The discreet charm of the Cham
Visiting the secret temples of Vietnam

Boat people
Did the Phoenicians sail round Africa 2000 years before the Portuguese?

Fox news
The cunning tale of a cosmic creature

It’s all Greek to me
Solving the puzzles of the Parthenon

Beyond El Dorado
Ancient Colombian gold on show at the British Museum

Internationally acclaimed abstract artist Sean Scully explains why Doric is the only order he will follow

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We try to fox you with Greek riddles and maritime theories

In this issue of Minerva you get three for the price of one – at least as far as editors go, because Mark Merrony and James Beresford, both former editors of this magazine, have written features. Twice nominated for the Turner Prize, Sean Scully is one of the world’s most successful abstract artists. He says he feels indebted to the ancient Greeks – indeed his passion for the Doric order of architecture has inspired a whole series of paintings. You can read about him on pages 15 to 19, in an exclusive interview by Mark Merrony. Dr Merrony is Director of the Musée d’Art Classique de Mougins, where DORIC, an exhibition of Sean Scully’s paintings, is currently on show.

Doric columns dominate the Parthenon, of course, which is the subject of two features: in the first, David Stuttard links this magnificent temple with the Mystery religions of Eleusis (pages 12 to 15); in the second, Dr Dyfri Williams sets out to establish the true identity of one of the impressive male marble figures reclining on the pediment (pages 20 to 23).

One of the most ingenious Greeks ever was the 3rd-century polymath Archimedes, whose life and work are currently being celebrated in an exhibition in Rome (pages 8 to 11). Quite apart from his famous Screw, it seems that his ‘Death Ray’, designed to set fire to enemy ships, may actually have worked.

It was a group of Ionian Greeks, the Phocaeans, who founded the city of Massilia, today’s Marseille, which is this year’s European Cultural Capital. Among the many projects celebrating the city’s heritage are the opening this year’s European Cultural Capital. Among the many projects celebrating the city’s heritage are the opening of two splendid new museums, one focused on the history of the city itself, the other on Mediterranean culture (pages 30 to 33).

Phoenicia, a replica ship closely modelled on Jules Verne’s Nautilus, a Greek wreck found in the harbour of Marseille, was built for a special project. The brain-child of former Royal Navy Officer Philip Beale, The Phoenician Ship Expedition set out to prove that Phoenician sailors circumnavigated Africa 2000 years before the Portuguese did so. But James Beresford has his doubts; see what you think after you have read Sailing close to the wind on pages 34 to 39.

Moving further east, we go on the trail of an animal that provokes a mixed reaction whether it appears in the countryside or in our city streets. But the fox was not always viewed as vermin – quite the opposite, in fact, in the ancient Middle and Near East. So what was its special allure, and why is it depicted in so many different cultures? A dog fox appears on the columns of the 11,000-year-old temples of Gobekli Tepe in Turkey, for example. The fox is also shown on Babylonian cylinder seals and boundary stones, on Greek pots and on Graeco-Persian engraved gems. Hugh Kohl, who has written a book on the subject, believes that a constellation called ‘The Fox’ was once recognised. You can find out more on pages 42 to 45.

Going further east still, we follow Carol Howland to Vietnam as she goes in search of the temple towers of the Cham, a little-known people who lived there between the 7th and 13th centuries AD. She finds overgrown ruins hidden away in secret valleys and impressive Cham artefacts in local museums (pages 38 to 41).

What image do the words El Dorado conjure up for you? In Spanish, they mean literally ‘the gilded one’, but they have come to signify ‘a mythical land, or city, abounding in gold, situated somewhere in the region of the Orinoco and Amazon rivers’. According to Elisenda Vila Llonch, this notion is thought to have originated in an ancient ceremony in which a chief was covered in gold-dust before being dunked in a lake. Elisenda is the main curator of Beyond El Dorado: power and gold in ancient Colombia, the next big exhibition at the British Museum, which opens on 17 October. On pages 24 to 28, she gives us a preview of some of the fabulous gold artefacts that will be on show there.

To finish off we have our usual saleroom reports – this time from New York and Paris – where you can find out which antiquities were sold for record-breaking sums; book reviews – one or two of our reviewers have become more than a little waspish recently; and our Calendar, which gives details of a diverse selection of exhibitions in museums and art galleries all over the world.

From a Phocaean city to Phoenician sailors
Early in 2015, four surviving, original copies of Magna Carta will be brought together at the British Library in London for the first time. Magna Carta (meaning ‘The Great Charter’) was issued by King John of England in 1215, as a practical solution to the political crisis he faced at the time. Written in Latin on parchment, this historical charter established, for the first time, that the king was subject to the law, rather than above it.

Although nearly a third of the text was dropped, or substantially rewritten within 10 years, and almost all the clauses have been repealed in modern times, Magna Carta remains a cornerstone of the British Constitution, and its principles are echoed in the US Constitution and others around the world.

The display at the British Library will create a unique opportunity for researchers and the public alike to see these precious documents side-by-side. The manuscripts will be examined in the British Library’s Conservation Centre by some of the world’s leading experts on the documents, allowing historians involved in a special project to study faded, or obscured, parts of them more closely and to look for new clues about the identity of the writers of the texts. Of the four surviving copies, two belong to the British Library, one to Lincoln Cathedral and the fourth to Salisbury Cathedral. All three institutions plan to celebrate Magna Carta’s 800th anniversary: the British Library will stage a major exhibition; Lincoln Cathedral will open a new purpose-built Magna Carta Centre in Lincoln Castle, and Salisbury Cathedral will launch a programme of events, both educational and recreational.

‘Magna Carta is the most popular item in the Library’s Treasures gallery, and is venerated around the world as marking the starting point for government under the law,’ says Claire Breay, Lead Curator of Medieval and Earlier Manuscripts at the British Library. ‘Bringing the four surviving manuscripts together for the first time will create a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for researchers and members of the public to see them in one place, and will be a fantastic start to a year of celebrations.’

The Dean of Salisbury, the Very Reverend June Osborne, comments: ‘Magna Carta’s clauses on social justice are as relevant today as they were 800 years ago and are at the heart of all we aspire to. We hope the publicity generated through the planned unification and 800th anniversary year will increase awareness of its importance, values, ideals and modern significance to a new audience.’

The Very Reverend Philip Buckler, Dean of Lincoln, concluded: ‘We know from the times when Magna Carta has been exhibited abroad – most recently in the United States – just how far-reaching its influence has been. This unification event will be of national significance, and mark for us a pivotal point for our manuscript in the anniversary year before it returns to enter its new purpose-built home in Lincoln Castle.’

‘The legal, political and social impact of Magna Carta is unique,’ says Richard Godden, a partner at Linklaters, the international law firm sponsoring the three-day event at the British Library.

‘It is a foundation-stone of the Rule of Law and its influence extends around the world. The arbitrary authority of the state is just as much a threat today as it was in the day of King John, and the principles enshrined in Magna Carta remain essential in relation not only to personal liberty but to creating an environment in which business can prosper. We forget them at our peril.’

Lindsay Fulcher
Nine years ago archaeologists from the National Trust for Scotland excavated a Mesolithic monument in Aberdeenshire. Now, following recent analysis by the University of Birmingham, it is thought to be a 10,000-year-old lunar calendar.

The site was first detected through aerial photography of unusual crop marks, conducted as part of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, and excavation began in 2004.

The monument itself is an alignment of 12 pits dug in an irregular row stretching 50m in Warren Field, part of the grounds of Crathes Castle, 10 miles west of Aberdeen. It is thought that the difference in shape and depth of the pits (that may once have contained wooden posts) corresponded with the phases of the moon, and tracked lunar months. The 12 pits also align at sunrise on the Winter Solstice; this has the effect of ‘calibrating’ the calendar every year so that it remains accurate – as lunar months do not correspond directly with the natural year and suffer a ‘seasonal drift’.

The subtle complexity of this ancient structure has led to a reassessment of Mesolithic society, as Dr Richard Bates, a geophysicist from the University of St Andrews and part of the project team, explains: ‘It shows that Stone Age society was far more sophisticated than we have previously believed, particularly up north, which until lately has been kind of a blank page for us.

‘This is the earliest example of such a structure and there is no known comparable site in Britain or Europe for several thousands of years after the monument at Warren Field was constructed.’

Before this discovery the earliest formal time-measuring monuments came from Ancient Mesopotamia and were dated circa 3000 BC – a full five millennia later than the site at Warren Field. This discovery is of great significance not only to British archaeology but to our understanding of the development of prehistoric man and his concept of time. Vince Gaffney, Professor of Landscape Archaeology at the University of Birmingham and leader of the project, observes that while the notion of the passage of time may well have already been acknowledged among hunter-gatherer societies during this period, the existence of a tool to track and predict seasons marks a great social and technological advance.

Clive Ruggles, Emeritus Professor of Archaeoastronomy at the University of Leicester and adviser to the team, commented: ‘There are certainly hunter-gatherer societies who use the phase cycles of the moon to help synchronise different seasonal activities but it is remarkable that this could have been monumentalised at such an early period.’

The purpose of this calendar was most probably to let man know when different animals, fish or crops were in season; however, the implications are much greater, for, as Vince Gaffney puts it, this may mark the beginning of ‘time’ as a concept which obviously plays a huge role in the development of history and ritual.

• Time and a Place: A lunar-solar ‘time-reckoner’ from 8th millennium BC Scotland is published online in Internet Today, Issue 34, July 2013. Geoff Lowesly

To find anything of interest, no matter how tiny, on an archaeological dig is more than most first-year students would dare to hope for, but Alex Kirton, archaeology student at Durham University, has surpassed that modest aspiration by uncovering a significant carved sandstone Roman head.

The team were digging near Binchester Roman Fort, County Durham, as part of a five-year project working on late Imperial Roman remains in the province. The digs are held annually for the university students who are assisted by visiting American students and public volunteers.

The head was discovered in what is likely to be a late Roman bath-house that probably dates back 1800 years to the 2nd or 3rd century AD. Measuring roughly 10cm by 20cm, the head may be that of Antenociticus, a Celtic cult deity popular among the military in the North-East.

This suggestion stems from the head’s stylistic similarities to one found in Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in 1862. Luckily, the Benwell head had an inscription which positively identified it as Antenociticus who, explained Dr David Petts, a lecturer in archaeology at Durham University, is ‘one of a number of gods known only from the northern frontier, a region which seems to have had a number of its own deities. It’s possibly a Geordie god, though it could have been worshipped at the other end of the [Hadrian’s] Wall.’ While Dr David Mason,
Illumination... and co-operation

One of the finest illuminated Hebrew manuscripts ever created, a rare 15th-century, handwritten copy of the Mishneh Torah by Maimonides, one of the most important rabbinical figures of the Middle Ages, has been jointly acquired by the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and will be shared by the two museums on a rotating basis.

Created in Northern Italy circa 1457-65, this beautifully illustrated Hebrew text includes the eight final books of the Mishneh Torah, the first systematic codification of Jewish law. This richly illuminated manuscript has six large painted panels, decorated in precious pigments and gold leaf, as well as 41 smaller illustrations with gold lettering adorning the opening words of each chapter.

It underwent a complete restoration in the Paper Conservation Laboratory at the Israel Museum, where it has been on long-term loan since 2007 and on view to the public since 2010.

Originally conceived in two volumes, the first volume, which contains Books I-V, was purchased between 1838 and 1854 by the renowned Italian collector Giovanni Francesco De’ Rossi, whose manuscript holdings were later acquired by the Vatican Library.

The second volume, which includes Books VII-XIV and is often referred to today as the ‘Frankfurt Mishneh Torah’, reached Germany and was part of the collection of Avraham Merzbacher of Munich until the end of the 19th century. It was later presented to the Frankfurt Municipal Library.

‘The Mishneh Torah is a rare treasure that unites Jewish literary heritage with some of the finest illuminations from the Italian Renaissance,’ said James S Snyder, Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum. While Thomas P Campbell, Director and CEO of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, stated: ‘… The Mishneh Torah is a justly celebrated work that attests to the refined aesthetic sensibility of members of Italy’s Jewish community as well as to the opulence of North Italian book decoration in the 15th century.’

Lindsay Fulcher

a head of the rest

Principal Archaeologist for Durham County Council, added:

‘The head is a welcome addition to the collection of sculpture and inscriptions from Binchester. Previous religious dedications from the site feature deities from the classical pantheon of gods and goddesses such as the supreme god Jupiter and those associated with healing and good health such as Aesculapius, Salus and Hygeia.

‘This one, however, appears to represent a local Romano-Celtic god of the type frequently found in the frontier regions of the Empire and probably representing the conflation of a Classical deity with its local equivalent. The similarity with the head of Antenociticus is notable, but this could be a deity local to Binchester.’

It has been observed that the head has features which appear to be African. Dr Mason, however, cautioned against jumping to any conclusions by suggesting that this could easily be due to the form being typical of the kind produced by local craftsmen, a stylised rendering rather than a conscious depiction of African features. If, however, it could be proved that the head was deliberately made to look African then this could be a very important find indeed.

Either way, Alex Kirton, the student who uncovered it, is absolutely right in saying: ‘It was an incredible thing to find in a lump of soil in the middle of nowhere.’

Geoff Lowsley

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Teams of archaeologists from Italy and from other countries have been excavating in different sections of Gabii, a Latin city-state, preserved in its entirety practically intact, some 20km east of Rome along the modern Via Prenestina.

Roman legends mentioned Gabii as the place where the mythical twins and founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, were educated. According to the historian Livy (59 BC-AD 17), during the archaic period, Rome and Gabii were at war with each other until Rome prevailed. A treaty was agreed upon and its text was written on the skin of a bullock stretched over a wooden shield and displayed in a temple in the capital (Livy 1.53.4).

This site was already known in the 18th century, when the antiquarian Gavin Hamilton excavated there and found no fewer than 40 statues which later entered the collections of the Borghese family in Rome and the Louvre in Paris. More recently, the Spanish School at Rome excavated a podium temple, believed to be dedicated to the cult of Juno.

The necropolis at Osteria dell’Osa nearby revealed more than 600 burials dating to the end of the second/beginning of the first millennium BC, providing evidence of the social make-up of Iron Age Latium and its connections with Etruria and Southern Italy.

In 2007 the University of Michigan and the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology launched the Gabii Project whose aim is ‘…reviving the large-scale involvement of non-Italian Universities and Academies in exploring substantial portions of ancient cities in Italy, while introducing cutting-edge methodologies and the most recent historical debates’.

The specific goal of the project is to chart the history of this very important central Italian urban site, from the dawn of the historical era to the Medieval period.

‘Ultimately, the results of this research may well radically change current models concerning the growth and decline of Roman cities. At the same time, the project will lead to the rehabilitation of an area on the periphery of Rome enveloped by an urban sprawl that has made no provisions for green areas and sites of collective memory. The data collected will also aid in the conservation of the remains and their display to the public in an effort to promote and develop knowledge of the local cultural heritage,’ says Nicola Terrenato of the University of Michigan.

‘A key objective is also to train a new generation of young American and Canadian archaeologists, so that they can acquire a practical knowledge of central Italy from a historical and cultural perspective, ensuring the continuation of this type of research.’

Under his direction, the field research began with a geophysical survey of circa 40 hectares of Gabii’s urban centre. A full-scale magnetometry survey of the urban area completed by autumn 2008 presented evidence of a previously unknown urban grid within the line of Gabii’s ancient walls.

Major excavations commenced in 2009, sampling a portion of five contiguous city-blocks with multi-phased occupation. In the same year an unusual Imperial Roman lead sarcophagus was excavated.

This year’s season revealed a major new monumental complex with beautifully preserved architecture dating from the late 3rd century BC. It is a huge (almost 1,600 square metre) building with a grand portico and elegant mosaic floors. One suggestion is that it was an opulent house which may have belonged to a prominent member of the celebrated Cornelii family, who originated in Gabii and who restored the temple to Juno there – but it could simply be a public building. This may not be established until the other half of the complex is excavated next season.

