Turner round
A brilliant artist inspired by Classical history in old age

Beyond the cedar groves
How safe is it to visit Lebanon’s ancient sites?

A passion for Greece
Emperor Hadrian’s love of all things Hellenic extended way beyond his art collection – even to the shape of his beard

Playwright Frank McGuinness explains how an Irish upbringing prepared him for working with Greek tragedy
ROMAN MARBLE GROUP: MENELAOS SUPPORTS THE BODY OF PATROKLOS: The most complete original example known. Ca. 2nd Century AD. H. 27 in. (68.5 cm.); L. 28 in. (71 cm.); W. 14 5/8 in. (37 cm.) Ex John Kluge Collection, Charlottesville, Virginia, acquired from Royal-Athena Galleries in 1995.
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A truly multicultural mix

Emperor Hadrian, the artist JMW Turner and the playwright Frank McGuinness have all reinterpreted themes from the Classical world

In our increasingly turbulent and intolerant world multiculturalism does not necessarily lead to peaceful coexistence. Yet as any student of the ancient past will tell you, it has ever been thus: there have always been eras when nationalism rises and countries close their borders, followed by periods of expansion when trade and cultural exchange flourish. Just how expansive the Classical world can be gleaned from the distances that some objects travelled, something that often surprises archaeologists.

In Madrid, for example, the brilliantly redesigned National Museum of Archaeology houses a really diverse display of objects – from Talayotic bronze bulls’ heads to Visigothic votive offerings – as Polly Chiapetta, who visited it recently, reports back with great enthusiasm; turn to pages 8 to 12.

From Spain we move across to Italy to explore the Emperor Hadrian’s eclectic tastes and his special love for Greek art and culture. An exhibition on this subject is currently on show in the Antiquarium at Villa Adriana, which Hadrian had built at Tivoli to display his Hellenistic preferences; see pages 14 to 18.

Greek tragedy is entirely understood by Frank McGuinness, who, brought up in Northern Ireland, knows all about warring factions, divided families, bloodshed, revenge and retribution. He was only a teenager when he first saw Sophocles’ Electra but, he says, he understood it at once and in a visceral way. This led him to craft his own version of the play and says, he understood it at once and in a visceral way.

By the early 19th century the fashion for painting scenes of the Classical world had begun to wane, but the great JMW Turner went against the flow and, from 1835 onwards, during the last 16 years of his life, he produced some of his most spectacular paintings on themes taken from antiquity. You will be able to see some of these works in an exhibition called Late Turner: Painting Set Free at Tate Britain from 10 September; turn to pages 24 to 28.

From a man at the end of his life to one in the full flush of youth – TE Lawrence is well-known for his passion for the Middle East but, before his crusade on behalf of the Arabs, he worked as an archaeologist in the Near East. Anthony Sattin has written a fascinating book about this remarkable man during his earlier incarnation as ‘Lawrence of the Euphrates’ – see pages 30 to 33.

The multicultural mix I mentioned at the beginning of this letter is clearly evident in an exhibition called From Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age, opening at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on 13 September. It focuses on the Iron Age, a period stretching from the sumptuous court of Ashurbanipal to Homer’s Age of Heroes; turn to pages 34 to 37.

For our travel feature we go to that multicultural melting pot, Lebanon, where different peoples and religions have coexisted for centuries. Diana Darke enjoyed visiting some of the old monasteries in the Qadisha Valley there (she even stayed in one) and exploring the ancient coastal sites; see pages 38 to 41.

The word ming means ‘brilliant’ or ‘bright’, which is rather appropriate, as the Ming Period was one of the most dazzling eras in Chinese history; when trade flourished – it can even be claimed that it was the starting point of modern China. There are two Ming exhibitions: one is in Edinburgh, the other opens in London in September; turn to pages 42 to 45.

London is definitely the hottest place for high-class antiquities these days. Not only have three top-end galleries, Kallos, Ariadne and Danny Katz, opened over the last few months, but some spectacular pieces have been auctioned this summer. First, there was the much-publicised sale of Sekhemka that changed hands at Christie’s for nearly £16 million – a world record for an antiquity sold at auction (see page 53). Then the Northumberland Aphrodite made over £9 million at Sotheby’s, setting a European record (see page 52). But, more recently and much more quietly, the private sale of the rediscovered ‘Hope Antinous’ bust also took place in London; you can read all about this ravishing object on page 3.

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Minerva September/October 2014
A stunningly sensual Roman marble bust of Antinous-Osiris, from the collection of Thomas Hope (1769-1831), which had been ‘lost’ for almost a century, was sold to a private collector by Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch in London in July. The exciting rediscovery of this rare piece of sculpture was made by the company at Thornbridge Hall, in Derbyshire, in 2010. Some scholars believe that the bust was unearthed at Hadrian’s Villa by Gavin Hamilton while he was excavating there in 1769. It was later acquired by the great Regency connoisseur Thomas Hope who gained a taste for Classical antique sculpture while on an extended Grand Tour that lasted eight years. When, in 1799, Hope bought a palatial London house in Duchess Street, he set about remodelling the interiors to ‘appropriate a little repository for the reception of a small collection of antiquities, Grecian and others’. Hope also designed Classically influenced furniture for his new home. Soon his reputation as an arbiter of taste grew and he became a key figure in the history of Regency style. Eventually the Antinous-Osiris bust passed to his grandson, Lord Henry Pelham-Clinton-Hope, the 8th Duke of Newcastle (1866-1941), and it was auctioned by Christie, Manson and Woods in a sale entitled The Hope Heirlooms in 1917, where it was bought by an unknown buyer identified only as Cory. It was later acquired by Charles Boot Esq (1874-1945) and installed at Thornbridge Hall, a house he bought in 1930. It was sold with the house in 1946 and remained there, forgotten until, four years ago, it was identified by Oliver Forge, together with an expert from the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum. In 1882 Adolf Michaelis noted that the ‘nose, ears, lips and part of the calantica [Egyptian headdress]’ of the Hope Antinous were restored but, sometime after 1917, these old restorations were lost. The nose and mouth were restored again this year. The crack in the calantica can still be seen, but this does not detract from the perfection of form of Antinous, the beautiful boy who stole the heart of Emperor Hadrian and who was deified after his untimely death in AD 130. The young man drowned in the River Nile on the day, it is said, that the death and rebirth of the god Osiris was celebrated by the Egyptians, so it is fitting that the two merge in this ravishing portrait of Antinous-Osiris. (Visit www.forgelynch.com.)
10,000 years of Durham

A permanent exhibition, entitled Living on the Hills: 10,000 years of Durham, has gone on display at the city’s Wolfson Gallery on Palace Green. Living on the Hills explores the lives of people who have lived and visited Durham through the tools and everyday objects they used, and the art and architecture they left behind to be rediscovered.

This includes prehistoric objects found by chance at the turn of the century, Roman objects uncovered by Victorian antiquarians and medieval objects found during archaeological excavations in the 1970s.

Together, the exhibits – which come from the collection of the University of Durham’s Museum of Archaeology, other university departments and regional museums – build up a picture of life in the region during the past 10,000 years.

Located on the first floor of Palace Green Library beside Durham Castle, the Wolfson Gallery opened in 2011 after a £2.3 million refurbishment funded in part by a donation of £300,000 from the Wolfson Foundation. (For further details of the exhibition visit www.dur.ac.uk/archaeology.museum).

Durham Cathedral and Castle from Observatory Hill by JW Carmichael, oil on canvas, 1847.

All that glisters…

A treasure trove of gold jewellery and precious artefacts, all with links to the North East, is on display at Bede’s World, Jarrow. This exhibition is the second part of Treasures, a major three-year programme designed to highlight the region’s heritage and identity.

