propaganda to religion and humanism.

The National Gallery of Art
+1 (0) 20 27 37 42 15 (www.nga.gov). From 30 September until 31 December.

DENMARK
COPENHAGEN
Shipwreck. The Coin Hoard of the Six Emperors
In 1991 a violent storm disturbed the, as yet, undiscovered cargo of a shipwreck from the late 3rd century AD. The ship went down off the coast of Camarina, south-east Sicily and this is the first time the artefacts have been exhibited outside Italy. The exhibition includes over 4,000 coins, largely minted in South Germany during the reigns of six emperors, along with a selection of other finds.

The Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek
+45 (0) 33 41 81 41 (www.glyptotek.dk). From 12 October until 1 February 2013.

AMERICA
PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania
Anchors Aweigh! Nautical Collecting in America
The collection at Ambras Castle is one of the few from the Renaissance period to have survived and still interact with the stunning 16th-century collection of natural wonders and craftsmanship on show, together with around 65 loans from Grüne Gewölbe in Dresden, which are on display in Philadelphia for the first time. Highlights include precious goldsmith work, goblets of Saxon serpentine, coral bowls and flatware, filigree ivories turned on a lathe, and goblets made of nautilus shells and ostrich eggs.

Ambras Castle Kunsthistorisches Museum
+43 1 525 24 0 (www.khm.at). Until 23 September.

CANADA
QUEBEC
Maya: Secrets of the Ancient World
This collaboration between the Royal Ontario Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the National Institute of Anthropology and History brings together a range of artefacts, many of which have never been exhibited before, to give a holistic insight into Mayan culture, from their architecture, cosmology and writing system to the 2012 end of days myth.

Canadian Museum of Civilization

VIENNA
Dresden & Ambras: Treasures from Renaissance Kunstkammer-Collections
The collection at Ambras Castle is one of the few from the Renaissance period to have survived and still interact with the stunning 16th-century collection of natural wonders and craftsmanship on show, together with around 65 loans from Grüne Gewölbe in Dresden, which are on display in Austria for the first time. Highlights include precious goldsmith work, goblets of Saxon serpentine, coral bowls and flatware, filigree ivories turned on a lathe, and goblets made of nautilus shells and ostrich eggs.

Altes Museum Berlin
+49 (0)30 266 42 42 42 (www.smb.museum). Until 7 October.

HAMBURG
Ancient and Renaissance Collections Reopening
The Ancient History and Renaissance areas of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe have been redesigned by the multi award-winning architects Studio Neumann Schneider. The new Ancient History section has been divided into Egypt - Land of the Pharaohs; Coptic Textiles; Myth and Truth of Homer’s Heroes; An Age of Tyranny; Developing a Collective Identity; The Mysterious Etruscans and Rome and its Empire.

Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe
Hamburg +49 (0) 40 42 81 34 80 0 (www.mkg-hamburg.de). From 1 September onwards.

HANNOVER
Secret Knowledge
Through the ethnological collection of Lower Saxony, the different ways that cultures deal with both social and individual crises are examined. Many of the exhibits reflect ritualised acts used to deal with the unknown and the inexplicable, that still come from our subconscious today.

Landesmuseum Hannover
+49 (0)51 19 80 77 86 (www. landesmuseum-hannover. niedersachsen.de). From 28 September until 7 April 2013.
MANCING
Unknown Boundary of Rome: Celts, Dacians, Sarmatians and Vandals in the north of the Carpathian Basin
Spanning 800 years from the 4th century BC to the 4th century AD, a range of ethnically diverse artefacts reflect the cultural differences across what is now modern Romania and Hungary, the northern border of the Roman Empire. This fascinating area is known from the campaigns of Emperor Trajan and indeed items from that period can be seen here.
Celtic Roman Museum Mancing
+49 (0) 4 599 32 37 30 (museum-mancing.de).
Until 17 February 2013.