(For further information visit http://sitemaker.umich.edu/gabiiproject/home)

Dalu Jones
A Greek marble head of a goddess
Hellenistic Period, circa 3rd-2nd Century B.C.
10½in (26.5cm) high
£30,000 - 50,000

Provenance:
Hans J. Morgenthau Collection (d.1980),
Chicago, formed between the 1960s-1970s.
Thence by descent.
Acquired from Münzen und Medaillen, Basel,
Simon Bavier Collection (1825-1896),
Switzerland, possibly acquired while posted in
Rome as Swiss Ambassador between 1883-1894.
Astronomer, mathematician, architect, engineer, physicist and one of the greatest inventors of all times, Archimedes was born in Syracuse circa 287 BC (1). Not much is known about his life but it is believed he was the son of Phidias, himself an astronomer and mathematician, who would have been his first teacher. Archimedes’ father may have been related to Hiero II (r 269-215 BC), the king of Syracuse, who inaugurated a period of peace and prosperity during which the city became the most important city in Magna Graecia, a hub of commerce, art and science.

The fruits of Hiero II’s clever external political alliances, effective measures for the local economy and generous patronage of the arts are reflected in an exhibition entitled ‘Archimedes, the art and science of invention’, currently on show in the Capitoline Museums in Rome. More than 100 of the artefacts displayed there come from the Archaeological Museum ‘Paolo Orsi’ in Syracuse.

The first section of the exhibition illustrates the environment in which Archimedes lived, a city-state where the arts, culture and science thrived. Many of the monuments that enhanced Syracuse are still standing: the theatre where plays by leading writers such as Aeschylus (circa 525-456 BC) were regularly performed.

Dalu Jones visits a fascinating exhibition in Rome, the first ever held to celebrate the life and work of the brilliant 3rd-century Greek polymath Archimedes.
a Roman soldier ordered him to meet the victorious general Marcus Claudius Marcellus (268-208 BC). Archimedes refused, saying he had to finish his diagram first. ‘Don’t disturb my circles,’ he snapped, referring to a geometric figure he had outlined on the sand. Furious, the soldier killed him (1 and 6).

Archimedes’ tombstone was engraved with an image of a sphere within a cylinder, of the exact same height and diameter, because in one of his geometrical treatises he had proved that the volume and surface area of the sphere would be two thirds that of the cylinder. Some 137 years after his death, Cicero (106-43 BC), while he was quaestor in Sicily between 75 and 76 BC, had Archimedes’ long-neglected tomb restored.

During the Second Punic War (218-201 BC) Syracuse was looted and its precious artefacts were taken to Rome and displayed in temples, public and private buildings, initiating a fashion for Hellenism, a turning point for the development of the arts of the capital. Plutarch wrote: ‘Marcellus, at length recalled by the people of Rome to the immediate war at home, to illustrate his triumph, and adorn the city, carried away with him a great number of the most beautiful ornaments of Syracuse. For, before that, Rome neither had, nor had seen, any of those fine and exquisite rarities; nor was any pleasure taken in graceful and elegant pieces of workmanship.’ (Parallel Lives, Chapter 21)

Among the objects taken to Rome were two ‘spheres’ made by Archimedes: one was a globe, the other a device for representing the motions of the Sun, the Moon, and the planets. According to Cicero (De Re Publica I 14, 21-22), one of the spheres was set inside the temple of Virtus, outside the Collina Gate in Rome.

Michael Wright, a researcher at Imperial College London, has been trying to discover how Archimedes’ sphere worked – not an easy task because, although it is described in historical writings, no pieces or even drawings of it have survived. He writes: ‘Archimedes had devised...
a way in which a single rotation would generate the several non-uniform motions of the planets including the retrograde motion, where they appear to stop and reverse direction for a while before proceeding in their usual direction.

Earlier this year, Wright presented his version of Archimedes’ sphere in public for the first time at a conference at New York University where experts from around the world gathered to assess Archimedes’ continuing influence on science and technology. Chris Rorres, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at Drexel University, who organised the conference, said: ‘[Archimedes] just planted the seeds for so many seminal ideas that could grow over the ages.’ The singular genius of Archimedes was, he concluded, that ‘he came up with fundamental laws of nature, proved them mathematically and then was able to apply them’.

Archimedes is known, of course, as the epitome of the absent-minded professor. One famous episode, that has been known to schoolchildren through the centuries, describes the excited inventor jumping out of his bath (12) and running naked through the streets of Syracuse shouting ‘Eureka!’ (‘I found it!’), ‘itr’ being the principle of buoyancy, proving that the upward force on a submerged object equals the weight of the liquid displaced.

He was also an extremely practical man, however, the inventor of many devices useful in times of both war and peace. The upper floors of the Capitoline Museum are currently devoted entirely to large-scale functioning models that visitors activate themselves and that clearly illustrate his most important inventions even to the least technically minded. Among them is Archimedes’ Screw (2), a simple device that already existed in the Middle East but which the inventor perfected. It consists of a hollow tube containing a spiral turned by a handle at one end. When the lower end of the tube is placed into water and the handle turned, water is carried up the tube and out. This device is still used as a simple machine for irrigation by farmers in developing countries.

An architectural application of Archimedes’ Screw is the inner core of Trajan’s Column in Rome, built in AD 113 by the architect Apollodorus of Damascus to celebrate the emperor Trajan’s victory over the Dacians. The helical shape of the staircase lightens the weight of the stone blocks that make up the structure.

The conference in New York made known that ‘a couple of decades ago, engineers found that running an Archimedes’ Screw backwards – that is, dropping water in at the top, causing the screw to turn as the water falls to the bottom – is an economical way to generate electricity from small streams. The power output is modest, enough for a village, but with a small impact on the environment. Unlike the turbine blades that spin in huge hydropower plants, Archimedes’ Screw permits fish to swim through it and emerge at the other end almost unscathed.’ Generators such as these have been built in Europe, including a pair commissioned by Queen Elizabeth II to generate power for Windsor Castle.

Archimedes was able, by using geometry, to elucidate the principles of other basic devices still used today – such as the pulley, the fulcrum and the lever. Although he did not actually invent the lever, he discovered the reason why it worked. The lever enables a small force to

Minerva September/October 2013
One famous episode, that has been known to schoolchildren through the centuries, describes the excited inventor jumping out of the bath and running naked through the streets of Syracuse shouting ‘Eureka!’ (‘I found it!’)

Archimedes’ Claw, on the other hand, was a weapon that could be used to protect Syracuse from the Roman navy, grabbing enemy ships and tipping them over. As Professor Rorres told the New York conference, thanks to the law of buoyancy, the inventor was able to determine whether a paraboloid (a shape similar to the nose cone of a jetliner) would float upright or tip over, a principle of utmost importance to ship designers. Thus he applied his theory to make the Roman ships vulnerable as they came close to the city walls.’

Archimedes published his works in the form of correspondence with the main mathematicians of the time, including the Alexandrian scholars Eratosthenes of Cyrene (276-194 BC) and Conon of Samos (280-220 BC). The survival of his writings is a long, complicated saga, but it is through three manuscripts that we know of Archimedes’ treatises. One was last heard of in 1311, another was documented until the 1550s, while the third, The Archimedes Palimpsest, is now housed in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore.

Over time there had been many translations of his work – into Arabic, Latin and, later, during the Renaissance, into Italian, when Galileo Galilei used them as the basis for his research. After Jesuit missionaries presented Archimedes’ theories at the Ming court in Beijing in the 16th century, his treatises were even translated into Chinese. Archimedes: The Art and Science of Invention is a delightful eye-opener of an exhibition that brings to life the fascinating story of an outstanding man living at a time of tolerance and flourishing culture, when scientific research was universally respected and encouraged, free of religious dogma.

Archimedes: The Art and Science of Invention is at Rome’s Capitolini Museum (en.museicapitolini.org) until 12 January 2014.

Minerva September/October 2013
I n September 480 BC, the Greeks were scandalised by brutal sacrilege. The Persian Great King, Xerxes, had invaded mainland Greece; within months his vast army had seized Attica and its chief city, Athens; and here on the Acropolis, in an act of deliberate destruction, they had torched the temples. It was the culmination of decades of hostility. Only 27 years earlier, Athenian envoys had rashly offered fealty to the Persians. Then, just as rashly, they had withdrawn it. Soon they were instead supporting their Ionian cousins in a revolt against the Persian Empire, and in a raid on Sardis they had accidentally set fire to a temple of the Asiatic goddess Cybele (498 BC). Just four years later, the rebellion was over, crushed by the might of the Persian Great King, and now he was bent on vengeance.

A few days later, Xerxes’ Persian fleet was tricked into engaging with Greek ships in the straits between the island of Salamis and mainland Eleusis. In a hard-fought way, and burned their temples, but on the marshy plain at Marathon it was defeated against all odds by Athens’ heavy infantry (490 BC). The next time, Xerxes vowed he would not fail and, by September 480 BC, with the Acropolis in ruins and Sardis avenged, he thought that victory was his. He was mistaken.

Read the Parthenon

David Stuttard finds symbols of death and rebirth, evidence of politics and propaganda, and a thin dividing line between confidence and hubris embodied in Greece’s greatest temple

Even as an artfully reconstructed ruin, the Parthenon still dominates the Athenian Acropolis, seen here from the nearby Hill of the Muses, with the Roman Odeon of Herodes Atticus beneath it. Photograph by David Stuttard.
battle the Greeks emerged victorious and, with winter approaching, the Persian fleet limped back to Asia while Xerxes himself marched most of his men home, albeit leaving behind sufficient troops to conquer Greece. But again his plans were thwarted.

At the Battle of Plataea the next year an allied coalition of Greek states routed the Persian invaders. Soon much of Greece, with Athens at its head, had formed a military and economic League with which to ensure that Persia would never again threaten them or their Ionian allies. By 449 BC the League had been transformed into an Athenian empire, and such was its success that Persia agreed to peace terms. It was a watershed moment, and not least for the Athenian Acropolis.

It was later claimed that before the Battle of Plataea, the Greeks had sworn an oath not to rebuild the temples, which the Persians had destroyed, until their enemy had been defeated. Whether this is true or not, for 30 years, the Acropolis, Athens’ sacred centre, though tidied of its rubble, had been left untouched – a stark reminder of grim days, a ‘ground zero’, in which only the foundations of burnt shrines remained. One building had been started, post-Marathon, in a fit of patriotic zeal, but it was incomplete when Xerxes came, and it was on its site, redolent with the significance of that memorable victory that, moved by Pericles, democratic Athens decreed the construction of the centrepiece of a new, ambitious building programme. Here was to stand the Parthenon.

Built to house a towering statue of the city’s patron goddess Athene, 40 feet tall, its armature faced in gold and ivory, the Parthenon was intended to impress and to eclipse. For a century Athenians had looked jealously across the sea to two imposing temples: the one, of Hera, built on Samos by the tyrant-king Polycrates; the other, of Artemis, at Ionian Ephesus, arguably the most impressive building anywhere in the Greek world. Competitive, as all Greeks were, the Athenians envied not just its architecture but its sculptures, too, which included representations of men with long flowing hair, their shoulders draped in panther skins, women with full lips and almond eyes, horses, cattle driven to the altar to be sacrificed, struggles between men and Centaurs and battles with the Amazons. Now, Athens was determined not just that the Parthenon should rival Ephesus by being the most highly decorated building in all mainland Greece, but that its figurative sculptures should proclaim the city’s newly won supremacy.

These sculptures were arranged in three distinct zones. On the metopes (self-contained rectangular blocks set into the entablature above the outer columns) were shown scenes of battle, some of which mirrored those at Ephesus – Greeks fighting Trojans, Amazons and Centaurs; and gods fighting Giants. All were celebrations of the victory of civilization over barbarism, all mythological parallels to the defeat of Persia by wider Greece (which Athens now professed to lead).

The sculptures on the pediments were more specific. Here the greatness of the city of Athens, itself,
was celebrated. On the east pediment facing the rising sun, which caused the metal fixtures to shimmer in its rays, sculptures showed the moment of Athene’s birth at dawn. Athenians celebrated this birth each year in August in the so-called Panathenaic Procession, which wound through their city before climbing up to the Acropolis. (Many recalled, too, how it was at dawn that the heavy infantry had set out on their long, loping run against the Persians at Marathon to strike the first blow in their war for freedom.)

Athene’s birth was set on Mount Olympus, but the legend shown on the west pediment was much more local. Here was the contest between Athene and Poseidon, god of the sea, to decide which of the two would rule the land of Attica, a contest said to have occurred on the Acropolis itself. Athene won, and in recognition planted a sacred olive tree. But still Poseidon offered the Athenians protection, as their naval victory at Salamis reminded them – and surely it was not a mere coincidence that this pediment itself faced Salamis, especially as tradition would suggest that the victory had deeply spiritual significance.

The Battle of Salamis had been fought in September, on one of the most sacred days in the Athenian calendar. In peace-time, a procession would have set out from Athens to nearby Eleusis to take part in the Mysteries, a celebration of the cycles of death and rebirth. At their heart was the showing to initiates of an ear of corn, which, though harvested, contained the seed for next year’s crop. Since 480 BC, the Mysteries had assumed added significance for the Athenians, for on the morning of the battle they believed that they had heard the hymn, which usually accompanied the ritual, drifting in a cloud of dust across the waters. With no mortals there to sing it, they thought they must be hearing gods. Indeed, they had already been encouraged by a prophecy from Delphi, which revealed in language appropriate to the Mysteries that ‘godlike Salamis will be the cause of death to women’s sons, when the grain is scattered or the harvest gathered in’ (Herodotus 7.141). The battle won, Eleusis, Salamis and victory were forever fused, an irresistible trinity.

Indeed, Eleusis was physically present on the restored Acropolis. Embedded in the white marble basin on either side of the approach to the rock was a thin band of deep grey Eleusinian limestone. Its purpose was not recorded by contemporary writers, but its presence was no accident. It formed a dynamic boundary, charged with the profound significance of the Mysteries themselves. Cross its threshold and you entered the world of the divine.

This concept of a spiritual journey informs the final set of figurative sculptures on the Parthenon, the celebrated frieze. Set 40 feet above the platform, the frieze ran on the temple’s two long sides atop the outer wall and on the shorter sides above the inner columns of the porches. Its narrative started at the building’s west, the side first reached by worshippers. Perhaps inspired by Ephesus, it showed scenes of horsemen and chariots, incense-bearers and musicians, old men and maidens all processing in honour of the gods. Much effort has been made to try to show that it represents the annual Panathenaic procession, which culminated in the presentation of a new robe to an ancient olive-wood statue of Athene, rescued before Salamis, the most venerated object in all Athens. Although the central scene does seem to show this...
presentation, the frieze contains elements which were absent from the historical procession, while omitting others which were present.

In reality, it may be that the frieze shows something altogether more extraordinary. Just as the journey from the Parthenon’s west pediment (with its contest between Athene and Poseidon) to the east (the birth of Athene) moves the viewer from the Acropolis to Mount Olympus, so the imagined setting of the frieze shifts too. At the west end with its equestrian preparations we are firmly in Athens, but by the time we have reached the east we find ourselves in the presence of the 12 Olympian gods.

Once more we are in a heightened world. But what do the gods signify? Reading left to right, the first four gods (Hermes, Dionysos, Demeter and Ares) all had connections not only with the Underworld but with Salamis and Eleusis: Ares was the god of war, while the other three were worshipped at the Mysteries. All watch eagerly as the procession nears although, as we read on, many of the others – Hera and Zeus, Athene and Hephaestus, Poseidon and Apollo, Artemis and Aphrodite – seem positively uninterested. Why? The answer may lie in the Mysteries. On the left, the gods of death and of Eleusis eagerly receive a sacrifice. By the time our eyes stray to the remaining gods, the sacrifice has been accepted. Now its consequences can be enjoyed. For these are the gods of the city, of order and of civilisation. So perhaps this scene, itself the culmination of a procession, represents a journey from death to life. Perhaps, too, the sacrifice that is implied is not just that of oxen (as at Ephesus) but of Athenian lives in battle, which would result in Athens’ future glory.