The exhibits, which include rings, badges and pendants dating back to the Middle Ages, were all either found in the North East or belonged to someone who lived in, or visited, the area. Among the highlights are a 15th-century gold signet ring believed to have belonged to Henry Percy, who died in battle fighting for Henry VI during the Wars of the Roses (the ring was said to have been lost at the battle of Towton in 1461); a gold reliquary pendant showing St George and the dragon, with a rock-crystal back containing a space where the relic would be placed; a papal ring made of gilded copper alloy and glass and bearing the arms of the family of Pope Paul II; the seal matrix of the See of Durham, a small copper alloy disc with an image of Henry VI on one side and the arms of England and France on the other. Also on show are coins from the reigns of Scottish and English kings, including Alexander III, Edward I and Edward IV.

'Throughout the Middle Ages the North East was at the heart of cultural and religious life,' said Mike Benson, director at Bede’s World, ‘and the exhibition will really give an indication of the way people here lived and the challenges they faced.'

The Treasures programme began in May with the arrival at Bede’s World of a facsimile of the Codex Amiatinus, created by the great Anglo-Saxon scholar the Venerable Bede, in AD 692. (For further information visit www.bedesworld.co.uk or www.twmuseums.org.uk).

1. St George and the dragon reliquary pendant. 2. 15th-century gold signet ring, engraved with a lion, a symbol of the Percy family. 3. Papal ring that bears the arms of the family of Pope Paul II (1417-71). 4. The seal matrix of the vacant See of Durham (right) and its imprint in red sealing wax (left).
The glory of Rome

Some of Britain’s greatest Roman finds – including the spectacular and very rare Shield Boss (far right) are on display in an exhibition entitled The Glory of Rome: Arbeia’s Greatest Treasures at the Arbeia Roman Fort, South Shields.

All the objects exhibited were unearthed in South Tyneside. The Shield Boss, for example, was discovered near the mouth of the River Tyne in 1866. It dates to the early 2nd century AD and belonged to a legionary soldier called Junius Dubitatus. Some 1.5 million shield bosses were made for legionary soldiers across the Roman Empire, but very few have survived. The boss is the protruding section of the shield designed to deflect blows. This is considered one of the finest.

Other exhibits include the Regina and Victor tombstones, which shed a little light on the lives of two early inhabitants of the region. One commemorates a woman from South East England who was married to a man from Syria; the other, a man from North Africa who was the freed slave of a soldier from Spain, demonstrating the cosmopolitan nature of South Tyneside in Roman times.

Also on display are the most complete and best preserved Romano-British ringmail suit in the country and a very rare example of a Roman sword with a double herringbone pattern built into the blade.

‘Every single item highlights craftsmanship of the era in all its glory,’ said museum manager Geoff Woodward, ‘... and we are still uncovering amazing Roman archaeology at the site.’

Built around AD 160, Arbeia Roman Fort once guarded the entrance to the River Tyne, playing an essential role in the mighty frontier system. Four miles east of the end of Hadrian’s Wall at South Shields, the Fort was originally built to house a garrison and soon became the military supply base for the 17 forts along the Wall.

In 1986, the West Gate of the Fort was reconstructed to give visitors an impression of the size and scale of Roman military architecture. In 2002 two further reconstructions were opened to show the very different living conditions of an ordinary soldier, a centurion and a commanding officer.

The current programme of excavations at Arbeia began 23 years ago – it is the only Roman fort associated with Hadrian’s Wall where visitors can see archaeologists at work.

Today, the excavated remains, stunning reconstructions of original buildings and finds discovered at the Fort, combine to give a unique insight into life in Roman Britain.

• The Glory of Rome, part of the major three-year Treasures programme highlighting the region’s heritage and identity, will be on show at Arbeia Roman Fort, South Shields, until 1 November. Admission is free. (For further details visit www.arbeiromanfort.org.uk).

Family links to Howard Carter

An historic meeting of members of the Carter family and the Amherst family was re-enacted in July when Audrey Carter met Angela Cecil Reid (a member of the Amherst family). The chance encounter took place during a study day entitled Homage to Howard Carter: Artist and Archaeologist, part of the Holt Festival in Norfolk.

As a young man, Howard Carter (1874-1939) saw his first collection of Egyptian antiquities at Didlington Hall, the home of the Amherst family. Indeed, it was Percy Newberry, a friend of Lady Amherst, who found Carter his first job as an artist, recording tomb paintings for the Egyptian Exploration Fund. In 1891, aged 17, Carter left the small market-town of Swaffham, where he had been brought up, and set off for Alexandria. This was the beginning of a journey that led him to the Valley of the Kings and, 30 years later, to the momentous discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun.

Aged 81 and still bright as a button, Audrey studied Egyptology under Professor Rosalie David at Manchester University, while Angela is writing a book on the Amherst family. When asked about the idea of a campaign to ensure this country properly honours Howard Carter, both said that they would lend their support.
Looted from Baluchistan (south-western Pakistan) and retrieved in northern Italy by the Italian police, 80 beautiful terracottas are currently on display at the National Museum of Oriental Art (MNAO) ‘Giuseppe Tucci’ in Rome (until 21 September). These vases and animal figurines are among the most splendid Prehistoric objects ever found in Pakistan; they convey the sophistication of symbolism and craftsmanship developed during the 5th to 3rd millennia BC.

The objects were excavated in clandestine digs then brought illegally into Italy by antiquities smugglers. They were confiscated in 2005 at Monza by the Comando Carabinieri Tutela Patrimonio Culturale, the branch of the police responsible for combating art and antiquities crimes, and returned two years later to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Entitled Living Symbols: the power of images in the Prehistoric pottery of Pakistan, the exhibition features pottery decorated with a wide range of motifs painted in vibrant colours: zebu bulls, the heart shaped leaf of the *pipal* tree, tigers, fish, ibex and geometric designs, recognisable to those who are familiar with finds from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, the great cities of the Indus Valley (circa 2600-1900 BC). They are shown alongside metalware, everyday pottery and strings of semi-precious stone beads, of the same date and the same cultural area, drawn from the museum’s own collection.

Information about their provenance is sparse, but it is likely that these terracottas come from sites of the remote Nal Buthi and Kulli pre-urban and urban cultures in southern Baluchistan that preceded and accompanied the flourishing of the main Indus Valley centres. Some motifs and vessel shapes found in south-eastern Iran and on the Arabian Peninsula are sometimes also linked to the Kulli, indicating that long-distance contacts were made.

The high quality and rich decorative diversity of Baluchi pottery is outstanding, having few parallels in Bronze Age Central Asia. Painted motifs are applied directly on to the surface or on a coloured-slip surface, mostly in black or red paint, but a variety of colours, including brown, white, yellow, blue and green, are also known.

Baluchistan, Pakistan’s largest province, is still something of an archaeological terra incognita, despite excavations carried out there by international scholars, such as Sir Aurel Stein (1862-1943), and by later Pakistani and Italian archaeologists. The highlands have remained closed to outsiders since 1950. Research was taken up again in the late 1980s in Makran by the French mission and in 1996-7 by the Joint German-Pakistani mission to Kalat. Over the years more than 350 sites, dating from around 4300 BC to the 19th century AD, have been identified and documented.

Massimo Vidale, the exhibition’s curator (in collaboration with Giovanna Lombardo at the MNAO), is a prominent Italian archaeologist from the University of Padua who has worked on major sites in Pakistan. He is also a member of the team excavating Jiroft (2400-2100 BC) in south-eastern Iran, which is thought to be the hub of the oldest Eastern civilization, preceding that of Sumer by at least two centuries.

This exhibition provides visitors with a rare opportunity for a first encounter with early cultures in Pakistan that flourished during a period of major cultural and artistic importance.

(Visit www.museorientale.beniculturali.it or call +39 064697481 for further details.)