OSTERBURKEN
On behalf of the Eagle
A fascinating and innovative exhibition based around a stone inscription referring to an otherwise forgotten Roman soldier, Publius Ferrasius Avitus. This joint German and Hungarian venture presents over 80 artefacts illustrating seven phases in the soldier’s life, reflecting the vicissitudes of war but also times of peace and his faith in the emperors and in the gods.
The Roman Museum Osterburken
+49 (0) 62 91 415 266 (www.im-auftrag-des-adlers.de).
Until 31 October.

ISRAEL
JERUSALEM
Pure Gold
Marking the 20th anniversary of the Bible Lands Museum, this exhibition looks at the role of gold in many ancient cultures. With 385 mentions of this precious metal in the Hebrew Bible, the part it played in ancient Jewish culture is examined along with a broader perspective of what it tells us about the aristocracies of the time. Some 400 gold exhibits are on show including exquisite Greek and Roman jewellery (shown below), a collection of Etruscan fibulae, Chinese belt buckles and other artefacts from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia and the Black Sea region.
The Bible Lands Museum
+ 972 2 670 8811. (www.blmj.org).
Until 31 December.

SOUTH KOREA
SEOUL
The Best Under Heaven: the Celadons of Korea
This exhibition looks in depth at the ‘Goreo’ celadon ware, dating from AD 918-1392, which were considered ‘the best under heaven’. It focuses on the historical significance of the craft and its various forms.
From 16 October until 16 December.

NETHERLANDS
THE HAGUE
Gold from Java; Silver from Batavia
These simultaneous exhibitions display gold jewellery from the Javanese court culture, spanning from AD 0-1500, as well as 17th and 18th-century silverware from Batavia. Highlights of the Javanese collection are the mythical and grotesque creatures portrayed in the jewellery, while the Batavians exhibits tell the story of Dutch colonialism and the market for high status goods.
The Municipal Museum +31 (0) 70 3381111 (www.gemeentemuseum.nl).
Until 4 November.

EVENTS
LONDON
Events at the Museum of London
Archaeology Up Close: Lamps and Lighting
Drop-in on one of the monthly object-handling sessions with members of the Museum’s Archaeological Collections department. 21 September.

Open House London 2012: Billingsgate Roman house and baths
Tour the remains of the rarely-seen Billingsgate Roman house and baths. 23 September.

Roman and Saxon London
A 10-week accredited course on the archaeology of London. 24 September (first session).

The Museum of London +44 (0) 20 7001 9844 (www.museumoflondon.org.uk). See website for all events.

Events at the Petrie Museum:
African Hair Combs and the Diaspora
Part of the Origins of the Afro Comb Project, this talk will explore evidence for the form and use of hair combs in the African Diaspora.
26 September.

Egypt Undead: A Walk through Brompton Cemetery
Cathie Bryan will lead visitors to Egyptian-inspired mausoleums, such as the Courtoy Mausoleum, and the tombs of people connected with Egypt, such as Joseph Bonomi. 13 October.

Asian Art Week
During this annual London event leading Asian art dealers join together for a series of selling exhibitions, and London’s largest auction houses, Bonham’s, Sotheby’s and Christie’s, hold specialist sales of Asian art. With objects spanning 5,000 years of history there will be many fascinating pieces on show, such as this Thai Ayuthya-style, bronze Buddha head with mother-of-pearl eyes, circa 16th century, at Forge & Lynch (www.forgelynch.com) shown above.
Asian Art in London +44 (0) 20 7499 2215 (www.asianartinlondon.com). 1-10 November.

CONFERENCE
The Royal Archaeological Institute 2012 Conference
The theme of this year’s conference, is Legacies of Northumbria: Recent Thinking on the 5th to 14th centuries in Northern Britain. It will be held in Newcastle upon Tyne and the keynote speech will given by Professor Dame Rosemary Cramp.

Minerva September/October 2012