On a building rich in scenes of contest, war and birth such imagery would not be out of place. Indeed, the message it contained may have recalled a miracle.

For in 480 BC on the morning after he had burned the temples, Xerxes had sent men on to the Acropolis with offerings of his own. What they had seen there chilled them to the bone. From the blackened stump of Athene’s sacred olive tree, seared by the previous day’s fire, there sprouted a green shoot. Already it was 18 inches long. Athene had spoken and the sign was clear. The city may have been defeated but its life force, resurrected, would make it great again. Just as at Eleusis, death had been followed by rebirth.

As the building of the Parthenon reached completion and the programme of rebuilding carried on apace, there may have been not a few Athenians who believed their own propaganda and felt that their city was invincible. Yet there is a thin line between confidence and hubris, as the history of the next century, like that of the last, would soon reveal. But that is a story for another time.
How old were you when you first started to paint or draw?
I was about six. While I was at a convent school I was very involved with things like Nativity plays and I used to make the scenery. I was always the school artist.

When you were at art school did you only paint abstract pictures?
No. I started making very realistic drawings and I drew obsessively for the first couple of years. I produced a lot of beautiful drawings of friends, plants, animals, landscapes. I am showing them in Ireland and in Germany; there is going to be an exhibition that explains this story. I am one of the few artists knocking around now that made the transition from realism to abstraction.

What was it that steered you towards abstraction?
I would say that the drive to abstraction is fundamental to everything that follows, and that comes from an interest in Irish music – I mean, that’s in my soul, and the idea of rhythm, the sense of rhythm, that’s deep within me. The idea of universality has always been big in me, and still is, and I don’t abandon that, even though we are in a period that is basically called postmodern. You can still make very engaging abstraction – or I can anyway – after the fall of modernism, that’s not dependent on that context or that matrix, or a belief in that. That said, fast-forwarding to a man in his mid-60s, having just talked about a man in his late teens, I had an idea to make these paintings that came from a lot of things.

How did the concept and theme of abstracting Doric architecture develop in your work?
Once, when I did a film interview with the late Robert Hughes, the greatest art writer of his generation by far, he said of my work: ‘His paintings have a silent sense of gravitas and there is a kind of Doric order about them.’ That’s when I first got the idea of making a group of paintings called Doric Order – or referring to the sense of Doric order. But, before that, I had visited the temples at Agrigento in Sicily. They are very beautiful. I loved the pale orange colour of the stone; one of my paintings is called DORIC ORANGE. Those temples stand alone on an empty landscape against the sea. You have there an architectural sense of eternity against a body of water, poetically and geographically, or at least in our localised sense on planet Earth. This was of great interest to me.

Did any other factors in your early life influence your work?
The idea of standing things one on top of the other has always been of great interest to me, the idea of stacking. When I was young I worked in Woolworth’s. I operated a baling-machine, baling old cardboard boxes, and I always was very fascinated by this idea of stacking, and just being able to go up by stacking, which is what, in building terms, is called ‘post and linteling’. I have made 11 trips to Mexico, where I visited practically every temple – Labna, Coba, Sayil, Tulum, Chichen Itza of course, Uxmal – every site except Bonampak, which is in the jungle and a bit inaccessible. Those temples are also built in that way, by stacking. This idea of human stacking to create spaces in which we think and grow culture – spaces of contemplation – is very interesting.

The legacy of ancient Greece is strongly present in your work. Is it a tribute to that great civilisation?
I think about Greece and what we owe the Greeks, and how personally indebted I am to Greece. I wanted to make something for them. When I was thinking about it – not consciously thinking about their current economic plight but...
new art

perhaps subconsciously – in some way I wanted to come to their rescue as an artist, to speak up for them, to say this is what they gave us, this is what we stand in, this is what we base everything on.

Why do the Ionic and Corinthian orders not inspire you?
Because they are not fundamental – they are an elaboration built on the Doric. I’m only interested in fundamental forms. Look at the paintings; there are no twirly bits in my paintings, no decoration, no elaboration. I make my paintings out of absolutely fundamental forms. I have no interest at all in the idea of elaboration. It’s antithetical to what I do.

Aside from Greek architecture, do any other aspects of ancient Greek art strike a chord with you?
No. This isn’t really about artefacts. This is bigger than that. This is philosophical, and the subject of abstraction, once it left the figure behind, or once it left behind the appearance of figures, became philosophy. That’s what Western abstraction is based on. Of course, abstraction has been around for thousands of years. Our abstraction was invented to accompany the Russian Revolution. That is what took hold with me, not the appearance of things, but the meaning of things. That’s why I converted from figuration to abstraction, for political reasons, because I was a fervent Left activist. I believed in social order, social justice, I still do. I was attracted to abstraction because of that and because of the way cities are built. My early work was based on super-grids. I looked at the way highways overlapped, at the way city blocks went up. I was reacting to that, so my work has always been urban in one way or another.

You work both in Barcelona and in New York City, but you also have a house out in the countryside in southern Germany. You have mentioned that, since living there, your paintings have acquired ‘a softness’. What did you mean?
The first painting I produced when I moved to Germany was called Mooseurach, which is the name of the little village where I live. It was a painting with green in it. Green is a colour that sort of got away from me over time. When I moved to the countryside, it made me very nervous, because I have always fed on the city, on the syncopation of the city, and on urban rhythms, and my work has always been in dialogue with architecture, and the idea of...
doors and windows and stacked floors and so on. But when I moved to the countryside I found that I could use the things in nature – the colour of the sky, the way in which the light in the sky hits the Alps at different times in the day and transforms the stone into luminous matter. I found that I could bring that into my paintings in my studio, because I paint next to a big picture window, and right next to me is a huge forest where the mist hangs around a lot, which makes fantastically mysterious colours, and also there are the Alps. What has happened is that a kind of pink-purple colour has come into my work, and you can see it in this painting right here – that pink colour and those strange purpley colours, purpley greys, are the colour of the Alps in the evening. It has enriched my palette immeasurably. What has happened is that the paintings have become informed by forces outside the studio that are visual and more directly connected to landscape, as if the sensations of landscape are superimposed onto timeless architectural form.

Your *Wall of Light* series marked an especially prolific phase in your career in the late 1990s. What inspired these paintings?

It was 1984 and I was on the beach at Zihuatanejo in Mexico when I got the *Wall of Light* idea. I made a painting, a watercolour, as a direct result of looking at the temples. You can’t help but be impressed and moved by the silence of these places, and how the stone is transformed by the morning and the night. People were spiritually inhabited by this theatre of architecture, and that affected me very deeply. I didn’t think about the title. I just wrote underneath the watercolour: ‘Wall of Light’. I parked that painting for about 14 years, then, in about 1998, when I was ready, I started making all the *Wall of Light* paintings. I’m a person who needs a lot of time. I think that my work is deeply romantic. That’s why I go back to the Doric idea. I’m so moved by the sacrifice of the 300 Spartan warriors [at Thermopylae] who defended our future.

When you visited the Musée d’Art Classique de Mougins last year, you were interested in the principal concept behind the museum in that it displays ancient art alongside...
I’m only interested in fundamental forms... there are no twirly bits in my paintings, no decoration, no elaboration.

Baroque, Neoclassical, modern and contemporary art.

This idea is very interesting because there is a huge connection between antiquities and contemporary art. And the reason is in some sense primitive: both are primitive. It’s like my tattoo; it’s exactly the same thing as my tattoo. My tattoo design comes from Newgrange – you could quite easily incorporate items from Newgrange into your museum, in the same way that the British Museum does. There is a stone in the British Museum that has exactly the same drawing on it as my tattoo. The idea of putting ancient art with contemporary art is very interesting, particularly anything that has been influenced by minimalism, because minimalism is something that you can almost see in art of 4,000 years ago – very simple forms. The first thing that I saw in the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens was a stone cross, made 2,000 years before Jesus Christ was born, a kind of rough, fat carved stone cross that looked almost like a piece of minimal art, like something that you would have seen 20 years ago. So the idea of closing down the space between ancient art and contemporary art is true – it has about it a truthfulness because it is an art that tries to be somehow direct in its appeal or direct in its approach, and it dispenses to a large degree with narrative and perspective, which was really invented to illustrate Christianity.

Why did you decide to stage your exhibition, DORIC, in the Musée d’Art Classique de Mougins?

Interview

Sean Scully: DORIC is on show at the Musée d’Art Classique de Mougins (www.mouginsmuseum.com) until 29 September.

Sean Scully: Triptychs exhibition will open at Pallant House Gallery (www.pallant.org.uk) in Chichester on 2 November and will run until 9 February 2014.
Ever since their public display to the modern world just over 200 years ago, the Parthenon sculptures have stood at the heart of our understanding of the artistic achievements of the Classical Greek world, yet, despite generations of study, they still merit close examination.

The temple, with its sculptural decoration, made of local Pentelic marble, was conceived soon after 450 BC, at the height of Athens’ power and influence. It was deeply rooted in the culture of the city-state and the aspirations of its dominant statesman, Perikles. Of the marble sculptures, those in the huge triangular gable at the east end of the temple, its front, were perhaps the most important. The whole composition probably once consisted of some 20 gigantic figures, all carved completely in the round; the 2nd-century AD travel writer Pausanias said that it showed the birth of Athena, the patron deity of Athens.

The lolling naked male (1), the only pedimental figure still to preserve its head, formed the starting point for a fresh appraisal of the figures in the pediment, and this sculpture is presented here to show that by getting up close and personal new insights may still be gained into such a familiar masterpiece.

This seated giant faces into the corner of the pediment, away from the main action of the scene. He reclines comfortably, resting on his left elbow, his legs extended and slightly spread, and displays a wonderfully developed, long torso, lithe and sharply muscled. His right arm is bent up at the elbow and slightly raised. His hands and feet are now missing, although a drawing by Jacques Carrey done in 1674 shows...
that his left foot was still preserved at least until the catastrophic explosion of 1687 (2).

An ancient dowel hole, bored into the core of the shin, remains in the figure’s right foot, indicating either an addition made during the sculpting process or, in this case almost certainly, a repair of damage that occurred when the sculpture was being manoeuvred into position in the pediment.

The right leg was carved completely free of seat and support, making it particularly vulnerable. A trace of the bridge of marble that once linked the figure’s lost left heel to his rock-like seat may still be discerned. This seat is partially covered with an animal skin (two feline paws are visible and part of what seems to be the tail, but not the head), while a cloak is bunched, rather untidily, under the figure.

How can we discover exactly who this superb figure was? The report by Pausanias saying that the scene showed the birth of Athena suggests that all the figures in the pediment were gods, or heroes, who might reasonably have been present at such an event, in other words a selection of Olympians. Although labels were added to aid identification on some sculptural groups from the Greek world, such as the low-relief friezes from the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi of the 6th century BC, or the huge high-relief friezes from the great altar of Zeus at Pergamon of the 2nd century BC, such consideration appears to have been exceptional. Instead, ancient viewers, like the chorus in Euripides’ play Ion (lines 184-218), when they looked up at the sculptures on the temple of Apollo at Delphi, identified Herakles by his...
golden sickle and Iolaos by his blazing torch, as they disposed of the Hydra. Modern viewers similarly have to marshal what information remains, including the overall subject of a scene (if known), the gender, action, pose and dress, together with any attributes (such as sceptres, musical instruments or weapons), although such distinctive attributes are now lost and we can only hope to discern their attachment points or holes.

Over the last 200 years, scholars have put forward a whole host of alternative identifications for this figure, some 10 in all. Of these, however, almost all have been discarded, and only Dionysos and Herakles now seem to be serious contenders. Indeed, most recent scholars have favoured Dionysos, as is shown by the caption currently displayed in the British Museum.

Nevertheless, some detailed evidence that the figure preserves has never properly been considered before. If we look closely at the figure’s head (3–5), we notice that, despite later damage and weathering, his hair was indicated with shallow locks (still visible, for example, over and in front of his right ear – cf. 7). There are no traces of attachment holes for a wreath, as was de rigueur for Dionysos, the god of wine and the feast (he should also be clothed, not naked), but there are a number of other details visible on the head that require proper explanation.

If we examine the hair on the nape of his neck (3), we find that a rough cutting was made with a point into the main hair mass to create a ledge. At the front of the head there are also two previously unnoticed features that need to be understood (4). The first is the unexpected strong division of the wavy hair over the centre of the brow, which seems to be only roughly finished. The second is a separate flat patch on the top of the head over the forehead, clearly worked in the same fashion as the cutting into the hair mass over the nape of the neck. The last and most obvious clue is the large hole for a circular metal dowel in the top of the head (5).

We need to find a convincing explanation both for the dowel in the top of the head and for the secondary workings of the hair and brow, which in the end must have been covered in some way, and not left raw and visible, even if only to the gods. There seems to be only one plausible solution to explain all these clues and peculiarities – the figure was originally equipped with a bronze helmet and, with the aid of a graphic montage prepared by Kate Morton (6), we can see how this might have worked.

A metal dowel in the top of the head was one of the methods used for securing an added metal helmet on other sculptures, while the areas of reworking may be understood in terms of the final fixing in place of the helmet in a slightly lower position than planned, as a result of the unexpected proximity to the sloping roof edge above. The ledge cut into the hair at the back will have been made to fit the joint between the dome of the helmet and its neck-piece; the central division of the hair would have been required to accommodate the visor-like part of the helmet; and the flat patch over the forehead must have similarly helped the helmet to sit flatter and lower than originally envisaged.

Of the various common types of helmet worn in Athens, one, the so-called Attic or Chalcidian type, fits all the requirements, including the necessity for it to fit under the sloping roof edge. In addition, the area round the figure’s right ear very much suggests that the lower contour of the helmet curved right round the ear (7).

The head of the figure seems to be slightly smaller than one might have expected in relation to the body and his neck is rather long. The planes of his cheeks are also unexpectedly flat and the width of his face and head rather narrow. These may all have been features influenced by the intention of giving him a bronze helmet – ways of preventing the head from seeming too large in proportion to the rest of the body. Furthermore, the narrowness of the lower face and the flatness of the cheeks suggest that the helmet’s cheek-pieces were down, rather than turned upwards.

Two final pieces of evidence,
although purely circumstantial, might also be adduced in support of the idea of a bronze helmet. Firstly, Carrey’s drawing reveals that already at some moment before the great explosion inside the temple in 1687 the sloping block that once overlaid the figure’s head had been prised off the building (2). The way that this damage falls directly over the head of the once helmeted figure suggests the activities of metal robbers, intent on getting at the large bronze helmet and the dowel that held it in place – indeed, the degree of damage to the top of the head, especially the large crack, is no doubt indicative of the force required to remove it. Furthermore, the damage to the figure’s left (outermost) ear and the clear line of deep scarring just in front of it similarly suggest the manner in which the metal robber might have first attempted to pry loose the helmet.

Once we realise that the figure was originally equipped with a bronze helmet, presumably gilded, and that the figure should therefore be identified as the war god Ares, we may turn to two other clues: the feline skin on which he reclines and the small attachment hole preserved in the front of the ankle of his left leg. Feline skins appear on the seats of a wide variety of deities, so that here it cannot have been intended as a precise iconographic indicator. We may, however, wonder if it was intended to be connected with the war god’s ferocious nature.

As for the hole in the front of the figure’s left ankle, it is perhaps best taken as the fixing for a greave pad – the leather or fabric pads that were worn around the ankles of warriors to protect them from being chafed by the lower edge of the bronze greave (cf. 8).