Dalu Jones

2. Terracotta vase with *pipal* tree motif. 3. Terracotta bird figurine. 4. Terracotta vase with polychrome cross-shaped and ladder polychrome motifs.
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Polly Chiapetta takes the bull by the horns when she gets to grips with some of the fascinating and little-known treasures displayed in the brilliantly revamped National Archaeological Museum in Madrid

In the English-speaking world, the ancient civilizations of the Phoenicians and Celts are well-known even outside coterieosa of scholars, but what about the Tartessians? And hands up anyone who could name an object created by the Talayotic civilization, or who knows what a verraco was used for? In terms of brand recognition, the archaeology of Spain – a country that is emphatically European and whose later history is intertwined inextricably with that of the rest of the continent – scores embarrassingly low. However, with the reopening of Madrid’s Museo Arqueológico Nacional, an astonishing collection of art and artefacts from prehistory to the 19th century steps out of the shadows and into the international limelight, in a €65 million restaging that has seen a total renovation of its Neoclassical home in the heart of the city. A top-toe reinstallation and reinterpretation has brought its display up to the standards expected by a museum-going public accustomed to in-depth information available in multiple languages at the touch of a screen or the press of a key.

From the smart Calle Serrano, the building’s dignified, columned façade today offers few clues to the extent of the changes within. Designed by the Spanish firm Frade Arquitectos, the reopened museum has seen the space dedicated to the display of the collection expanded by over 30 per cent, the entrance reoriented to allow wheelchair access, new visitor facilities provided and a total rethinking of how the collection is communicated to its audience. The story told in the display is an emphatically Spanish one, charting the country’s prehistoric origins through the Roman period and Moorish occupation to the time of the collection’s foundation, and Spain’s contribution to archaeological scholarship. It brings together the disparate and somewhat unbalanced collections into a linear narrative that gives context and coherence to a series of objects acquired and bequeathed in different circumstances over the museum’s nearly 150-year history. Areas where the collection is particularly strong in terms of numbers of objects – such as artefacts from the dawn of human civilization, Roman mosaics, coins and Moorish architectural elements – have galleries devoted to them.

The idea of a single institution to conserve and display Spain’s historical artefacts for the edification and entertainment of the public came from Queen Isabella II (1830-1904), who was picking up on a trend gaining momentum across Europe and in the United States. Visiting museums as palaces of art had become a popular pastime, and from a ruler’s point of view was a useful tool in troubled times to create an anchor for a sense of national identity in a shared past. In 1866, building work got under way on a site in the Salamanca district of Madrid – then the focus of a campaign of urban development – and the following year the collection, bringing together works from the National Library’s ethnographic and archaeological holdings and objects gathered at the country’s School of Diplomacy, went on temporary display at the Casino de la Reina in Madrid. The present home of the museum, the Palacio de Biblioteca y Museos, was inaugurated in 1892, then – as now – sharing the site with the National Library.

Perhaps the obscurity in which the pre-Roman history of the Iberian Peninsula has languished can be put down to the Romans themselves. The many cultures that had flourished in Iberia were extremely sophisticated – the Greek geographer Strabo wrote in the 1st century AD that the Turdetanians – who lived in the Guadalquivir Valley in what is today Andalucia – were ‘ranked among the wisest of the Iberians; and they make use of an alphabet, and possess records of their ancient history, poems and laws written in verse that are 6,000 years old’. It took 200 years of military campaigns for the numerous clans and tribes finally to be
brought to heel under Roman governance, and a more unified social and religious culture to be rolled out across the peninsula.

Politics, too, have played their part in the long-standing neglect of ancient Spain. While the treasures of Greece and Rome had been collected, copied and studied both within and outside their borders since the Renaissance, Spain’s material culture from antiquity has only slowly and relatively recently been excavated and its importance recognized. For much of the 20th century, following the Spanish Civil War, the scientific study of Spain’s pre-Roman past was compromised by the Fascist regime’s desire to emphasise the unification of the country into a single entity, a situation conveniently prefigured by the Roman conquest of the culturally varied Iberian peoples. The fierce resistance of the northern Celtiberi people against the Romans in the second century BC may have had uncomfortable resonances for the regime that it would probably have preferred not to dwell on.

To grasp quite how much there is yet to learn about the cultures of the pre-Roman conquest civilizations it is most helpful to look at the objects themselves. One of the most unusual and persistently mysterious works is the mausoleum of about 500 BC found in 1970 at Pozo Moro, near Albacete in south-eastern Spain, which has been reconstructed in the light-filled courtyard. The surviving reliefs that decorate the square structure, which rises some 10 metres from a stepped plinth, are a maelstrom of violence – a monster sits

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at a banqueting table before a bowl filled with small human body parts; animal-headed figures clutch raised swords; a winged being holds a lotus flower and two standing creatures are engaged in intercourse. The seated monster with its tongue lolling from its head has been interpreted as the Semitic god of death, Mot. Does this monument depict a cult of sacrifice? Is it symbolic of regeneration, or simply a posthumous propaganda tool for the family of an unnamed occupant? And by what avenue did these very Near Eastern mythological images reach Spain? Definitive answers about the iconography have so far remained elusive, but the monument can, at least, be connected stylistically with another celebrated sculpture in the museum, the fabulous human-headed bull the Bicha de Balazote (Beast of Balazote), which was discovered at a site east of Pozo Moro.

Some objects produced in ancient Spain were unique to their time and location, isolated phenomena that emerged from a society to fulfil a need or belief, and died with it. The stocky granite animal forms known as verracos – four of which are in the collection – are thought to represent creatures such as pigs, boars, bulls or donkeys, and were produced by Celtiberian and Vetton stone carvers in the area around Avila, Cáceres and Salamanca as well as in pockets of Portugal, during the 5th to the 1st centuries BC. Positioned visibly in open land on Spain’s high central Meseta, they are thought to have acted as markers for grazing pasture controlled by the oppida, or settlements, that produced them, but may also hint at the importance of animal cults during the period.

Unsurprisingly perhaps for a country that has a long and glorious tradition of indomitable matriarchs, images of powerful women hold sway in the museum’s collection. Its most celebrated Iberian object, the bust known as ‘The Lady of Elche’, has been identified variously as a sculpture of a woman in bridal garb, an idealised figure of a female ancestor, or as the Punic-Phoenician war-goddess Tanit, who, together with her consort Ba’al Hammon, was worshipped widely across the Mediterranean and north Africa. Discovered in 1897 in La Alcudia, the work was almost immediately exported to France before its return to Spain was negotiated in the 1940s, when it first went on display at the Prado museum before taking its place at the National Archaeological Museum as one of the masterpieces of Iberian art.

Once highly coloured, the limestone figure, with its finely carved features, elaborately ornamental headdress and heavy jewellery, bears the hallmarks of Hellenistic workmanship, suggesting a cosmopolitan culture of cross-fertilising artistic influences.

An intriguing parallel to this work is the near-life-size funerary sculpture called ‘The Lady of Baza’ from 4th-century BC, which was unearthed from a necropolis near Granada in 1971. While her adornments are just lavish as those of the Lady of Elche, her features seem more individualised, suggesting the possibility that this was a portrait of the deceased, whose ashes could be placed in the hollow in the figure’s side. As such it would probably be unique; in reality, the fact that the sculpture is also laden with symbolic imagery – the throne with...
projecting wings indicating divine status and the bird she holds in her hand a link with the dead person – means that it is more likely to be a generic representation of a deity.

The period of Roman rule over the Iberian Peninsula, which began in 19 BC when Augustus finally defeated the Cantabri and Astures, was one of unprecedented peace. Great wealth was to be had – mining was widespread, and agriculture yielded olives, wheat and wine. Hispano-Roman cities such as Emerita (modern Mérida) were sophisticated urban centres, but the elite also sought the refuge of the countryside, building rural villas that matched their city residences in comfort and grandeur. The museum has remarkable holdings of mosaic floors, such as that from a villa at La Olmeda near Palencia – one of a total of 12 figuratively tiled floors in the building – in which a mask of Medusa is surrounded by birds and mythological creatures in hexagons.