We might well expect Ares to have been equipped with a spear, and examination of the figure’s right forearm indicates that this is quite possible, for the muscles are not tensed to carry any particular weight, but are rather relaxed. This would fit well with a hand loosely gripping the shaft of an angled spear (9). The bottom of the shaft probably passed between his feet while the point disappeared behind his head – it was presumably all made of bronze and perhaps even formed in two sections to aid attachment, the joint being concealed by the figure’s closed fist.

There remains only the question as to the action of his left hand. This may have been empty and relaxed, but equally Ares might have held his sword, now sheathed, in its scabbard. The god was, it would seem, intended to be thought of as resting from battle, shield and greaves set to one side.

Giving a new identity to this great sculpture raises other questions and makes it clear that a thorough re-examination of all the other preserved figures from the Parthenon’s East Pediment is necessary. Indications of their identity must be assessed, and how they were located and interacted in the limited space of the pediment frame revealed graphically. This can be done with the aid of a series of restored sketch-drawings of each figure seen from the front, combined with a bird’s-eye sketch of the figure in place on the floor of the pediment. Such drawings (all the work of Kate Morton, cf. 9) and fresh thoughts on all the figures from the pediment and their interconnections, are to be published in a forthcoming volume. So watch this space.

8. Athenian red-figure amphora showing a warrior with his helmet and greaves to the right. Brussels inv. R 308; courtesy of the Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire.

9. Reconstruction drawing of the Parthenon’s East Pediment, Figure D, as Ares, with pediment floor and bird’s-eye view. © Kate Morton.


* Kate Morton is Illustrator in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum (kmorton@britishmuseum.org).
The notion of El Dorado (literally ‘the Gilded One’) was a legend that spread among Europeans in the wake of their first encounters with the New World and resulted in an extensive search across South America for riches and gold, including a mythical city of gold. The legend is thought to have originated in a ritual, recorded by Spanish chroniclers, that took place at Lake Guatavita, 35 miles north-east of modern-day Bogotá. In it, a chief, covered in gold dust and accompanied by attendants, was taken on a raft into the centre of the lake, whereupon he plunged into the water, washing off the dust while offerings made of gold and other materials were cast into the waters around him.

Now, in a new exhibition called Beyond El Dorado, a collaboration between the British Museum and the Museo del Oro in Bogotá, some of the unique, awe-inspiring gold objects created by ancient Colombian communities are coming to London. The exhibition opens at the British Museum in mid-October. Curator Elisenda Vila Llonch and Project Curator Leonora Duncan explain their significance, power and use.
2. Lime dipper with anthropomorphic finial, gold alloy (tumbaga), Colombia, Calima-Malagana (Yotoco), 200 BC–AD 1300. H. 22.6cm. L. 2.1cm. © Museo del Oro. Banco de la República, Colombia.

3. Anthropomorphic bat-man pectoral, gold alloy (tumbaga), Colombia, Tairona, AD 900–1600. H. 9.5cm. L. 11.9cm. © Museo del Oro. Banco de la República, Colombia.

4. Neck of a poporo (lime container), gold alloy (tumbaga), Colombia, Quimbaya, AD 600-1100. H. 17cm. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

5. Anthropomorphic pectoral, gold alloy (tumbaga), Colombia, Popayán/Late Cauca, AD 900–1600. H. 30cm. W. 20.5cm. D. 2cm. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
brings together over 300 stunning objects from the two museums’ collections and uses them to deconstruct this timeless myth and to explore the richness, diversity and skilled craftsmanship of several of the cultures present in pre-Hispanic Colombian territory.

In addition to masterpieces in gold, the exhibition also features objects in stone, ceramic, textile and other organic materials to show the differing styles and cultural practices of ancient Colombian peoples. As well as exploring the complex and diverse technological processes used in the making of these objects, notions of status, power and identity are examined through ritual objects and items of body adornment.

In pre-Hispanic times gold was panned in rivers at renowned sites, such as Buriticá, or was mined in shafts in the cordilleras of the Caldas and Antioquia regions. The majority of the resulting gold was then taken northwards to Dabeiba, where goldsmiths traded ingots and raw material across established trade routes into the different cultural regions. Gold in ancient Colombia was not used as currency, but instead possessed important symbolic significance.

Its yellow colour and shining appearance gave it a strong natural association with the sun – a star revered for its creative power and unchanging nature. Societies across the region valued the aesthetic of iridescence, reflection and lustre, achieved by polishing and burnishing metal objects. Gold was linked to a spiritual power concerned with forces of creation. The sun also helped connect mankind with the supernatural world. Golden objects glinted in the bright sunlight during the day and in the firelight at night, reflecting light at different angles and shimmering in a magical way. But pure gold was rarely used in the production of objects in the region – instead a distinct material known as tumbaga was favoured. Tumbaga is an alloy primarily composed of gold and copper, together with smaller proportions of the silver naturally occurring in the gold. This alloy has a lower melting point and is harder and stronger than its individual components. It is also easier to cast, and reproduces fine decorative elements with more accuracy – a factor of great importance when one considers the scale and level of detail of many of the stunning objects created by pre-Hispanic metalworkers.

The quantities of gold and copper were purposefully and carefully chosen in order to control the colour and other properties of the final material – even the smell and taste of the piece changed with different proportions of these elements. Colours ranged from a bright, yellowish golden tone to a reddish one, and the final result held a high level of significance beyond its aesthetic appearance.

In a world concerned with cosmic balance, gold was linked to the sun and its power, as well as to masculinity and its associated characteristics, while silver and copper were related to the moon and night time, and to the opposing force of femininity. A variety of techniques were mastered and exploited by ancient Colombian people, with markedly...
different regional styles using specific features and designs. Tumbaga was melted in small round ingots, which were flattened using hand-held hammers and anvils made from hard, fine-grained stone to create sheets of the metal. These sheets were used to make spectacular objects, including pectoral discs, nose ornaments and other body adornments and ritual objects. Some pieces were joined together by small metal rings that allowed the pieces to dangle and move freely, while more complex three-dimensional objects were constructed by folding, or clipping, the edges of the sheets of tumbaga together. Repoussé was often employed to create raised decorative details on hammered objects.

The greatest achievement of ancient Colombian goldsmiths, however, was mastering the lost-wax technique to the highest degree, to create both solid and hollow pieces. Objects were sculpted in wax and surrounded with a clay mould. The mould was heated and the melted wax poured out through a channel; molten metal was then poured in. Once cooled, the mould was broken and an exact, unique replica of the wax model was created. Hollow objects were especially challenging, as double moulds had to be created, with an inner clay mould encased in wax and then again in clay. In both processes the metalsmith had to simultaneously maintain careful control over the temperature of both the fire and the different materials used, which required not only artistic skill but great technical knowledge.

Different techniques were used to enhance the colour and shine of the finished objects. Depletion gilding was frequently used to alter the appearance of the tumbaga. By this method the surface was treated with a plant acid that removed the base metals (copper and silver) and left only a thin layer of gold visible.

Objects were occasionally decorated with the use of depletion gilding on selected parts of the surface, producing a two-colour pattern. Other techniques allowed for areas of contrasting colour to be achieved in the same objects, by using a range of different alloys in the same piece or applying other surface treatments, such as the scraping of gilded pieces. At the final stage, objects were often burnished, cleaned and polished using materials ranging from dung to sand, and with tools made from metal, bamboo, antler or stone, to bring out a gleaming finish and to consolidate their outer, superficial layer of gold.

Gold objects were valued and used in a wide variety of ways across ancient Colombia: as body adornment, as offerings to the gods and in ritual contexts. Objects like Muica tuncu (flat, unpolished depictions of humans, animals or complex scenes) discovered in caves and bodies of water were made specifically as votive offerings to deities, to appeal to them, to pay tribute or to express thanks.

Stunning tumbaga objects were used by elite individuals as items of body adornment—elaborate diadems, pectorals, and nose and lip ornaments would have been worn by high-status individuals as an outward expression and reminder to others of their power and position in society. As well as decorative ornaments, weaponry and protective gear were also crafted from or decorated with tumbaga. Unlike to have been made specifically for use in warfare, as the metal would have been too soft to offer protection, these helmets and other items of weaponry were probably used to mark the status of their wearer in ritual contexts.

Some musical instruments were also crafted in gold alloy. Colonial accounts from ancient Colombia describe sacred ceremonies where dancing, singing and the playing of trumpets and drums were an essential part of the proceedings. Trumpets, bells and ocarinas made in different materials, including tumbaga, show the importance of those objects in ritual life and in elite practices. Elaborate ceremonies were an essential part of life, and in some instances the whole community was involved.

Body adornments—as well as body paint and other regalia—were used to alter the appearance of chosen members of the community, giving them the physical characteristics of animals. For example, feather headdresses transformed their wearer into a bird-like being, while other ornaments and piercings could give them a bat-like appearance. When made of tumbaga, these imposing iridescent objects imbued their wearer with semi-divine status. Various animals had different symbolic meanings to ancient Colombian people, and their physical properties were believed to have connections to elements of the supernatural world. Jaguars, for example, frequently feature in the pre-Hispanic iconography of...
the area. Known for their strength and ferocity, they were associated with rulers and power; chiefs would wear their skins, as well as masks with fangs or necklaces made from their claws. They embodied many desirable qualities, from their night vision to their agility and speed.

Animals that had the power and physical ability to bridge the divides between land, water and the sky were especially important to ancient Colombian people. These animals – bats, frogs, crocodiles, snakes and birds, for example – were held in high esteem and were often depicted in *tumbaga*. In rituals people would put themselves into trances, believing they could thereby possess the physical qualities and abilities of such animals, increasing their knowledge, communicating with the supernatural, and gaining a different perspective on the world. These alterations in physical appearance, accompanied in ritual ceremonies by music, dancing, fasting and the ingestion of hallucinogenic substances, all combined to initiate the transformative process.

In ancient Colombia, plants were not only used to heal and to give strength, but were also an essential component of transformative ritual practices. Coca leaves were chewed with powdered seashell, an alkaline substance that increased the effects of the plant. The powder was carried separately from the coca leaves, in containers known as *poporos* (lime containers). The most elaborate of these were cast from *tumbaga*, and the powder was ingested using a dipping-stick, the most beautiful and finely crafted of which have highly detailed finials. Coca not only relieved the fatigue caused by living at high Andean altitudes, but was also believed to give its user knowledge and power, and was employed in a ceremonial context.

Hallucinogenic plants induced visions and enabled communication with the supernatural world; their use was highly restricted to elite individuals. The seeds and leaves of the *yopo* plant were crushed and snorted from elaborate snuff trays which featured birds and animals, reflecting a connection with the animal and spirit worlds.

Pieces made of *tumbaga* were not only an essential part of life but were also highly important in death. Most ancient Colombian objects still in existence today, including those made from ceramic, stone and textile, were deposited in burial places for use by the dead in the afterlife. The survival of these objects attests to their importance and power in both life and death, and allows us to continue to appreciate their complexity, beauty and significance to the people that created them.

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This year Marseille is celebrating its well-deserved role as European Cultural Capital with an unprecedented urban renovation programme costing €700 million and a swathe of ambitious projects, focusing on its 2,600-year-long history as a major Mediterranean centre of trade and culture.

In June the stunning new Musée des Civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM) opened its doors. This is the first museum to showcase all the civilisations of the Mediterranean, bringing together history, anthropology, archaeology – and art, ancient, modern and contemporary. It is spread over three sites: a spectacular new building on the J4 port pier at the entrance to the port; Fort Saint-Jean, which dates back to the 12th century; and the Belle de Mai area, at the Centre for Conservation and Resources, where its collections are preserved.

It was through Marseille, the oldest city and the most important ancient Greek outpost in Western Europe, that the Greeks introduced wine and olives to Provence – long before the Romans appeared on the scene. It is this sometimes forgotten Greek dimension to France’s second city that came into sharp focus some 50 years ago when archaeologists unearthed parts of the ancient Phocean city of Massalia (Roman Massilia and today’s Marseille), dating back to 600 BC, a major metropolis at the western end of the Greek world at a time when Rome was little more than a village.

It was Ionian Greek settlers from Phocaea, the city of Foça in Asia Minor on the Aegean coast of modern Turkey near Izmir (Smyrna), who set up trading outposts along the French Riviera in Monaco (Heracles Monoikos), Nice (Nikaia, City of Victory), Antibes (Antipolis) and Saint-Tropez (Athenopolis), and who founded Marseille (Massalia). Other Phocaean or Massaliot comptoirs (trading posts) can be found at Aleria in Corsica and along the Languedoc coastline to the southwest at Agde (Agathe Tyche, or ‘Good Luck City’ in Greek), Port-Vendres (Port Venus) and further south along Iberia’s Mediterranean coastline at Ampurias (ancient Emporion) and other ports all the way to Gibraltar (the Pillars of Hercules), where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic and the ancient world came to an end.

Today Marseille still has a distinctly Greek feel to it that sets it apart from Romanised France, and its people, the marseillais, still call themselves phocéens (Phocaeans) in proud memory of their Greek origins. On the steps of the Marseille Saint-Charles main railway station, a huge statue of a formidable Hellenic woman at the helm of a ship reminds the visitor that this is ‘the Greek colony of Marseille’. 

The Greeks’ Marseille was a brilliant success from the word go. On their arrival around 600 BC the Phocaeans were given a rapturous reception by the local Celts, and Gyptis, daughter of the local chief-tain, married their leader Protis.
or so the legend goes. Despite constant threats from hostile Ligurian tribes in the region, Massalia was a stable and prosperous city-state throughout its close on 600 years as an independent entity. Its sphere of influence was considerable, with trading posts or colonies stretching along the Mediterranean coast east to Corsica and the boot of Italy and southwest into Spain. Massalia also controlled a large chunk of the Celtic hinterland, notably the Bouches-du-Rhône, the mouth of the River Rhône, and further inland.

Several centuries after its foundation, when Massalia had become a staunch ally and trading partner of Rome, its economy was based on trade in wine, slaves, grain and tin. The city’s economy hinged on trading wine for slaves, a lucrative exchange, as slaves from Gaul were easily available and in high demand, while the Gauls fast developed an unquenchable thirst for wine. In Roman times there were an estimated 300,000 Gaulish slaves, with Gaul supplying 15,000 male slaves a year via Massalia, and Gaul’s annual wine consumption standing at a not unimpressive 13 million bottles.

All this, along with its ideal geographical location as a seaport near the mouth of the Rhône, ensured...
that Massalia had a solid foreign trade surplus. Wine imports to Gaul, first from Greece, then from southern Italy, went almost exclusively through Massalia. The city also became a major centre for trade in tin, a metal it imported in huge quantities, transported across land and down the Rhône from Brittany, the Scilly Islands and Cornwall, in western England, for onward transport to the Garonne and Gironde rivers, or even as far north as Brittany, turning south along Africa’s west coast to Senegal and Guinea. The Carthaginians – dominant in the western Mediterranean – had closed off the Straits of Gibraltar to all ships from other nations. Some historians believe that Pytheas might well, therefore, have travelled overland to the Garonne and Gironde rivers, or even as far north as Brittany, all in western France and skirting the Bay of Biscay, whence he sailed to Britain. Others believe that, to avoid the Carthaginian blockade, Pytheas may have had to stick close to land and sail round Spain into the Atlantic Ocean – travelling by penteconter with a Massalian crew at night time, so as to not be spotted by the omnipresent enemy, but this is thought improbable by certain experts. In any case, it is a known fact that Pytheas got himself into difficulty and studied its production and processing there.