Chance and luck (both good and bad) have played a part in the formation of the collection, with the vicissitudes of history ensuring that many works of art and artefacts have arrived intact at the Calle Serrano only by the skin of their teeth. Among the highlights of the Visigothic collection are pieces from the Guarrazar Treasure of votive objects, a group of over 20 gold and jewelled crown-shaped ornaments, crosses and belts that were discovered in an orchard near Toledo in 1858. Shortly after they were found, the objects, created as a tribute gift from the Visigothic monarchs to the Church in the 7th century AD, were dispersed among the local community. Some pieces vanished shortly after they came to light; a few were melted down for their materials; others were transported to Paris, where they entered the collection of the Museum of Medieval Art in the Hôtel de Cluny; the remainder stayed in Madrid. Today the votive crown of King Recceswinth glitters in the subdued light – a reminder of exactly how fragile our links with the distant past can be, and offers an intriguing suggestion of what treasures may still be buried in the dry, red earth of the Meseta.

To find out more about the National Archaeological Museum, Madrid visit http://www.man.es/man/home.html
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Having pacified the whole of Asia Minor, in AD 124 Emperor Hadrian took a year off from the cares of ruling the Roman Empire. He spent his lengthy holiday wandering from one Greek island to another during the summer, and visiting the Peloponnese in the winter. After this he continued to return to Athens, which became his official residence and he stayed there for brief intervals during the next six years. At those times the city was de facto the capital of the empire and the stopping-off point for the emperor on his many official journeys throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt.

Hadrian had already lived in Athens as a private citizen between AD 111 and AD 113, and it was here that his taste for Greek culture was born. A Philhellene all his life, he even set a fashion by sporting a beard in the manner of Greek philosophers, such as Metrodorus (9).

This year, the fact that first Greece, then Italy, holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union has inspired several cultural institutions from these two countries to organize an outstanding exhibition entitled Hadrian and Greece: Hadrian’s Villa, Classicism and Hellenism, currently on show at Hadrian’s Villa, the emperor’s magnificent extended palace (2) at Tibur (modern Tivoli) 30 kilometres east of Rome.

Major museums and the Italian Archaeological School in Athens have been involved in this exhibition, which focuses on the relationship between Hadrian and Greece, his country of election, and how this is reflected in the villa itself. By looking at the design and lay-out of all the buildings at Hadrian’s Villa, we can see how the emperor perceived Greek art and culture and how it was thus reinterpreted.

This is largely possible thanks to loans of exceptional importance including 50 pieces of sculpture from Italian and Greek museums. Among them are 22 from Athens, Loukou, Marathon, Piraeus and Corinth that have never before been seen outside Greece. They are all displayed in the Antiquarium of Hadrian’s Villa.

The loans from Loukou and Marathon are especially important because it was here that villas were built for an immensely rich Greek aristocrat, the Sophist Herodes Atticus (AD 101-177), a major landowner from a family of consular rank and Hadrian’s close friend (4). Like the emperor, bilingual from birth and by education, Herodes...
belonged to Hadrian’s inner circle of councillors and became a high-level functionary moving between Rome and Athens. Like Hadrian, he too was a connoisseur and generous patron of the arts.

Although smaller in size, Herodes’ villa at Loukou was built according to a plan that competes with Hadrian’s master plan for his own grand villa in Tivoli. Extending over three terraces on different levels for a total area of over 20,000 square metres, it was filled with outstanding works of art. Herodes’ villa was partially excavated by the Greek Archaeological Service from the late 1970s until 2001. It was on this site that an extremely interesting and rare portrait bust (1) of Emperor Hadrian (r AD 117-138) was found. He is shown wearing a cuirass with a gorgoneion (a kind of amulet pendant) on the breastplate of which, instead of the usual face of Medusa (the snake-haired monster who was able to petrify enemies with a single glance), there is a portrait of Antinous (3), the beautiful boy much favoured by Hadrian. The distinctive features of this young man are easily recognizable despite the addition of wings (although one is missing) to his head.

According to recent interpretations, the image of Antinous has deliberately been placed here instead of Medusa as, by occupying the position of the Gorgon, the young man inherited the ‘duty’ of protecting the wearer of this breastplate – namely the emperor. It may even be that this unique iconography was conceived by Herodes, himself, as a homage to his friend’s devotion to the handsome Bithynian youth.

This exhibition brings together some of the most important portraits of Hadrian found in Greece, including truly monumental examples such as the colossal head of the emperor, wearing the corona civica, the jewelled oak crown with a disc at its centre, inlaid with a representation of the eagle of Zeus, which marks him both as saviour of the people and as Olympios (5).

Hadrian transformed Athens into one of the most beautiful cities of the Roman Empire with a series of imposing public buildings including the Olympieion, the temple of Zeus Olympus, which was finally completed in AD 131 after almost five centuries of work in progress, the Library that took his name, an entire new city district and a splendid aqueduct.

In his Description of Greece (I.18.6 and I.24.7), the Greek traveller and geographer Pausanias (circa AD 110-180) refers to the
presence of two pairs of statues of Hadrian, two in Asian marble and two in Egyptian marble, which must have been situated in front of the Olympieion, perhaps next to the access propylon. All around the temple, there were other statues of Hadrian donated by colonial cities. To these one has to add the colossal statue of the emperor in the temple, dedicated by the Polis itself. His statue was even set in the cela of the Parthenon, alongside that of Athena.

A large head of Hadrian was unearthed in the port of Piraeus, where the complete statue was probably exhibited in the porticoes of the Emporion. Alternatively, the statue may have been intended for shipment overseas. Despite its size, this is a finely made and sensitive rendering of the emperor’s features. The portrait, which was probably paired with a second one, now in fragments, was loricata, meaning that the emperor is shown wearing a cuirass (lorica). This martial depiction – which flies in the face of Hadrian’s openly pacifist policies – is a reference to his own personal military past as a warrior of notable valour who is ready, if necessary, to defend the empire.

Other loricata statues on display in the exhibition includes a huge one, almost three metres high, which was found at Hierapytna in Crete (this is a plaster copy, the original is in the National Archaeological Museum in Istanbul). Another large statue of Hadrian (an original this time) from Thasos, an island he probably visited in AD 124-125, is also on show.

The most surprising portrait of the emperor, though, comes from Athens: Hadrian is represented looking straight at the viewer with an amused and relaxed smile, and the carving is of the highest quality (6). Chosen as the logo for the exhibition, this portrait conveys the charming and seductive personality of an intelligent and subtle man in the full vigour of youth, still full of enthusiasm and curiosity.

The large number of artworks of exceptional quality and preservation excavated over the centuries in Hadrian’s Villa, after it had fallen into disuse, led to a change in the practice that had applied till then, whereby the statues unearthed were sold to private collectors or sent to museums in Rome. An Antiquarium was created on the site during the 1950s in order to preserve the link between the buildings in which the statues were found (where casts of the originals are now placed) and their location in the museum. This makes the Antiquarium the ideal setting for the exhibition, as it overlooks one of the most striking and best-preserved parts of the villa: a large pool and an artificial grotto, the Canopus (2) and Serapeum, named respectively after an Egyptian city and a temple dedicated to the god Serapis.

The Canopus is flanked by statues (11) inspired by Classical originals dating from 5th-century BC – already considered in Rome as paradigmatic of the best of Greek art – as well as some Hellenistic
statues. Some of the latter are now on display – the Greek originals next to the Roman copies – inside the Antiquarium. One example of this is provided by the four caryatids from the west side of the Canopus. They are displayed beside a caryatid from Corinth, all of them modelled on the Korai of the Erechtheum in Athens. In Hadrian’s Villa, just as in the temple on the Acropolis, the sculptures supported lintels and functioned as columns.

These caryatids (12) provide us with information, otherwise lost, about the Greek originals whose arms are missing. It is easy to infer from the Hadrianic copies that their right hand held the _phiale_, a typical ritual cup used for libations, while the left grasped the edge of their mantle. The figures are characterised by voluminous and elaborate hairstyles that frame the face, falling on to the shoulders in a sort of braid. They each wear a _peplos_ with a mantle and sandals; their personal adornment is limited to two bracelets in the form of snakes encircling the forearms. The statues repeat the same type in pairs, as shown by the rhythm of the upper part of their dress (repeated on the weight-bearing leg), which varies between the types only if they are put together, so that the sequence generates a mirror effect.

Another interesting group of statues gathered together in the Antiquarium are a collection of exquisite portrait busts of ladies with elaborate hairstyles, found in Athens and Corinth, set next to a marble head of Vibia Sabina (8), Hadrian’s wife. It was in his villa at Tivoli that
the emperor really focused on and expressed his own idea of Greekness (10), constantly picking up and varying themes and mixing them with other influences from Asia Minor and Egypt. The Golden Square, a vast, monumental *triclinium* with a peristyle, and two-aisled portico, for example, recalls the plan of the so-called Library of Hadrian in Athens that functioned as a hall for the emperor’s cult. There are other subtler, but no less important, allusions in the buildings, the choice of decoration and the statuary.

So, it is not only the influence of Classical and Hellenistic Greece that is evident in Hadrian’s Villa. Cosmopolitan Alexandria, the capital of the Macedonian dynasty of the Ptolemies, founded by Alexander himself, was also central both to the emperor’s political attitude and his artistic preoccupations. In fact his villa echoes and reinterprets the spatial organization of the royal palaces in this late Egyptian city.

Nevertheless it was Greece and her magnificent monuments that were the first real source of inspiration for Hadrian. Gradually he drew together layers of personal references to form an organic and universal vision and to build his own fully integrated cultural and artistic model, which is reflected in his splendid villa. ■

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**Exhibition**

*Hadrian and Greece: Hadrian’s Villa, Classicism and Hellenism* is on show at the Antiquarium of Hadrian’s Villa in Tivoli (www.villaadriana.benculturali.it) until 2 November. The catalogue (in Italian and English), edited by Elena Calandra and Benedetta Adembri, is published by Electa at €10.
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With his bristling, grizzled red beard, piercing eyes and fiery complexion, Professor Frank McGuinness looks like a man who has seen life coming at him and met it head on. Born in Northern Ireland in 1953 and brought up with troubles, both personal and political, right on his doorstep, he has witnessed first-hand more than his fair share of violence, grief and revenge – enough to give him a deep understanding of the driving forces at work in the darkest of Greek tragedies.

Over the years, his own powerful versions of Electra, Hecuba and Oedipus, in which not one word is wasted, have been produced to great acclaim on the London stage. He also recently wrote the libretto for Julian Anderson’s opera, Thebans, performed by the English National Opera earlier this year.

Now his electrifying version of Electra is to be staged again, this time at the Old Vic, with Kristin Scott Thomas in the starring role. The play opens on 22 September.
My father’s dead.  
He did not die in war. 
He does not lie on a foreign shore. 
Here, at home,  
My mother’s hands turned red 
With his blood. Adulteress, 
Adulterer, she and Aegisthus,  
Split him open with an axe.  
The tree fell,  
And father, I am left to dwell 
Alone in your house, my back  
Against the wall,  
Weeping for my father dead,  
Mourning my dead father…

I call upon Persephone,  
I call upon the dead,  
I call upon the Furies,  
Revenge my father’s 
blood-stained marriage bed,  
Revenge my father,  
Send me back my brother,  
I can no longer stomach  
the size of my sorrow.  

(Lines from Electra by Frank McGuinness)

What was the first Greek play that you ever saw and when did you see it?  
I can remember exactly – it was as a teenager in my Donegal home. The BBC broadcast a play on television called Electra played by the magnificent actress Eileen Atkins. Not merely did I know nothing about it before seeing it, I also knew nothing about the story. The impact of Electra is with me to this day – the face of the woman herself, the white shirt of her brother, the jewels of her mother, the black scarf covering the hair of the neighbours scrutinizing everything that happened.

Prior to seeing this, for me ancient culture consisted of Caesar’s interminable wars, the impossibly intricate odes of Horace, all of this slog sweetened at times by lines from the First Book of Virgil’s Aeneid, their relish, their radiance. From Virgil I got a smell of the mystery that might lie in Latin literature, attracting me as surely as the obsession with datives and pluperfects puzzled me.

But there was no puzzle nor riddle about Electra. I watched it and realized almost for the first time with any piece of theatre one absolute fact – I know what this means. I know this woman’s passion – the necessity to articulate that passion. I know the familiar loyalty that inspires such passion. I know the worst crime is to betray that loyalty. I know the necessity to nurse a grudge until that nursing turns into harming, self-harming. I know, in short, the deep connection between love and hatred that lies at the core of Electra, and I loved the play for its hatred, its purity, its ferocity, its capacity to destroy.

How did being brought up in Northern Ireland help you to understand this play?  
I knew these things. I recognised them in this performance because of where I am from – Donegal, that place divided in the no-man’s-land both north and south that forms the politics of our island, that isolated county, that lonely, strange, savage, sophisticated community from which I sprang, whose marks I bear and bear, that inheritance of peasant ferocity crossed with philosophic depth, depth that comes from years, centuries of brooding what it means to be of – what it means to suffer from – the intimate and exacting gods and demons of the family, the tribe that gives and, if necessary, takes life. In short, as a boy, I was ready for Electra. But it would be many years before I would meet her again.

Tell me about your career as a playwright.  
It began in the early 1980s. My first plays concerned themselves with work and religion. The shirt factory, industry of my native town, Buncrana, lay at the centre of The Factory Girls. A troubled sexuality, violated too early, provides the broken music of Baglady. The Protestant work ethic, its power and passing, inform every episode of Observe The Sons Of Ulster Marching Towards The Somme. The Roman Catholic traditions Donegal had steeped me in provided the secrets and sacraments that pervade Innocence and Carthaginians, each seeking to violate the sacredness I was then in the business of rejecting with as much violence as that same Catholic Church had inflicted on me, and so many.

But despite the joy of finding and extending the range of my voice, I knew that were I to continue writing for the theatre, I must seek sustenance and challenge in more than the materials of my own immediate life. Opportunities to meet such challenges, to locate such sustenance, presented themselves early to me in my career.

In 1987 I was asked to provide versions of Ibsen’s Rosmersholm for the National Theatre in London and Lorca’s Yerma for
Interview

When did you write your first version of an ancient Greek play?
In 1997 I received a request from the Donmar Warehouse in London to provide them with a version of Electra by Sophocles – and the memories sprang to life. Sprang to life, I say, but also shocked me into silence – or so this request first threatened.

I knew I could not see this text with the devouring eyes of a Donegal young fellow. I had learned too much about theatre to have that particular type of hunger. So, for the first time, I sat down and read the literal version the theatre sent. And I felt nothing. No compassion, no closeness, nothing. These people and their dilemmas were a million miles from me. This coldness told me I could not do what was being asked of me. Here was a task beyond me. That, of course, enraged me. That was failure.

So I read the literal again, and in my anger, I had found Electra. She had come to me and saved the play for me, the play that in my memory I had treasured so long, for now memory was only a weapon – the necessity was to act, and to act in this case was to write, write as fiercely as possible, write in white heat – beginning, middle and end. This was the only way I could work on Electra, for I had convinced myself the play had possessed me. Or maybe it was the person, the person of Electra herself.

I knew before starting that she would be played by the great actress Zoe Wanamaker. I had heard that superlative voice, capable of registering any emotion, intelligent enough to confound any darkness, subtle and strange enough to always be her own woman – that voice aided and abetted me in the writing. And I admit that it was the power of that being, Electra herself, that thrilled me into taking on the challenge of the Greeks.

What is the essence of this play?
Electra is a wrenching study of the violence of mourning, mourning a murdered father, mourning sharpened even more keenly by knowledge of his murderer – self-confessed murderer Agamemnon’s wife, Electra’s mother, Clytemnestra. The intense analysis of Electra’s suffering is the blood of the play, but its flesh and bones are the war between mother and daughter, avenger and revenger, each hell or heaven bent on proving the other wrong in the exercise of their anger.