The Carthaginian blockade that denied the Massaliot Greeks access to tin sources in north-eastern Spain forced them to seek new suppliers in Brittany and Britain. Pytheas then sailed round Britain and found that tides could be very high there – this was the first recorded circumnavigation of the British Isles. His voyage continued to an island ‘six days’ sailing to the north of Britain’ called Ultima Thule (the Faroe Islands, Greenland or Norway), a land at the edge of the known world inhabited by the Hyperboreans, who worshipped the god of the north wind.

Pytheas’ account contained the first description by a Greek of the Midnight Sun, the Northern Lights or Aurora Borealis, and polar ice. Tacking eastwards back over the Northern Ocean, Pytheas is believed to have reached Heligoland before rounding the tip of Jutland, skirting south Sweden and maybe even landing on the Danish island of Zealand. From there he penetrated the Baltic Sea to the east – probably getting as far as Stettin in today’s Poland – in search of amber, another prized commodity, and later earning the title Columbus of the North.

At about the same time, his colleague Euthymenes sailed out of the Mediterranean from Marseille, and turned south along Africa’s west coast to Senegal and Guinea. Busts of Pytheas and Euthymenes, Massalia’s two great Greek explorers, can be found on the esplanade by Marseille’s City Hall.

Archaeological interest in the site of ancient Massalia dates back to 1852, when a worker involved in building Marseille’s Cathédrale de la Major in the district of Le Panier accidentally stumbled on a slab of stone bearing the inscription ‘stadium’ in Greek. This central part of Massalia, west of the Vieux Port (the Old Port, known to the Greeks as Lakydon), was the site of a Greek theatre (Butte St Laurent), the acropolis, temples of Apollo and Artemis (Butte des Moulins) and an ancient geographer and explorer. Pytheas (circa 380 to 310 BC) wrote a book entitled On the Ocean in which he described his voyage to north-western Europe. Sadly, this has not survived; instead all we have are references to it in the works of later writers, such as Polybius, Strabo and Pliny the Elder.
agora (marketplace) on the modern Place de Lenche. But today, apart from the odd stone block, the subterranean remains of a cistern system in the Convent of Saint-Sauveur are all that is left of the ancient city.

It was during clearance operations for redevelopment work on a new shopping mall and multi-storey parking complex near the Bourse (Stock Exchange) in the late 1960s that archaeologists made sensational discoveries, unearthing huge sections of ancient Massalia’s Graeco-Roman city gate and walls, along with funerary terraces, three square towers, paved roadways and the silted-up dock and quays of the original ‘horn’ inlet of the Greek harbour.

it is this impressive site at the downtown end of the Vieux Port (at the bottom of the main thoroughfare, the Canebière) that has been revamped and landscaped into an area now called Musée d’Histoire de Marseille et du Port Antique (Museum of the History of Marseille and the Ancient Port), with open access from the adjoining Rue Henri Barbusse on the other side from the Centre Bourse mall.

Just round the corner, behind the lively waterfront of the Old Port, with its fishing boats, yachts, excellent restaurants and lively café life, is the fascinating Musée des Docks Romains (Roman Dock Museum), which has displays of cargo amphorae, anchors and the ribs of an ancient merchant ship.

The new Museum of the History of Marseille – which overlooks the archaeological site and backs onto the modern mall – cost €31 million (£25.6 million) and provides 6,600 square metres of space. The museum, which is due to open in September, covers 26 centuries of the city’s history in 14 sections, from its prehistoric origins and the Phocaeans’ arrival in 600 BC right up to modern times.

Central to the new museum’s collection are the remarkably well-preserved remains of an ancient craft excavated from the port area, dating from the 3rd century AD. The hulls of nine other Greek and Roman vessels are under restoration, making this one of the Mediterranean’s most important ancient ship museums; also on display are finds from recent excavations in the Bourse area and nearby Place Jules Verne, all in all some 4,000 artefacts.

To the west of Marseille, la Côte Bleue (the Blue Coast), a string of resorts with good beaches all the way up to Cap Couronne, has its own tale to tell. From La Couronne, some 40 kilometres west, the ancient quarry that supplied the hard stone to build Massalia still exists. From these quarries, pinkish stone was carted down to the shore for transport to Massalia in barges. Large sections of the coast were sliced away by the quarrymen of antiquity, whose laden carts ran their wheels along rutted grooves cut into the rock surface of the cliff top and still clearly visible at the Calanque de Beaumaderie. This was the building material used to shape mighty Massalia. Its removal left the coastline dramatically scarred and disfigured: the ancient past seems very close at hand at such gaunt sites.

• European Cultural Capital 2013 (www.marseillecityofculture.eu).
• Musée des Civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée (www.mucem.org).
• Musée d’Histoire de Marseille et du Port Antique (www.museumhistoirede-marseille.marseille.fr)
• Tourist Information Office (+33 (0) 4 91 13 89 03; www.marseille-tourisme.com).
• Discover the route of historic Marseille (www.marseille.fr).
James Beresford investigates Philip Beale’s daring project designed to prove that Phoenician sailors circumnavigated Africa in 600 BC, more than 2000 years before Portuguese navigators did so.
When Herodotus (circa 485–425 BC) wrote the following he provided a source of controversy that is still debated today:

Pharaoh Necho II sent some Phoenicians out in ships sailing down the Red Sea with orders to keep voyaging until they managed to return to Egypt through the Pillars of Heracles (Straits of Gibraltar) to our [Mediterranean] sea. The Phoenicians sailed south; every autumn they would come ashore, plant some crops wherever in Libya [Africa] they happened to be, and then reap the crops the following harvest before continuing their voyage. In this manner two years went by; but in the third year the sailors rounded the Pillars of Heracles and made their return to Egypt. They reported all sorts of things that I personally do not believe, such as that when they rounded Libya the sun was on their right. (Histories 4.42).

The possibility that Phoenician sailors, hired by the Egyptian pharaoh Necho II (r 610–595 BC), might have circumnavigated Africa at the end of the 7th or start of the 6th century BC, more than two millennia before Portuguese mariners were able to repeat the feat, has ignited many an imagination. Herodotus had his own doubts about the veracity of the claim, but by questioning their assertion that ‘when they rounded Libya the sun was on their right’, the historian unwittingly provides support for the Phoenician achievement to have, at least, penetrated beyond the equator – for, once in the southern hemisphere, the sun would indeed be in this strange location. Although most academics are sceptical that Phoenicians ever managed to circumnavigate Africa, in 2008 an experimental ship named Phoenicia (1) set sail on a 20,000-mile voyage in an attempt to re-create that first circumnavigation ordered by Necho II more than 2,500 years earlier.

The man behind The Phoenician Ship Expedition was Philip Beale (2), a former Royal Navy officer, who rather than simply wanting to go off on a Boy’s Own-style adventure, was motivated by three serious aims, namely: ‘To publicise the maritime skills and achievements of the Phoenicians through a wide range of media and to assist in the preservation of an ancient cultural heritage. To test, from an exercise in experimental archaeology, the performance characteristics of the Phoenician/Mediterranean ship under sail. To document the practical issues experienced in building and sailing a ship of this type.’

Historians and archaeologists have a tendency to downplay the usefulness of such projects, especially when carried out by non-academics. However, while there are undoubtedly some major problems with the experimental ship and its voyage, Phoenicia has fulfilled its goals and helped bring greater public awareness to one of the most fascinating peoples of the ancient world.

Previous Egyptian pharaohs had shown little interest in overseas exploration, but Necho II was ruling at a time of upheaval in the Near East. Babylonia was resurgent, fresh from its destruction of the once dominant Assyrian Empire; and under Nebuchadnezzar II (r 605–562 BC), it was pushing inexorably westwards, threatening Phoenicia and even Egypt itself.

Ancient Phoenicia was a collection of small city-states – the most powerful of which were those of Sidon, Tyre, and Byblos – in modern-day Lebanon. From the Late Bronze Age until the Hellenistic period, the Phoenicians were acknowledged to be the preeminent sailors and navigators of antiquity. Writing in the 3rd century BC, the poet Aratus notes how the Phoenicians could more accurately locate north in the night sky than their Greek rivals: ‘One constellation men call the Great Bear, and the other the Little Bear. It is by the former that the Greeks steer...’

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their ships, because it is bright and easy to pick out in the sky. But the Phoenicians put their trust in the smaller constellation, which is better for sailors, and by this group of stars the men of Sidon steer the straightest course.” (Phaenomena, 426–453).

‘Phoenician’ is derived from the Greek Phoenikes, meaning ‘Red People’, a reference to the substance that Phoenicians extracted from the murex shellfish and used to dye fabric. Richly coloured cloth exported from Phoenicia was much sought-after throughout the ancient Mediterranean and beyond, especially the royal purple that has been associated with those of high social status ever since. In addition to murex dye, the most important local resource to which Phoenicians had ready access was timber, especially cedarwood, from which they constructed their ships. These mighty trees still grow on the mountain slopes of Lebanon and a cedar tree is depicted on the country’s flag.

Natural deposits of bitumen from the nearby Dead Sea also proved the ideal substance with which to caulk their ships, giving rise to Homer’s descriptions of the Phoenician vessels: ‘So came the Sidonians, renowned for their sea-going ships, in the black hulls of which these greedy merchants bring countless trinkets for trade.’ (Odyssey, 15,415–417).

In an effort to build a credible replica of a Phoenician ship of the late 7th century BC, the experimental vessel was closely based on an ancient wreck discovered in the harbour of Marseille. Known as Jules Verne 7, it served as the model for Phoenicia, with Philip Beale noting: ‘J/V 7 was an ideal match for what we wanted: it was either of Phoenician or Aegean origin.’

However, because Marseille (ancient Massilia) was founded by Greeks from Phocaea, most scholars consider the wreck to be that of a Greek, rather than a Phoenician, ship. Furthermore, Jules Verne 7 sank about 510 BC, a century after Necho sent the Phoenicians on their expedition. This is especially important because the late Archaic Period appears to have been a time of major technological change in ship-construction techniques. So Phoenicia might have been built in a very different manner to the vessels that Necho sent out from Egypt at the end of the 7th century.

Despite these concerns, construction of Phoenicia using the ancient shell-first technique – in which the planks of the hull are joined directly to one another using thousands of mortice-and-tenon joints – began in November 2007 on Arwad (3, 4, 5). This small island had once been part of ancient Phoenicia and today lies just off the coast of southern Syria.

It was intended that the replica be considerably larger than the original archaeological find from Marseille, with a length of 20 metres, five more than that of Jules Verne 7. Phoenicia was also designed to be fully decked and had modern accommodation. It was estimated that it would take nine months, and approximately 8,000 mortice-and-tenon joints, to complete the vessel.

This method of ship construction is very different from that practised by modern boat-builders, and Nick Burningham, a marine archaeologist, had to instruct a traditional shipwright from Arwad, Khalid Hammoud, and his team in the ancient technique. Phoenicia was given a high prow carved in the image of a horse’s head (6). This was similar to Phoenician ships depicted on the famous Baalawat Gates, which celebrate the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (r 859–824 BC) receiving tribute from the city of Tyre. The horse indicated that the Phoenicians worshipped a deity similar to that of the Greek sea-god, Poseidon, who was also closely associated with horses.

The builders of Phoenicia did, however, make a few concessions to modernity. For example, she was fitted with the latest navigational aids and communication technology and, while a broad square sail would provide the motive energy for the ship throughout the voyage, a small engine was also installed to help the crew manoeuvre her when in harbour. Nevertheless, there was no lavatory on board nor running water, and all the gear for the raising and lowering of the sail and weighing of the anchor remained faithful to the tackle of antiquity. This reliance on ancient technology did occasionally cause problems. The steering oars suffered breakage on nine occasions during the voyage, and removing the heavy 400kg rudders from the water while underway was not easy. Soon after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, where the warm waters of the Indian Ocean meet the cold currents of the Atlantic, frequently generating storms, Phoenicia had to contend with 7-metre (23-ft) waves, while gale-force winds ripped the sail apart.

However, problems such as these are valuable in their own right, for they allow insights into the strengths and weaknesses of ancient ship technology. Launched in the summer of 2008 (8, 9, 10), Phoenicia set sail from Arwad in August and...
sailed southwards to the Suez Canal to begin her attempt to circumnavigate Africa, passing through the Indian Ocean before rounding the Cape and heading back to the Mediterranean via the Atlantic (11).

However, the exact route taken by the replica ship on its experimental voyage proved problematic. At times difficulties were unavoidable: Phoenicia had to take a very circuitous passage through the Arabian Sea to avoid being attacked by pirates – although she did attract the brief attention of what appeared to be a Somali pirate craft before managing to lose it in the dark.

Once round the tip of southern Africa, ‘the expedition team believed the most likely route a Phoenician ship would have taken would be to follow the winds and currents far out into the Atlantic...’

rather than trying to hug the coast of west Africa where these elements would have worked against them’.

So it was that Phoenicia made good use of the Benguela Current to speed her passage northwards from the Cape of Good Hope towards the island of St Helena. But it is questionable whether the original Phoenician mariners would have felt sufficiently confident to leave the coast and trust to unfamiliar currents that would carry them into the open waters of an unknown ocean.

Although the ancients appeared to have been blissfully unaware of the true size of the continent, Africa is extremely large, with a coastline of approximately 30,500km (19,000 miles), and to be able to complete such a voyage in less than three years, using the technology of the 7th century BC, has always appeared a highly unlikely proposition. Phoenicia’s successful circumnavigation of Africa lasted approximately the same length of time as that described by Herodotus; she arrived back in Syria in October 2010, following a voyage lasting two years and two months. It is true that the 21st-century crew did not need to stop to plant and harvest crops, as the ancient explorers had done. Nevertheless, this experimental voyage proved that the original Phoenician expedition was not inherently impossible.

In his conclusion to Sailing Close to the Wind, Philip Beale’s highly readable book about the project, he concludes: ‘I had wanted to recreate what I believed to be one of the greatest and most daring voyages in history, but in the process the Phoenicians had taught me far more than just their seafaring skills. I had gained an immense respect for their courage and tenacity... I had begun the expedition believing the Phoenicians had been the first to circumnavigate Africa and I returned even more convinced of this fact.’

While I remain sceptical of claims that the Phoenicians circumnavigated Africa, Philip Beale’s project is worthy of praise, for it captured the popular imagination and posed new questions for historians and marine archaeologists alike.

Sailing Close to the Wind by Philip Beale and Sarah Taylor is published in paperback by Lulworth Press (2012) at £9.99. (For further details of the project visit www.phoenicia.org)
A
ngkor Wat in Cambodia is a popular tourist destination, but across the border in Vietnam, on the far side of the Trong Son Mountains, are glorious, little-visited red-brick temple towers built by the mysterious Cham people. Some of them predate Angkor. The Cham carved every pillar, column, lintel, alcove, moulding and frieze of their temples, and their sculpture is as fine as any produced by the Khmer. Having lived in Cambodia in my youth, I had heard a little about the Cham and visited the Museum of Cham Sculpture in Danang, and this made me want to find out more about these intriguing people. Why had they been forgotten for so long? It can only be because of wars – the Second World War, the French-Indochina War and the Vietnam War – which not only damaged some of the temples but also halted archaeological work started by the École Française d’Extrême-Orient in 1903. It was not until the 1980s that work there resumed under a Polish-Vietnamese team. Although on a much smaller scale than Angkor, the seven temple complexes of My Son, the Cham’s
spiritual sanctuary, built between the 7th and 13th centuries AD, have been designated a World Heritage Site, and the Vietnamese have built a new road through the jungle and paved paths through the ruins, making them more accessible to visitors. My Son is hidden away in a narrow, secret jungle valley 27 miles up the Thu Bon river from the Chams former port, Hoi An, 18 miles south of Danang.

The Thu Bon river ran through the historic ‘province’ of Amaravati. Simhapura, its seat of political power (on the site of present-day Tra Kieu), is nine miles upriver from its port, Hoi An (referred to as Lam Ap Pho in Chinese records).