Anger again – that dominant passion. I adored the fury of these women, the clarity of their eloquence engaged as they were in the brute demolition of each other’s truth. And behind it all is one terrible gut-wrenching question – when love is lost, what comes instead? A grief to fill the earth, an absence never replenished, a sorrow beyond all sorrow. ‘I can no longer stomach the size of my sorrow,’ says Electra. The sheer scale of feeling operating in this play – the monumental sense of loss – the factions each convinced of their own correctness – all these are meat and drink to the playwright, but there is in Sophocles an underlying code that keeps these oceanic surges under his control, and that code is as simple, as subtle as his story.

If, with Oedipus, Sophocles is an extraordinary chronicler of how the human mind copes with extremes of terror, the terror that lasts, the terror that defines, then he matches that imaginative analysis with marvellous narrative dexterity.

Electra’s character is at the dramatic core of that play, but it is a character framed by technique, and the technique is at times as sly as the speech is shocking. Nowhere is that wonderful slyness more apparent than in the very opening of the text.

What is the plot of Electra?
If Sophocles is master of anything, then it is in his adeptness at playing with time. History here is a series of masks to be assumed and discarded as best befits the plot. Electra’s past is defined by the death of Agamemnon and the ensuing grief that consumes her. Her future, she believes, lies in her hopes for her exiled brother, Orestes – he will live to revenge their father against their mother, Clytemnestra. But the drama opens with the arrival of Orestes [unrecognized by his sister] and a faithful family servant, bringing the revelation that Orestes is dead, crushing, apparently, all Electra’s hopes for her future. The result of this is that Electra, defined by her past, hoping for her future, loses her grip on the present, which has become a complex meeting of life-in-death and death-in-life. She believes in her brother’s slaughter as deeply, as utterly, as she believed him to be her speaker. She listens to the servant’s graphic, indeed cinematic, picturing of how Orestes met his end in a chariot race.

Clytemnestra’s reaction to the news is a mixture of relief and regret, whereas Electra gives full vent to the violence of her loss, an intensity that reaches a climax when Orestes himself hands his sister what she imagines to be an urn containing his ashes.

We are instantaneously involved in and removed from Electra’s suffering, the suffering at the core of her character, but not at the core of the play. What lies there is the story, the whole story of the plot, and that demands resolution. It is resolved – Orestes
Like Electra, your version of Euripides’ Hecuba was staged, at the Donmar Warehouse, in 2004, then, the National Theatre in London asked you for Oedipus.

Yes, in the next Greek play I was to become engrossed with, I tackled the man who is unquestionably the father of all misfortune. He is Oedipus, King of Thebes.

Some 20 years ago when I was working in Maynooth College, I had commissioned a literal translation of Oedipus from my colleague in the Classics Department there, Ciaran McGoarty. I had been asked to teach the play as part of a course on tragedy and theatre, and it had entirely baffled me. I believed if I wound my way through its intricacies I might grasp the power of the whole play, but as things happen in university courses, our teaching format changed and I no longer had to lecture on this topic. So, for many years it lay untouched, unread, until I received a commission from the National Theatre in London in the summer of 2008 to provide a version of the play scheduled for production in the autumn of that year, directed by Jonathan Kent who had put Hecuba on stage at the Donmar, and starring the English classical actor Ralph Fiennes.

I mention the tight deadline between commission and delivery because without its demands I wonder if I could have taken on this work. The doubts and fear I’d faced when I was younger, trying to make a fist of this play, might have arisen again had I not been forced to sit down and tackle what I’d been asked to do immediately.

There was also one great difference in my own life in the 20 years between getting Ciaran’s literal-and-dry, my version. My father had now died. I mention this because as I worked through this play I sensed more than just a historical reference – something I had always avoided writing and, now, 10 years after his passing, this play Oedipus was giving me the opportunity to create at last.

Tell us about your feelings for Oedipus. There is no hiding place for casualness in the construction of Oedipus. Everything serves its purposes – no more, no less. Every secret will be revealed. Every lie will be exposed. Every comfort will be erased. It is a theatre that insists on telling its truth, and all touched by these truths will be transformed. It is, then, a world without stability, and so it is essential that, focused on such disturbance, the story-telling must be crafted with as sure a hand, as balanced a mind, as compassionate a heart as have ever been created in theatre before or since.

For that reason, the intelligence of the narrative design of Oedipus has long been admired. The assuredness of its poetry has long dazzled the eye and entranced the ear. The depth of its analysis of human motivation and divine mystery has long ralled the most complex and threatening insights of any great author since its composition. But if I must single out what I regard as one supreme quality in this play, it is courage. I draw a subjective difference between courage and heroism. For me, heroism is for show – courage is for survival.

Now Electra will electrify the stage again with Kristin Scott Thomas in the lead.

That’s right. I will be there for the first week of rehearsals. Kristin Scott Thomas is both beautiful and very smart. Most actresses have a grief that cannot be healed – great actresses can endure this. She has a ferocity and a vulnerability that are matched – and these traits are the essence of Electra. She also has the eloquence of silence. But Kristin is also a woman of immeasurable verbal dexterity, and Electra uses language as a weapon – she is a verbal warrior and she is much more intelligent than her peers.

Electra has a singular strength and purpose, and it is undermined by pity. She is a woman with balls and she knows how to fight like a man – she is merciless. Clytemnestra only fights like a woman. So they effectively kill each other. After Orestes murders Clytemnestra, Electra’s function ends – she has got revenge on her mother. The root of grief is revenge and vice versa.

Will this blood feud ever end and can you relate this to what has gone on in Ireland?

Athena ends a war fed by hatred. She is the miraculous divine agency who shows love to the Eumenides, the Furies, the agents of retribution, who will hound Orestes and punish him for matricide. Athena tells the unlovable that they have their place – it is no accident that she is the goddess of wisdom. She re-directs the Furies, then she employs them.

As for Ireland, having been at war for most of the 20th century, it has now rewritten the rules of engagement. There is an exhaustion with regard to violence and enmity, and those who committed the worst atrocities are suffering the most. Forgiveness is not always the answer. My mother, who was a very devout Catholic, never forgave the violent nuns who taught her at school. She said they had a licence to beat.

And will myths go on living through us?

The pattern of myths lives on. There is a sense of predictability, it goes on repeating itself, but there is also an element of the unpredictable. Myths mean what the time means. The gods make their own importance – as Patrick Kavanagh said (and only he would dare): ‘The gods are picky and not many people rise to their requirements’.

Electra opens at the Old Vic in London (www.oldvictheatre.com) on 22 September and runs until 20 December.
Ruins, reconstruction

As *Late Turner: Painting Set Free* opens at Tate Britain, its co-curator David Blayney Brown, explores how, at the end of his life, the great artist went against the flow and returned to Classical subjects for inspiration – with stunning results.
Among our greatest artists, JMW Turner (1775-1851) has been particularly prone to misunderstanding and misrepresentation. For his admirer John Ruskin, who saw it as his mission to defend him from attacks by inferior critics, he was the foremost ‘Modern Painter’, especially because of his pictorial naturalism. Ruskin’s analysis left no room for work where truth to nature was not the painter’s prime motivation, whether historical pictures that he dismissed as ‘nonsense’ and ‘preposterous accumulations’, or scenes of man-made progress, such as railways and steamships, that he loathed. No less damaging are ‘Modernist’ interpretations of Turner’s mature output, based on his large legacy of unfinished and experimental work that was not exhibited or sold in his lifetime, arising from supposed presentiments of later artistic movements such as Impressionism or abstraction.

Tate Britain’s new exhibition Late Turner: Painting Set Free liberates the artist from such reductive critiques by celebrating the full spectrum of his extraordinary creative flowering in the last 16 years of his life. From 1835, after he turned 60, he produced a group of pictures of the ancient world, its architecture, landscape, heroes and legends. However original and advanced Turner was in his painting style, his imagination was still steeped in antiquity, even as other artists were leaving it behind. When he was growing up, Classical culture was dominant but largely outside his own social and early educational background (he was the son of a London barber). His pride in the knowledge he achieved, and eagerness to continue showing it off, was surely partly because it was self-taught, or acquired on his own initiative from better-educated friends willing to tutor him.

Long stays in Italy in 1819 and 1828 and voracious reading gradually stocked his memory and entered his imagination, building a parallel historical universe that was apt to come to life in the present, much as it had in earlier sketchbooks where English river views morphed into ancient seaports complete with triremes and galleys.

But as important for Turner as travel and reading were pictorial sources, paintings by Old Masters, such as Claude Lorrain or Nicolas Poussin, who reconstructed ancient architecture. Turner, who had once thought of becoming an architect, honing his drawing skills in architects’ offices, turned himself into a modern Claude. Among his close friends were the Neo-Classical architects John Nash and John Soane. The latter was a fellow-professor at the Royal Academy and, using Soane’s superb library, they prepared their lectures together.

### 1. The Parting of Hero and Leander, 1837, oil on canvas, 1461mm x 2362mm. Lent by the Trustees of the National Gallery 1988.
Soane on architecture and Turner on perspective. While travelling abroad, Turner had a keen eye for modern Classical buildings, such as those by Karl Friedrich Schinkel in Berlin or Leo von Klenze in Bavaria. Having visited von Klenze’s nearly completed temple to German art and science, the Walhalla beside the Danube at Regensburg, he painted an imaginary picture of its opening, which he sent for exhibition in Munich. Sadly, the Germans did not appreciate Turner’s depiction of the massive building as if through morning mist. For the artist, the glow of daybreak was as symbolic as the structure itself of their cultural renaissance after the Napoleonic Wars.

If his German audience expected factual detail in the portrayal of this real modern building, in pictures of ancient subjects Turner could indulge in spectacular reconstructions, more imaginative than literal. For *The Parting of Hero and Leander – from the Greek of Musaeus* (1) he rewrote a passage from the poem (as he explained in the picture’s title) and reimagined the legend, depicting the lovers embracing beside the Hellespont in their last moments when, properly, Leander drowned on his way to meet Hero. The background is a vision of the Greek city of Sestos rising in tiers and terraces of marble and mosaic and lit by a stormy dawn, a fittingly theatrical, even operatic setting for the incipient tragedy.

Directing the drama, Turner is not just a history painter and antiquarian but an architect *manqué* building a splendid fantasy. His moody lighting and shifting shadows render it unstable, shot through with uncertainty about the lovers’ fate and the will of the gods whose pawns they are. However sketchy or amateur Turner’s Classical education had been, he had grasped the vulnerability and unpredictability of life in the ancient world.

As a painter of nature, he saw how these stories could match, as they had once been told to explain, the workings of natural phenomena beyond human control. This understanding led him to represent ancient subjects in an expressive, emotive way quite unlike that of conventional history painters.

For earlier artists such as Benjamin West, the ideal of Classical historical painting was the *exemplum virtutis*, telling a clear story of bravery, sacrifice or moral probity. In Turner’s *Regulus*, the hero is not so much the Roman patriot tortured and killed after disobeying the orders of his Carthaginian captors, as the blazing sunlight that blinded him after they cut off his eyelids. Even as he imagines Carthage in the idiom of a Claude seaport, Turner almost obliterates it in the glare.

Change and decay are visible here less in the person of the doomed Regulus, who is hard to identify, than in the fabric of the long-vanished city and perhaps in Turner’s sense of himself if, as there might now be reason to believe, he was beginning to suffer the effects of light-induced cataracts. Light as both an animating and a dissolving force was a recurrent theme in his work, especially in later life.

But Regulus may not have been the only Roman who prompted Turner to bouts of self-reflection. As his pictures fell prey to increasingly vindictive criticism in the press, and the Gothic Revival of the 1830s turned the tide against Classical culture, dismissing it as decadent or even evil, the eventual downfall of such iconic Romans as the poet Ovid and the orator and jurist Cicero came to mind as prototypes – not so much of virtue as of reversals of fortune. In *Ovid Banished from Rome* Turner reconstructed the city as the setting for the poet’s departure, ordered into exile by the emperor for immoral writings and intrigue. For Turner, Ovid perhaps presented a persecuted artist, a Romantic type and, if remembered as such, not dead and irrelevant at all – even if his works were not still read. Besides portraying
the poet himself, Turner painted a series of pictures illustrating Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, such as *Bacchus and Ariadne* (2), keeping his writings alive for a modern audience.

In *Cicero at his Villa* (4), Turner shows the Roman surveying the magnificent grounds of his villa, perhaps for the last time at the moment of his own arrest. The picture is ambiguous, for the dialogue taking place between Cicero in his white magistrate’s robe and a dark-cloaked man also recalls the passage in Cicero’s *De Legibus* praising a place on his estate so perfect that it seemed ideally formed for a debate on nature and natural law. Turner’s conceptual horizon here is wide, from Cicero’s heyday to his execution, later rehabilitation and rediscovery, and to Richard Wilson, an earlier British painter of the same subject whose reputation collapsed after his death and had not yet recovered.

In an earlier Academy lecture on ‘Backgrounds’, Turner had linked the fates of Cicero and Wilson, the one dreaming of a peaceful retirement, the other succumbing to ‘acute anguish’ and dying neglected – the fate of many artists and perhaps one he feared for himself. The ghost of Wilson (the first really notable British historical painter) in Turner’s Cicero is a reminder that West had painted a picture of Regulus for George III along with another subject of Roman virtue, the devotion of the widow Agrippina to the ashes of her deceased husband Germanicus, a narrative that Turner added (anachronistically) to a painting called *Ancient Rome* that he paired with one of the modern city. In pictures like these he could make comparisons and connections across millennia – in deep time as it were – or his own lifespan.

Exhibited in 1839 these pictures, with their exceptional focus on architecture, both in its prime and in a state of decay, were probably memorials to Sir John Soane, who had died two years earlier. In *Ancient Rome* (3) the imperial city appears in splendour with a
'triumphal bridge and palace of the Caesars restored', an echo of a fantasy bridge designed for London by the young Soane, who won a gold medal for it at the Royal Academy in 1776. Modern Rome reprised a subject Turner had previously painted for Soane: the Forum, ruined and repopulated by churches, goatherds and an archaeologist at work on a column. As Turner knew, Soane had fallen out of favour, spending his last years bemoaning the ravages of 'all-devouring time' and deriving a macabre fascination from fantasies by his favourite pupil JM Gandy of his landmark Bank of England as a roofless ruin, adrift in some dystopian future. Yet Soane had bequeathed a permanent museum preserving his work and collections, as Turner was to do.

But Turner's pictures express continuity rather than rupture, linked as they are by the same warm, pink-tinged light, be it of morning or evening, and by related motifs: the imperial bridge, the inscription PONT MAX (Pontifex Maximus) alluding to the construction work of emperors and popes, and the clock-like turns of a water-wheel. Depicting Tivoli and the Campagna in a painting of Modern Italy to pair Ovid Banished from Rome, Turner included peasant pifferari playing their bagpipes to images of the Virgin, latter-day descendants of ancients playing music to the gods described in Ovid's Fasti. That the past lives in the present, and the arts endure, was a reassuring message to offset against the gloomier prospects presented by vanished powers like Rome or Carthage to modern Britain, still a rising empire when Turner was painting.

Turner's Classical subjects are more nuanced than merely nostalgic attempts to stem the current of contemporary culture. While to persist with such pictures towards mid-century would have seemed old-fashioned, they were painted with such freshness and brilliance that they seemed entirely new, as if ancient stories were being told or events happening for the first time. It is all the more remarkable that they were the work of an ageing and increasingly infirm painter.