Amaravati was only one of at least seven recognised Cham sites in central and south Vietnam. All these settlements were loosely based around clans and located in river valleys. Indrapura (present-day Dong Duong), of which nothing remains, was a few miles south of My Son.

Much further south were the Cham’s last great strongholds, Vijaya (present-day Qui Nhon) and, still further south, Kauthara (Nha Trang) and Panduranga (Phan Rang). These last three have restored Cham temples that can be visited.

No enterprising tour operator has yet organised The Cham Temple Trail, although many include Hoi An and Nha Trang, Vietnam’s favourite beach resort. A charming small town, Hoi An is a World Heritage Site because it has probably the finest concentration of old wooden merchant houses in Southeast Asia. It also has a splendid beach. Enthusiastic temple tourists visiting My Son, near Hoi An, can extend a one-day excursion to explore two undamaged Cham temples near the town of Tam Ky (Khuong My and Chien Dan).

Further south, on a beach but off the tourist map, Qui Nhon has three splendidly restored kalans or temple towers. In the town is Thap Doi. The temple of Banh lies a few miles outside.

Still further south, near Phan Rang, at the turn-off to Dalat (an old French hill-station), is the fine restored temple complex of Po Klong Garai.

Coming from the south, east of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) is Mui Ne, a pleasant beach resort near Phan Thiet, which also has a Cham temple (Po Shanu). So there are numerous temples to choose from.

The history of the Cham is very much a growth industry, with fresh disputes flaring among academics and archaeologists as new
finds appear. It is believed that the Chams arrived as traders along the Vietnamese coast sometime before, or in, the 1st century AD. They most probably came from the Philippines or Borneo, as the modern Cham language can still be understood by a tribe in Sabah (northern Borneo, Malaysia). For the Chams still exist as an ethnic group, pushed farther and farther south as they were vanquished by the Viets from the north. Following their final defeat in 1471, Champa continued to exist as a province in the far south, at Phan Rang until 1832, where they continue to live, as well as in the Mekong Delta and in Cambodia.

Their religion was Hindu. They worshipped Siva, except for a brief detour into Buddhism in the 9th century AD. Their Hinduism joined to an earlier religion worshipping three deities, one a mother goddess known as Yang Po Ino Nagar, hence the name of the temple at Nha Trang (Po Nagar).

One of the reasons I wanted to visit Cham temples was to compare them to those of the Khmer in Cambodia, with whom they intermarried in the 7th century and also fought repeatedly. In fact, the Cham sacked Angkor in 1177, and Jayavarman VII, builder of the Bayon and Angkor Thom, retaliated by defeating the Chams and imposing 30 years of Khmer rule over Vijaya (Quy Nhon). Jayavarman even ordered that a bas relief be carved on the Bayon depicting the surprise attack on Angkor by the Cham – in boats, rowing up the River Mekong.

There are remarkable similarities between Cham temples and early Khmer temples. The Cham built theirs of low-temperature fired bricks without mortar. Italian archaeologists have recently discovered that they used the resin of a local tree, *dipterocarpus alatus* Roxb, to bind the bricks together. They use this resin to seal wooden and basketwork boats to this day. However, they usually made their lintels and columns of stone, like the Khmer. The earliest Khmer temples at Roluos, dating from 9th century AD) were built of brick, then faced with stucco, whereas the Chams carved directly into the brick.

The first brick Cham towers at My Son date back to the 7th century AD, but the earliest inscription – the wooden temple having long gone – was inscribed by Bhadravarman, who may have reigned from AD 380 to 413, although his name is not mentioned in later genealogies of Champa.

What might have brought the rise of a usurper king (Bhadravarman) was the sacking in 446 of what the Chinese called Linyi by the Song army of China, who carried off an estimated 100,000 pounds of gold. As with all Cham history, it is uncertain whether the gold was looted from Khu Tuc, near Hue, or from Lam Ap, as the Chinese called Simhapura, or from both. Regardless, Linyi, a breakaway, independent region, one of three former trading regions in north and central Vietnam dominated by China, was certainly a rich prize.

Although I have seen a book of photographs of Cham gold (which is in a private collection), I have never seen gold displayed in the Cham Museum of Sculpture in Danang, in the History Museums of either Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City, or in the Musée Guimet in Paris. The Chams believed in adorning their deities and kings in gold and precious jewels, and in the case of their *apsaras* ('heavenly…'

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It is 8.30am and we have the temples to ourselves. Birds twitter, the heady scent of warm green jungle fills the air – you can almost smell it growing

![Image of Cham temple](image1)


11. Ascetic playing a flute, My Son Group E, 8th century AD. Cham Museum, Danang.

12. The overgrown remains of a central *kalan* (temple tower) at My Son.

13. The elephant god, Ganesha, seated in full lotus posture, from My Son Group B3, 8th century AD. Cham Museum, Danang.
surrounded by complex was and the temple at the corners, and the temple bases throughout Cham art. Their well-endowed female deities are equally scantily clad, perhaps understandable in a religion in which the lingam (phallus) is worshipped as the symbol of the life force of Siva.

In the kalan, or principal tower, of a Cham temple complex, a stone lingam was usually found in the honoured central position, placed on a yoni, a stone base representing the vagina, over which sacred water was poured by a priest. Worshippers entered a gopura (gate) and proceeded to a mandapa (performance hall for music and dance). The kosageha (treasure house and library) and the posa (stele house) stood to the side.

There were sometimes additional towers at the corners, and the temple complex was surrounded by thick walls. Returning to My Son again this year, I round a corner and suddenly come across a haunting dark red brick tower and a two-storey kosagrha erupting from the jungle. It is 8.30am and we have the temples to ourselves. Birds twitter, the heady scent of warm green jungle fills the air – you can almost smell it growing.

As we enter the low-walled temple quadrangle, the peace of this sanctuary of the Cham descends upon us. I can see why they chose the isolation of this narrow green valley in which to raise temples to their deities. Tranquility reigns. Along these rough paths tread a ghostly procession of kings and priests, redolent of a culture long vanished. But here also swarmed marauding armies to defile and destroy, to slaughter and plunder. My Son seems peaceful at first, but it harbours a restless soul. So much has happened here, so many have come in reverence, in joyful triumph, in the fury of war, only to disappear.

A deity with elongated earlobes stares stolidly from the wall of the grass-tufted remains of a temple tower. The entrance to one side exposes thin, corbelled bricks; the doorway, supported by stone pillars, is elegantly carved with extended lotus petals.

Each king, as he built a temple tower, a stupa or one of the buildings of a temple complex, had an inscription engraved on a pillar, usually inflating his own importance. In dedicating temples, Cham kings added a suffix referring to Siva to whom the temples were dedicated – perhaps this practice was a forerunner of the Khmer tradition of god-kings.

Two elephants under a banyan tree (the Cham used elephants in warfare) grace the lintel of a small two-storey temple. Figures of Siva shelter in alcoves. Along one side, voluptuous, bare-breasted apsaras perform their heavenly dance under colonnades. These erotic nymphs of Indra’s heaven, the daughters of pleasure, dancing and singing, were the romantic partners of the musicians. According to Hindu mythology, apsaras first appeared during the churning of the Milk Ocean (Milky Way) during the creation of the world and, because of their irresistible allure, the gods and demons (asuras) both lusted after them, which led to conflict.

A tiny museum has been arranged in one of the temples, the turned-stone balustrades of its windows not unlike thick Victorian chair legs and very like those of Angkor. A dancing Siva balances on one bent leg, his other knee lifted high, toes turned up, his multiple arms elegantly positioned.

Beyond Siva, two round, upturned semi-spheres – breasts – lie exposed. The goddess Uma, or Uroja (she had many names) was worshipped by the Cham long before Hinduism took root, after which she continued to be revered as the Cham Mother Goddess, alongside Siva.

The Cham simply added or amalgamated Hindu gods and goddesses into their own religion. If only contemporary religions would amalgamate their deities, we might avoid many of the wars that continue to afflict us.

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14. Bo Tat Tara, (Bodhisattva Tara) from Dong Dzuong, AD 875, the largest Cham bronze statue ever found (replica), H. 1.2m. Cham Museum, Danang.

15. Lingam from Binh Dinh Province, 11th-12th century AD. It is set on a later pedestal, bordered by breasts symbolising the Cham Mother Goddess Uroja, from Thap Mam, 13th century AD. Cham Museum, Danang.

16. Polo players from Tra Kieu, 10th century AD. Cham Museum, Danang.

17. The goddess Lakshmi from Thap Mam, 13th century AD. History Museum, Ho Chi Minh City.

All photographs by Geoff Dolbel.

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• The Secrets of Hoian, Vietnam’s Historic Port by Carol Hownland is published by The Gioi Publishers, Hanoi (www.thegioipublishers.com.vn or email thegioi@hn.vnn.vn) at £14 ($21), postage included.

• Travel Indochina Oxford (www.travelindochina.co.uk) offers a wide choice of small-group and tailor-made tours of Vietnam.
Hugh Kolb follows the distinctive scent of a creature well known for its cunning and finds that it played an important, complex, even cosmic role in the ancient Middle East.
to analyse this myth are most impressed by Enki’s sexual exploits. All commentators note the existence of the fox in passing but do not regard it as needing any explanation, other than sometimes to imply that foxes are generally considered to be clever, so that they must be a natural choice for an intermediary of this kind. This seriously undervalues the importance of the fox in the story. It is credited with powers that override those of the chief gods and goddesses of the Sumerian pantheon and, without it, the whole of creation would have been lost. The fox is clearly not just a random animal connecting two parts of the myth. It must have meant something more fundamental and significant to the Sumerians. The fox also appears as a major player in other pieces of the Sumerian Wisdom Literature, but these are too fragmentary to analyse in detail.

The administrative complexity of the early Mesopotamian kingdoms required thousands of scribes who had attended elite schools. These schools needed standardised material for their curricula, particularly in Sumerian, which was an academic language much like Latin in medieval Europe. Part of a scribe’s early training consisted in copying short epigrammatic Sumerian sayings modern translators describe as ‘proverbs’. Many of these can be assigned to particular collections current during the second millennium BC. These so-called proverbs cover a variety of subjects, and animals feature in roughly a quarter of them. The animals most often mentioned are dogs and cattle, but the wild animal most frequently appearing in them is the fox, outranking even the lion and the wolf.

There are 37 distinct fox proverbs in this literature, most of which are complete. Some are obscure. Others suggest a spatial relationship between the fox and other animals, particularly the bull, the dog and the raven. One of these has survived into the modern age in the Adaiga of Erasmus – *Vulpes bovem agit* (‘The fox drives the ox’).

A few address the dubious character of the fox – it even lies to Enlil, the sky god; some relate the fox to water in a variety of forms (rain, the sea, rivers and tears); others comment on its body structure.

The catalogue of the library of King Ashurbanipal in Nineveh contained an entry for a set of tablets called *The Series of the Fox*. What remains of the story was first collated from 13 fragments by WG Lambert, although this may only represent a fifth of the original. The main characters are The Fox, The Dog, The Wolf and The Lion; they are larger than life and spend all their time hurling insults at each other. The Fox is accused of being a sorcerer and a truce-breaker but resolutely complains to the sun god Shamash that it is innocent, and occasionally bursts into tears. The dominant participant is The Dog, which threatens both The Fox and The Wolf with violence and claims to be able to make the mountains and waters dry up at the sound of its voice. The only securely placed part of the story is the beginning, where The Fox complains to Enlil about a drought in the land and demands he do something about it.

An important literary form in the
Sumerian and Akkadian world was Contest Literature, in which aspects of the natural world, Summer and Winter, The Ox and the Horse, The Tamarisk and the Palm, were set against each other. The Series of the Fox is almost certainly an extension of this type of story.

In Berlin there is a Babylonian tablet, colloquially known as KAR 142, which mentions these same four characters. It lists the names of various stars or constellations that seem to have been relevant to the New Year Ceremony in praise of the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon, Marduk.

Images of foxes appear on a variety of seals and other forms of glyptic and sculptural art from Mesopotamia. The earliest are stamp seals from temple storage rooms at Tell Brak, Syria, dating to around 3000 BC and shaped in the form of a fox with inlaid eyes. A well-known Babylonian cylinder seal, from the end of the second millennium (now in Berlin), shows a fox and a fish next to a regal figure venerating a small ziggurat (3). A number of seals of various dates from Sumeria and Iran illustrate an assemblage of characters that has become known as the ‘Animal Orchestra’. The individuals on these are mostly too small to identify accurately, but one panel on the Sumerian Royal Harp from Ur shows animals playing a harp and percussion instruments. One, seated and holding a rattle, is dog-like, with a long bushy tail and pricked ears; it is almost certainly a fox (10).

A clearer image of a fox (6) can be seen on a similar sculpted orthostat (upright stone or slab) that came from Tell Halaf (Guizada), in modern Syria, and dates to the early first millennium. This shows lots of dancing animals, some playing pipes and drums, and another siphoning off beer from a pot.

Foxes appear on several inscribed boundary stones (kudurrus) that were characteristic of the period of Kassite rule in Babylon at the end of the second millennium. One in the British Museum from the reign of King Melshipak shows a fox underneath a ram’s-head staff and a turtle, as well as the symbols of several gods and goddesses (14). The most interesting kudurrus, however, is a late example from the reign of King Marduk-zakir-shumi I (now in the Louvre), which shows a fox under a staff, seven dots and a scorpion, all flanked by a lion and two raven-like birds. The whole scene is dominated by a giant snake that crawls across the top (12).

Given the other evidence available from Mesopotamian astronomy, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that these are the images of a selection of constellations, several of which are still familiar to us.

Sumerian literature emphasises that the fox and its fellow characters were somehow related to the hydrological cycle, an important concern for Mesopotamian civilisations with their reliance on regular irrigation. One suggestion is that the fox was a symbol of dereliction and drought, digging into ruins and demonstrating the loss of human control, as in The Lament for the Destruction of Ur. But even if this is sometimes true, it oversimplifies the situation.

Detailed analysis of the surviving evidence leads to the conclusion that The Fox was an autumn, equinocial constellation that was identified with the first rain after the summer drought. Further, that it was a constellation containing the most prominent long period variable star in the sky, which made it stand out as an object of suspicion in later astrally conscious societies. This seasonal and moral background formed the
basis for the character of the fox in later Middle Eastern and European cultures. So it is that we see the fox: on Persian seals (11); in Dionysian images on Greek pots (8); in references to ‘The Fox and the Grapes’ (9), one of the Fables of Aesop (circa 620-564 BC), and playing dead (2) in medieval bestiaries and tales, such as The History of Reynard the Fox.

But this is not just any old fox out to steal your chickens; it is The Fox that stands out as a religious and cultural icon through successive polytheistic and monotheistic cultures in the Middle East and Europe for the last 10,000 years and that is still a part of our society, albeit a shadow of its former self.

Foxes from the Gods by Hugh Kolb, hardback, £12.99, can be ordered from: Fox Star Books, Logie Coldstone, AB34 5PQ.

14. Symbols copied from three faces of a kudurru (boundary stone) of the Kassite King Melishipak (1185-1171 BC), spread out and flattened to show how they relate to each other.

15. Attic black figure phiale, showing two foxes among other animals, attributed to the workshop of the Nikosthenes Potter, 6th century BC.

All the illustrations are by Hugh Kolb.
A magnificent, large (H. 34.6cm) bronze cat of the Ptolemaic Period (1) from the collection of Nubar Pasha Nubarian (1825-99) was the unexpected highlight of the Christie’s New York Antiquities Sale on 6 June. Gifted to him by the Viceroy Abbas II, he brought it to Paris in 1895. Now consigned to auction by a descendant, it was estimated at just $150,000-$250,000. Two resolute bidders left the others far behind as they drove the price up to a staggering $2,027,750 (£1,297,760), won by a very determined American lady and setting by far the largest ever world record for the price paid at auction for an Egyptian cat.

Dr Jerome M Eisenberg reports on four antiquities sales held in New York and Paris

Bronze cat leaps up way beyond estimate

A magnificent, large (H. 34.6cm) bronze cat of the Ptolemaic Period (1) from the collection of Nubar Pasha Nubarian (1825-99) was the unexpected highlight of the Christie’s New York Antiquities Sale on 6 June. Gifted to him by the Viceroy Abbas II, he brought it to Paris in 1895. Now consigned to auction by a descendant, it was estimated at just $150,000-$250,000. Two resolute bidders left the others far behind as they drove the price up to a staggering $2,027,750 (£1,297,760), won by a very determined American lady and setting by far the largest ever world record for the price paid at auction for an Egyptian cat.

A delightful Roman marble Cupid (Eros) and Psyche embracing (2), circa 1st century AD (H. 78.4cm) has a superb provenance: the collection of Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803), Christie’s sale of his collection in 1801, the Henry Hope family, and the William Randolph Hearst collection sold in New York in 1941. Psyche’s body below her breasts was restored during the 18th century, as were Cupid’s legs, his left forearm, and the plinth. A very conservative estimate of $100,000-$150,000 did not prevent a US collector from paying $483,750 to secure this piece.

An over-lifesize (H. 165.7cm) Roman marble Aphrodite (3), circa 1st century AD, from N Koutoulakis, Paris, in 1965 or earlier, sold for $44,000 at a Sotheby’s London sale in December 1984; then for an appreciated $127,900 at Christie’s New York in December 2004. Now estimated at $250,000-$350,000, it commanded $447,750 from a European collector.

A fine Roman marble lifesize (H. 87.6cm) torso of Apollo (4), 1st century BC-1st century AD (possibly a version of Apollo Kitharoidos) from the collection of Dr Mona Ackerman, estimated at $200,000-$300,000, was purchased by an American collector.

A Roman marble statue of Hermaphrodite (5), circa 2nd century AD (L. 110cm), that was acquired by the Marquess of Lansdowne...
in 1775, sold at Christie’s in 1930, was then auctioned at a Sotheby’s London antiquities sale in April 1978, unillustrated, for a mere £1,980! It was restored in the 18th century with new limbs and a different ancient head. The rocky plinth was added in the late 20th century. Now with an estimate of $120,000-$180,000, it sold for $135,750.

A striking Roman marble and glass mosaic of a comic slave mask (6), circa 1st century AD (63.9cm x 66.8cm) purchased in Beirut in the 1960s and now estimated at $80,000-$120,000, brought in $123,750.

A rare and beautiful Roman chromium chalcedony cameo of a Julio-Claudian prince (7), late 1st century BC-early 1st century AD (2.3cm), set in a modern gold and ruby ring, bought at Sotheby’s New York in December 2007 for only $46,000, also now estimated at $80,000-$120,000, was hammered down for another $123,750.

A large Cycladic head of the Late Spedos variety (8), Early Cycladic II (circa 2500-2400 BC) (H. 15.9cm), acquired in Paris in the 1950s-1960s, with an estimate of $70,000-$90,000, sold to a New York dealer for $159,750.

Coming from a South American collection in 1961, this Hellenistic marble veiled head of a goddess (9), probably Demeter, circa 3rd-2nd century BC (H. 34.2cm), brought in $147,750, which was just within its estimate of $100,000-$150,000.

An archaic Greek bronze Illyrian helmet incised with a Gorgon mask flanked by two sphinxes (10), from the first half of the 6th century BC (H. 26cm), is a rare example of an Illyrian helmet engraved with decoration. Properly estimated at

Minerva September/October 2013
$70,000-$90,000, it created a bidding war, which ended with an American collector winning it for a resounding $435,750.

Next up was a very rare Attic pottery skyphos of the Late Geometric Period (11), *circa* 720 BC (W. 15.2cm), depicting three bulls, from the famed Hans Erlenmeyer collection. Sold at Sotheby’s London in July 1990 for £15,400 (with the writer as an underbidder), it was now estimated at an ambitious $120,000-$180,000 and indeed resulted in a winning bid of $135,750.

This was followed by an extremely fine Attic black-figure *hydria* by the Euphiletos Painter (12), *circa* 530-520 BC (H. 44.4cm), depicting Herakles wrestling the Nemean lion flanked by Athena and Iolaos, from the early 19th-century Capesthorne Hall collection, sold at Christie’s London in October 2005 for £131,200. Now its estimate was $150,000-$250,000 and it sold for $267,750 to an online bidder. This was the highest-value lot sold online in their New York antiquities sales.

An Attic black-figure amphora (Type B) attributed to Group E (13), *circa* 520 BC (H. 40.6cm), showing a charioteer driving over a fallen warrior and, on the reverse, Dionysos flanked by a maenad and three satyrs, was estimated at $100,000-$150,000, but attracted $183,750 from a Swiss dealer.

A fine, but fractured, Egyptian Old Kingdom indurated limestone male head (14), 4th Dynasty, *circa* 2575-2465 BC (H. 13.3cm), was purchased in Giza in 1904 by Dikran Kelekian. With an estimate of $60,000-$90,000, it sold for $153,750 to a European collector.

Finally, an Egyptian Middle Kingdom limestone offering table (15), carved with the image of the deceased seated before an offering table with loaves, and hieroglyphic inscriptions, came under the hammer. Dating from the late 11th-early 12th Dynasty, *circa* 1991 BC (L. 62.2cm), it was purchased in Gaza in 1904 by Dikran Kelekian. With an estimate of $80,000-$120,000, it went to the same European collector for $159,750.

The 193-lot sale totalled $8,178,213, with 70% sold by number of lots (a Roman gilt silver skyphos with an estimate of $500,000-$700,000 was bought in) and 79% by value. (All prices include the buyer’s premium.)
On the cover of the catalogue for Sotheby’s New York Antiquities Sale on 5 June was an imposing pastiche of a mid-1st century AD Roman marble monumental figure (H. 210.8cm) of an emperor (1), restored in the 18th-early 19th century. It has an original head of the emperor Lucius Verus (r AD 161-169) while the arms, legs and mantle were among the other restorations. Published numerous times since 1832, it had an illustrious provenance including: the collections of Duke Luigi Braschi Onesti (1745-1816); the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos; a Christie’s auction in 1848; the Earls of Lonsdale, Lowther Castle, until it was finally sold to an English collector in the Maple & Co’s Lowther Castle sale in 1947. Estimated at $400,000-$600,000, it went to a European bidder for $515,000 (£335,811).

A superb Roman sardonyx cameo of the emperor Caligula and Antonia Minor (3.3cm x 3.8cm), in a 19th-century gold mount (2), first published in 1829, was sold in Boisgirard’s auction of the Feuardent family collection in Paris in 2004. Antonia Minor, or Antonia the Younger (d. AD 37), was the daughter of Mark Antony and Octavia Minor and the paternal grandmother of Caligula. It was sold for $425,000, within its estimate of $300,000-$500,000, to an American collector.

Dating from 1st-2nd century AD, a Roman marble torso of a satyr resting his arm on a wineskin atop a tree-trunk support (3) (H. 54cm) was seized by the Nazis in 1938 from the Viennese collection of Oskar Bondy. It was restituted by the Austrian government in 1948 to his widow and later sold to a Detroit collector. The estimate of $50,000-$80,000 did not prevent two determined bidders from duelling for it up to a surprising winning bid of $329,000 from the same US collector.

A small (34.3cm) Roman marble torso of the Knidian Aphrodite (4), circa 1st century AD, from the collection of Edwin L Weisl Jr, was sold at Sotheby’s New York in May 1979 for $17,600. Now estimated at $40,000-$60,000, it was acquired by an anonymous buyer for a healthy $125,000. A fine, late 1st-2nd century AD Roman marble bust of Zeus (5) (H. 28.9cm), from an 18th-century collection, estimated at only $25,000-$35,000, also brought in $125,000 – from a European dealer.

An unusual Roman marble pillar of the Augustan period (6) (H. 100.6cm) in Neo-Attic style depicted a herm of Silenus surmounted by two female figures representing summer and autumn. The estimate of $35,000-$45,000 for this piece from the collection of Baron Valentin de Cournel (1838-1917), sold in Cannes in 1923, was quickly surpassed by a successful bid of $149,000 from a Swiss dealer.

A Hellenistic marble head of a Ptolemaic queen (7) possibly Berenike II or Arsinoe III, from the 19th-century collection of the Neapolitan

The emperor’s new limbs

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A Hellenistic marble head of a Ptolemaic queen (7) possibly Berenike II or Arsinoe III, from the 19th-century collection of the Neapolitan
Princes of Murat (H. 31.1cm), estimated at $45,000-$65,000, brought in $118,750 from an anonymous bidder.

Sold by Wladimir Rosenbaum in the late 1960s, a somewhat brutish Etruscan male portrait head (8), made of nenfro (a kind of volcanic stone) (H. 38.7cm), with an estimate of $30,000-$50,000, was purchased for $125,000 by the buyer of the Roman marble pillar.

A large Egyptian bronze Harpokrates-Somtous (9) (H. 31.4cm) from an Egyptian family collection of the early 20th century, conservatively estimated at $30,000-$50,000, sold for $137,000 to an American collector. From the same collection, a pair of Egyptian stone vessels, an obsidian kohl jar (10) (H. 11.4cm), from the 12th-19th Dynasties, were estimated at a surprisingly low $2,000-$3,000, but attracted an astonishing $125,000 from another anonymous buyer.

This upbeat sale of only 91 lots realised $3,835,626, with 81.3% sold by number and 91.2% sold by value. (All prices include the buyer’s premium.)

1. A superb, well-preserved Fayyum portrait of a young woman painted in encaustic on a wood panel (H. 38cm, W. 22.3cm) during the reign of Nero (AD 54-68) was offered for sale as the cover-piece at the Pierre Bergé sale in Paris on 29 May. Acquired by a European collector in 1968, it can be dated as Neronian because of the hairstyle that parallels those in portraits of Agrippina the Younger, wife of Emperor Claudius and mother of Nero, and Claudia Octavia, daughter of Claudius. Recognised as one of the finest existing Fayyum paintings, even though the estimate was already €700,000-€800,000, it was no surprise that following a contest between several enthusiastic bidders, the Metropolitan Museum of Art beat a prominent French collector by paying a record-breaking €1,465,000 for it.

2. Then, on 5 June, at the Boisgirard-Antonini sale, an exceptional Egyptian, deep green greywacke torso of the 4th century BC (H. 63cm), also the sale’s cover-piece, was identified as a 30th Dynasty prince and governor of Upper Egypt by the finely carved hieroglyphs that completely covered the reverse. Sold by a dealer in Giza in 1905, it arrived in France before 1919. Three German scholars discussed the inscription in publications in the 1920s and 1930s. Again, a long round of bidding ended with another record-breaking offer of €2,350,000 from a British dealer, far beyond its estimate of €400,000-€600,000. (Both prices include the buyer’s premium.)
Leaping Goat
Roman, First - Second century AD
Marble, 30.54 cm H
American private collection, Hudson, New York.
Sotheby's London July 6th, 1995
The Flame of Miletus: The Birth of Science in Ancient Greece (and How it Changed the World)

John Freely

Tauris, 2012

£18.99

The animals that live on the moon are many and various, but their common characteristic is that none of them excrete. Greek philosophy and science have a reputation for preferring abstract speculation to practical experiment and observation, and this observation made by the 6th-century BC Pythagorean, Philolaus, fits the stereotype well. No doubt this cliché is reinforced by pronouncements such as one by Socrates that the proper way to study astronomy is to concentrate on mathematical problems, and ‘leave the things in the sky alone’. But it is, of course, a very partial picture of Greek science. It is impossible to recommend a book that contains expressions like the following: ‘an infinite number of lines can be drawn through P parallel to GF Riemann’ and ‘an inscription giving the ratio by which the included solid exceeds the included’. These are extreme examples of the shoddy proof-reading which, from time to time, renders the text unintelligible.

Who, I wonder, could find this book useful? It develops no through-line, provides no overarching interpretation, and amounts to no more than a lot of ancient name-dropping, with a few random facts attached.

So, if anyone asks me for a readable general treatment of this subject, I will send them straight to Koestler.

Richard Stoneman
well. Excavation reports are the bread and butter of archaeology but are rarely reviewed in magazines. However, *Lundenwic* is a volume of note – it adds a chapter to the history of a world city, and tells us something about how we in England have dealt with our past.

London was not a trendsetter in English, let alone European, urban archaeology. Systematic excavation campaigns and ‘Implication of Development’ studies were developed in the 1960s and early 1970s for Winchester, Oxford, Gloucester, Tamworth, Tewkesbury and other towns and cities. It was not until 1973 with *The Future of London’s Past* (Martin Biddle and Daphne Hudson, with Carolyn Heighway), produced by the pressure group Rescue – not by a government agency or local authority – that London’s archaeological case was clearly presented. A dedicated archaeological team, attached to the Museum of London, was subsequently established but, despite this, throughout the next decade developers rarely funded archaeological investigation in the capital adequately.

This weighty report brings together the results from fieldwork at 18 locations – from Trafalgar Square in the west to Fleet Street in the east, from the Strand alongside the Thames, to just short of New Oxford Street. More recently English Heritage, the national agency, stepped in with funding to pull together the results from floundering projects – and the results are remarkable. As Martin Biddle quite rightly says in his Foreword: ‘This book is a record of a triumph, an archaeological discovery no less important in its way than any from the sands of Egypt: the recovery of the trading origins of one of the world’s greatest cities.’ *Lundenwic* confirms that Bede, England’s father of history, got it right in the 7th century: Anglo-Saxon London was ‘an emporium of many peoples coming by land and sea’. But this emporium did not lie within the walled ruins of Roman Londinium (the present-day City of London), as many modern historians have assumed. Anglo-Saxon traders and craftspeople, probably under the direction of the powerful Mercian royal house, established a 60-hectare settlement with perhaps a population of about 6,000 people to the west, between the still functioning Roman roads (Oxford Street and the Strand) and alongside the Thames where it was not cluttered by collapsing city walls. During the 8th century Lundenwic flourished, trading with similar emporia in present-day France, the Low Countries and Scandinavia, linked by road, river and sea to English markets, such as Gipeswic (Ipswich) and Hamwic (Southampton), and the heartlands of Mercia.

The delay in publication has had its advantages: these keyhole sites together provide a major window onto early London, and the authors and designers of *Lundenwic* are to be congratulated on mustering the complex evidence of topography, structure, craft and trade with such clarity and coherence. The English might like to cobble their past, but at least they have produced a generation of skilled field archaeologists. Let us hope their talents are not wasted by fantasists.

David Miles

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**Socio-Economic Aspects of Late Roman Mosaic Pavements in Phoenicia and Northern Palestine**

Mark Merrony

*BAR International series 2530, Archaeopress, Oxford, 2013*

282pp, 36 tables, 15 charts, 294 illustrations in black and white and colour

**Paperback, £55**

This richly illustrated book is dedicated to the memory of the late Fr Michele Piccirillo, that most eminent archaeologist, who uncovered many Late Roman mosaic pavements in Jordan. Based on Mark Merrony’s University of Oxford DPhil thesis (2000), its text has now been pared down, giving greater prominence to its innovative aspects, and its bibliography has been updated.

The study of 850 figurative and geometric mosaic pavements in Late Roman Phoenicia and Northern Palestine, which constitute a geo-cultural entity distinct from Syria to the north and the rest of Palestine to the south, is split into three equal parts: analysis, catalogue and illustrations.

Distancing himself from traditional art-historical approaches dominated by stylistic and exegetical interpretations (which he reviews from the 18th to the end of the 20th century in Chapter I), Merrony investigates a novel, technical and anthropological method which views mosaics holistically from bedding to surface. Using mosaic pavements as an economic ‘marker’, he demonstrates that the number of pavements laid reflects the fluctuations in the economy of Late Roman Phoenicia and Northern Palestine, which is also indicated by coinage, inscriptions, distribution of settlements and buildings, as well as by agricultural production and export (Ch. II): slow development in the 4th century culminated in prosperity in the second half of the 6th century, followed by economic decline in the 7th century.

The size and density of tesserae, width of interstices between tesserae, range of colours used and thickness of bedding played an important part in the economics of laying mosaic pavements, which also included division of labour and wage structure in a team of mosaics, as well as expenditure associated with the manufacture of the bedding of pavements (Ch. III).

The author reveals ‘hidden costs’ associated with the process of slaking lime (acquisition and transportation of fuel, cost of raw materials and manpower) for mortar – key to the solidity of floors – whose ratio in bedding was one part to three parts of aggregate. He rightly debunks the general assumption that the sums of donations inscribed on floor mosaics related to their cost, contending that these reflect levels of donation rather than actual costs. The real expense borne by the patrons who commissioned mosaic pavements lies ‘hidden’ in the bedding of floors and in the wages of teams of mosaics, ‘the multi-coloured tessellated surface being but the visible tip of the financial pyramid’ (Ch. III).

Novel, too, in Graeco-Roman mosaic studies is the coding of floral and geometric motifs following the system devised by the Association Internationale pour l’Etude de la Mosaique Antique (AIEMA), combined with their grading according to four levels of complexity, figurative decoration being assigned a level of decoration commensurate with its quality. Investigating links between pattern complexity, function of building or room(s) and wealth of donors, Merrony has led Merrony paradoxically to reintroduce the human element into a discipline tending towards abstraction and to rejuvenate it (Ch. IV).

His disclosure of the socio-economic status of patrons and family ties, as revealed by dedications and commemorative inscriptions, and his observation of the mechanisms of patronage, have healthily pushed Late Roman/Byzantine mosaic studies towards Histoire des mentalités (Ch. V).

Merrony’s highly readable work is an unusual, intriguing and successful attempt to delve into the personal ideologies of patrons within the wider context of institutions and cultural changes characteristic of the changeover from Roman Late Antiquity to the fully-fledged Byzantine Empire.

Claudine Dauphin
Minerva on the move

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UNITED KINGDOM

CAMBRIDGE
Chiefs & Governors: Art and Power in Fiji
Surprisingly, this is the first-ever exhibition devoted solely to Fijian art to be held outside Fiji. It is no surprise, however, that it is held here, where the core ethnographic material of the collection was gathered by the MA’s first curator in the late 19th century, just as Fiji entered the British Empire. The focus is on art and culture in a pre- and post-colonial setting. The Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
+44 (0) 1223 333516
(minerva.cam.ac.uk), Until 19 April 2014.

DURHAM
Lindisfarne Gospels Durham
This is a rare chance to see this iconic 8th-century AD manuscript (below), among other Anglo-Saxon artefacts and collections closely linked to the Lindisfarne Gospels. As the story of how and why they were made unfolds, the exhibition shows the cultural influence they had on art and religion across Europe. And only a stone’s throw away from Palace Green Library is Durham Cathedral, where the shrine of St Cuthbert (the saint in whose honour the Gospels were written) is to be found.
Palace Green Library
+44 (0) 3000 262626
(www.lindisfarne.org), Until 30 September 2013.

OXFORD
Francis Bacon/Henry Moore: Flesh and Bones
This major exhibition will include 20 paintings by Bacon and 20 drawings and 20 sculptures by Moore, dating from the end of the Second World War until the 1960s. It shows how the violence of the 20th century influenced the two men’s art.
The Ashmolean Museum
+44 (0) 1865 278 002
(www.ashmolean.org), From 12 September 2013 until 5 January 2014.

LONDON
Life and Death: Pompeii and Herculaneum
In this historic exhibition, ambitious in scope and size, 250 objects are brought together to recreate life in these two Roman cities in AD 79, when Mt Vesuvius erupted. Some exhibits, such as this plaster cast of a dog (shown below) are familiar, while others are new discoveries.
The British Museum
+44 (0) 20 7323 8181
(www.britishmuseum.org), Until 29 September.

SANTA ANA, California
Gems of the Medici
For 300 years the Medici dynasty controlled the artistic destiny of Florence. During that time the city produced all manner of superb craftsman and some of the finest art in the world which the Medici collected. Some exquisite pieces, such as this depiction of a princess or empress as Juno (above), and the Seal of Nero carnelian, that once belonged to Lorenzo the Magnificent, are on show.
Bowers Museum
+1 (0) 714 567 3600
(www.bowers.org), Until 15 September 2013.

ATLANTA, Georgia
Conserving the Memory: The Fratelli Alinari Photographs of Rome
Drawing on the museum’s own collection, this show is devoted to the work of the Alinari brothers, who systematically made survey photographs of Rome’s basilicas, gardens and architecture in the mid-19th century. This is a good chance not only to see some interesting early photography, but also to take a rare look at Rome before the developments of the last 150 years.
Michael C Carlos Museum, Emory University
+1 (0) 40 47 27 42 82
(www.carlos.emory.edu), From 5 October until 2 February 2014.

NEW YORK, New York
Medieval Treasures from Hildesheim
Hildesheim Cathedral, in Lower Saxony in Germany, has fixtures, fittings and accoutrements most of which date to between AD 1000 and 1250. Now a major renovation has made it possible for 50 pieces from the cathedral’s collection to be displayed at the Met. The focus of the exhibition is Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim, a patron of the arts who commissioned many pieces in the 10th century AD. One highlight is a monumental 13th-century bronze font; another is the gilded silver crozier of Abbot Erkanhald (above), dating to before 1011.
Metropolitan Museum of Art
+1 (0) 21 25 35 77 10
(www.metmuseum.org), From 17 September until 5 January 2014.

UNITED STATES

LOS ANGELES, California
Miracles and Martyrs: Saints in the Middle Ages
This special display, drawn from the Getty’s own collection of medieval manuscripts, focuses on how saints were depicted and how these images were received by the viewer. Saints played a central role in Christian art and, as martyrs, they were frequently shown enduring agonising torture, poverty and other forms of hardship, with the intention of encouraging piety and veneration among the layman.
The Getty Center
+1 (0) 31 04 40 73 00
(www.getty.edu), Until 15 September 2013.

NORWICH, Norfolk
Masterpieces: Art and East Anglia
Held to celebrate the unveiling of the newly renovated galleries by Norman Foster at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, this major exhibition presents a holistic portrait of art and culture in East Anglia, from pre-history to the present day. Innovative in its scope and aims, the highlights include a 700,000-year-old flint axe and a Roman bronze head of Emperor Claudius (above right) alongside sculpture by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Elisabeth Frink. A programme of lectures and events will complement the show.
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts
+44 (0) 1603 593 199
(www.scvca.ac.uk), From 14 September until 24 February 2014.
PORTLAND, Oregon
Samurai! Armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection
This high profile show is making its only West Coast stop in Portland. All manner of weapons and armour from 14th- to 19th-century Japan are on display. Their stylistic developments are observed and also how they relate to changing social situations. Highlights include lacquered helmets and full suits of Samurai armour from the Mori family collection.
Portland Art Museum
+1 (0) 503 226 2811
(www.portlandartmuseum.org).
From 5 October until 12 January 2014.

MOUGINS, Alpes Maritime
Picaso: The Classical Legacy
The pretty hill-town of Mougins is where Picasso spent the last 12 years of his life and it was a very prolific period. Commemorating the year of the artist's death, the MACM has put on a special display of Picasso's work, particularly those pieces inspired by the Classical world. It includes lino-cuts and prints from the Vollard Suite. Set among the ancient artefacts of this unique museum, the heritage of the past and its continuing impact on modern art is very evident.
Musée d'Art Classique de Mougins
+ 33 (0) 4 93 75 18 65
(www.mouginsmusee.com).
Until 29 September 2013.

PARIS
Charles Ratton, the Invention of 'Primitieve' Arts
During the 1920s an art dealer and collector named Charles Ratton, who made many trips to Africa, the Americas and Oceania, changed the way ethnographic art (below left) was perceived and appreciated. This had a lasting influence on the art world, both on art collectors and on artists, such as Dubuffet and the Surrealists.
Musée du Quai Branly
+33 (0) 1 56 61 70 00
(www.quaibranly.fr).
Until 22 September 2013.

AUSTRIA
VIENNA
The Face of a Stranger: The coins of the Huns and the Western Turks in Central Asia and India
This exhibition examines the coinage of the Iranian ‘Huns’ (above is a coin of an unknown Alchan king) at the far reaches of their empire from 4th century AD to the Islamic period. The exhibition has a walkable large-scale floor map and short films to help explain the context of the coins.
Kunsthistorisches Museum
+43 1 525 24 0
(www.khm.at).
Until 30 October 2013.

FRANCE
AUBAGNE, Provence
Picaso à l’Aubagne
Around 150 of Picasso’s ceramics, such as Chouette sur tête de faune (top right) from 1961, are on display to mark the 40th anniversary of his death. Many of these pieces are previously unseen and several are loans from other museums. They show the influence that this part of France had on the artist. A programme of events related to this exhibition are also scheduled.
Chapel of the Black Penitents, Les Aires Saint-Michel, Aubagne
+33 (0) 04 42 18 17 26
Until 13 October 2013.

MANNHEIM
The Wittelsbacher Palatinate and Europe on the Rhine
This major exhibition looks at the historic Rhine Palatinate of Baden from the late Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period. This area was inextricably bound up with the Wittelsbach family and the vicissitudes of the Holy Roman Empire. The show covers social, military and artistic history.
Reiss-Engelhorn Museums
+49 (0)51 19 81 76 86
(www.wittelsbacher2013.de).
Until 2 March 2014.

GERMANY
BERLIN
Of Black Ebony, Rich with Silver Decoration: An Augsburg Cabinet from around 1600
Following conservation and restoration work, the Augsburg Cabinet is going back on display. This is one of the finest and most decorated examples of furniture from Augsburg and is displayed alongside similar examples in order to highlight their stylistic and functional traditions.
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
+49 (0) 30 26 64 24 242
(www.sbm-museum).
Until 29 September 2013.

HANNOVER
The Golden Section: Lower Saxony's Longest Excavation
The Lower Saxony State Office for Heritage has collaborated with the Lower Saxony State Museum Hannover to present this exhibition of fresh discoveries made during excavations along the Northern European Gas Pipeline, which stretches across 200km of Germany. Over 150 settlements have been discovered and also the largest ever Bronze Age hoard - analysis shows that it seems to come from Central Asia and is 3500 years old.
Landesmuseum Hannover
+49 (0)351 19 81 76 86
(www.landesmuseum-hannover.niedersachsen.de).
Until 2 March 2014.

MINERVA September/October 2013
MUNICH, Bavaria

Contours – Textures – Spaces

This innovative re-display in the Glyptothek sees pieces of ancient sculpture removed from their usual context and exhibited in such a way that the nuances and rhythm of their carving can truly be seen.

Staatliche Antikensammlingen und Glyphtothek
+49 (0) 8 98 88 30
(www.antike-am-koenigsplatz.mwn.de).
Until 8 December.

ISRAEL

JERUSALEM
‘I Am Gabriel’: A Scroll in Stone from the Time of Herod

The centrepiece of this exhibition is an ancient Hebrew text inscribed in ink on limestone (right) and dated 1st century BC to 1st century AD. Around this, the museum weaves the story of how the three Abrahamic religions are linked through the Angel Gabriel. Rare copies of the Bible, the New Testament and the Qur’an are used to illustrate this.

The Israel Museum
+972 (0) 2 670 8811
(www.imj.org.il).
Until 1 February 2014.

KOREA

SEOUL
Congo River: Art of Central Africa

Continuing the National Museum of Korea’s admirable programme of diverse, global exhibitions, this one brings together the rich and varied art forms of the Congo people. The exhibits include artefacts made of shell, metal, wood and beads, with a special focus on social rites, such as healing and mortuary ceremonies, and body modification, such as tooth-filing and body-painting.

National Museum of Korea
+82 (0) 2 2077 92 93
(www.museum.go.kr).
From 22 October until 19 January 2014.

NETHERLANDS

AMSTERDAM

Petra: Miracle in the Desert

After Al-Khazneh (The Treasury) (below) was used as a location in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Petra became one of the world’s most iconic archaeological sites. Meanwhile the culture of the Nabataeans, who built this city, tends to be overlooked. This exhibition sets out to remedy this oversight by presenting over 150 archaeological and architectural masterpieces – reliefs, frescoes and pottery – alongside state-of-the-art 3D installations, to build up a picture of the culture, art and religion of the Nabataeans who, among other

Over 120 of the world’s leading art dealers will convene in London in mid-October for the second Frieze Masters international art fair. Offering many different kinds of art – from antiquities and Old Master paintings to medieval objects and contemporary works – the participants come from many different countries, from Brazil to the Lebanon, from Serbia to South Africa. Renowned ancient art dealers participating include: Rupert Wace, Daniel Katz and Sam Fogg from London, Cahn International from Basel (1. Head of a Herm, 460-450 BC) and Axel Vervoordt from Antwerp (2. Aphrodite of the Gardens, detail, 1st century AD). During the fair there will be a series of talks between artists and top museum directors and curators including: from London, Dr Nicholas Penny of the National Gallery and Professor Martin Roth, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum; Michael Govan, Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and from Vienna, Jasper Sharp, Adjunct Curator at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

As the fair’s Director, Victoria Siddall says: ‘The diversity and quality of the exhibitor list is what makes Frieze Masters different from other fairs. There will be a unique combination of classic work from throughout history and exciting discoveries …’.

* Frieze Masters (www.friezemasters.com) will be held on Gloucester Green, Regent’s Park, London NW1 from 17 to 20 October.
An exhibition entitled *Eros in Antiquity*, on show at La Reine Margot in Paris, reflects the many different faces of the god of love through 50 objects in marble, bronze, terracotta, glass, faience, gold, and hardstones. But just who is Eros, or Cupid as he was known to the Romans? Is he, as the Ancient Greeks and Romans believed, the god of love and desire? Is he, as Aristophanes relates, the primordial god from which the human race and all other gods came forth? Is he, as was believed in Classical Antiquity, the universal primeval life-force? Or is he the offspring of Venus-Aphrodite, goddess of beauty, and Mars-Ares, god of war, bringing the promise of life and love, but beneath it physical or moral decay and death?

Associated with Hymen, the god of marriage, Eros appears as a delicate youth with a graceful smile. Depicted as a child, Eros-Cupid takes on a whimsical appearance as a small boy. He walks side by side with Psyche, a companion to human existence. He brandishes a cornucopia, a symbol of fertility. And when representing the underworld, Eros sleeps or is sculpted on sarcophagi. An attendant of Aphrodite, Eros is also one of the consorts of Dionysus, god of wine. He plays a musical instrument in the god’s retinue, or harvests grapes to extract the intoxicating liquor. A popular divinity, Eros-Cupid evolved into an ornamental motif from the Hellenistic period onwards appearing on architectural friezes, medallions and everyday utensils, such as oil lamps and torches.

Images of Eros also embellish objects of personal adornment, and the exhibition includes an important collection of gold jewellery from the Hellenistic period. On a chalcedony intaglio, mounted as a ring, Eros is a boy holding a butterfly, the symbol of the human soul. He also appears as a winged figure painted on a lekythos (1) or suspended from delicately sculpted gold earrings (2) – both from 4th to 3rd centuries BC.

*Eros in Antiquity* invites every visitor to discover the many facets of a figure who continues to reign over the hearts of men and gods.

**Eros in Antiquity** is on show at La Reine Margot in Paris (www.lareinemargot.com) until 30 September.
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