Turner's last exhibits at the Royal Academy in 1850 retold Virgil's story of the love-affair of Dido and Aeneas at Carthage in his most ethereal late style. Reinventions once again of Claude, they may have been intended to counter Ruskin's denunciation of Turner's 'wicked rivalry' with that master. Be this as it may, they were Turner's farewell to his living audience, and tellingly, in the first picture of the set, Mercury seems to have melted into air after delivering his message that Aeneas is neglecting his fleet and future. Perhaps this is an invitation to read the message of the pictures themselves, in which ruin and revival, the eventual fall of Carthage and rise of Rome, play out as part of the historical cycle. The author of verses called 'Fallacies of Hope', which he quoted with these pictures, Turner has often been seen as an incorrigible pessimist. He is better described as a fatalist who accepted historical inevitability, but dared to hope that his legacy and the culture it embodied would not ultimately be lost.
21-26 November 2014
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Beyond the Crusader stronghold of Birejick, which is now nothing more than a crumbling, cliff-top shell, the Euphrates River cuts through a rolling green and stony landscape. To the west is Gaziantep, the pistachio capital, famous for its baklava and a new museum of Roman-era mosaics. To the east lies Sanliurfa, which the Crusaders called Edessa, and Gobekli Tepe with its remarkable 11,000-year-old stone monuments. Follow the river downstream for less than 20 broad miles beyond Birejick and it bends around a huge mound. The Turkish military use this as a vantage point from which to watch movement across the stressed border with Syria. The 100-metre-high mound beneath their huts and guns is what remains of the walled acropolis of the Hittite city of Carchemish. For three years before the outbreak of the First World War, this site was what the young archaeologist Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935) called home and where he acquired skills and understanding that he later used to such great effect in Arabia.

The British Museum opened the dig at Carchemish in 1910. It had hoped to mount a major expedition in the Ottoman East when John Garstang was granted permission to excavate the Hittite capital of Boghaz Köy in Anatolia in 1904. But political tensions between Turkey and Britain, and the intervention of the German Kaiser, led to Garstang’s permit being cancelled. Hugo Winckler of the German Oriental Institute went to Boghaz Köy and soon discovered a cache of some 10,000 clay tablets.

Excitement over the discovery was mitigated by the fact that Hittites had used three different scripts, one of which, a form of hieroglyphs, had not been translated. In the wake of Winckler’s discovery, the British Museum sent David Hogarth, keeper at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, to look for alternative sites, and Hogarth recommended that they dig at Carchemish. Apart from the promising mound, Hogarth knew that the Pharaoh Necho had fought Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish. He also knew that the city sat on the linguistic frontier between Hittites, Egyptians, Assyrians and Persians, a likely place, therefore, to look for a multilingual inscription – a ‘Hittite Rosetta Stone’ – that would allow the lost language of the Euphrates.

Before spearheading the cause of a free Arabia, TE Lawrence spent time working as an archaeologist in the Near East – as Anthony Sattin describes in his fascinating new biography
to be recovered. The team that arrived in Carchemish in March 1911, delayed by snowstorms that had closed the Beirut railway, included Hogarth as director, the Semitic language scholar Reginald Campbell Thompson as assistant and Gregorios Antoniou – Gregori, a former tomb-robber from Cyprus who had run all of Hogarth’s digs since the two had first met in 1888 – as foreman of the 100-strong team of local workmen.

It also included TE Lawrence, a 22-year-old Oxford graduate. Hogarth had known Lawrence for a couple of years, first as a donor to the Ashmolean’s medieval pottery collection, then as someone who had walked through what is now Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and into Palestine looking at Crusader castles for his Oxford thesis. Recognizing the young man’s exceptional abilities, and exaggerating his fluency in Arabic, Hogarth had asked the British Museum to cover Lawrence’s expenses on the dig and then persuaded Magdalen College to offer him a grant.

‘Work begins at sunrise,’ wrote Lawrence with enthusiasm of his first days as an archaeologist. ‘We breakfast first and then walk down [to the tell] a little later. Thompson is surveying the site... Mr Hogarth does the writing up of the results: I do the squeezing and drawing the inscriptions and sculptures, and (with the great Gregori...) direct the men.’ Digging, he thought, was ‘like Pandora’s box, with Hope in the last spit of earth’.

But with a tight budget, hope was always weighed against expectations, and by the end of April Hogarth was on his way back to London. They had found plenty of building stones, evidence of a palace and shrines, a lower town and outer walls, of the various layers of Hittite, Assyrian and Roman occupation. But there were few inscriptions and nothing in several languages. In late June, Thompson and Lawrence prepared to close the digs.

By then Lawrence had discovered several things. One was that he loved the life, the place and the people he was working with. Lying on the mound one night, with the river rushing below, he wrote that ‘our diggings are certainly in one of the loveliest spots in the world: and in one of the most memorable’.

He also discovered that he enjoyed being what he called doctor and father and godfather and best man to the workforce. One in particular had caught his eye, a good-looking donkey-boy called Dahoum, who had managed to teach himself to read a few words.

Gertrude Bell, the intrepid travel-ler and writer, visited the digs before they closed: it was the first meeting between two people who were to do so much to shape the Middle East. Bell wrote that the young man ‘is going to make a traveller’, something with which Lawrence would have agreed: when the dig closed and Thompson hurried home to be married, Lawrence went on another of his demanding summer tramps, designed as much to mortify the flesh as to uncover any architectural mystery although, officially, he was gathering material for his Magdalen College research. On his first solo walk through the region, while still a student, he had been attacked and robbed not far from Carchemish. The summer 1911 walk also ended badly when he caught typhoid. He limped back to the village, where the headman, Hamoudi, took him in and Dahoum looked after him until he was strong enough to get back to England.

When he left, he did so without knowing whether he would return, for the British Museum was reluctant to continue funding the dig without something spectacular to show for its faith and cash.

Fate intervened in the shape of Walter Morrison, Member of Parliament and benefactor of the Palestine Exploration Fund among other things, who was sufficiently
impressed by a lecture Hogarth gave on the prospects for Carchemish that he wrote a cheque there and then to fund the coming season. By December 1911, Lawrence was sailing back to Beirut to check on the site at Carchemish. Hogarth then wanted him to spend some weeks in Egypt learning in the field with Sir Flinders Petrie (1853-1942), before returning to Carchemish to build an expedition house and wait for the arrival of the new director, Leonard Woolley (1880-1960) in 1912.

All the elements of Lawrence's next few years were now in place. He had dreamed of setting up a printing press in the style of William Morris at Kelmscott. He wanted to emulate Charles Doughty, both as a traveller among the Arabs and as an author. He thought he might like to live a Hogarth sort of life, digging, collecting, writing, lecturing, perhaps attached to a museum.

But, for now, he was an assistant at Carchemish, and a very pleasant life it was turning out to be:

'I have got to like this place very much: and the people here – five or six of them – and the whole manner of living pleases me. We have 200 men to play with, anyhow we like so long as the excavations go on, and they are splendid fellows many of them (I had two of them – headmen – in England with me this summer) and it is great fun with them. Then there are the digs, with dozens of wonderful things to find – it is like a great sport with tangible results at the end of things – and hosts of beautiful things in the villages and towns to fill one's house with. Not to mention [Hittite] seal-hunting in the country round about, and the Euphrates to rest in when one is over-hot. It is a place where one eats lotos [sic] nearly every day.'

The Euphrates had also attracted German engineers working on a railway that would stretch from Berlin via Istanbul and Aleppo to Baghdad. Carchemish had been chosen as the best place for their railway bridge. Some writers have seen more than coincidence in the combination of Lawrence and the building of the railway and have imagined that the British Museum dig was a front for British intelligence. If this is true, then, so far, there is no evidence to support it.

Dahoum was one of the two headmen Lawrence had taken to Oxford in the summer of 1913. The former water-carrier had risen fast under Lawrence's tutelage, had learned to read more Arabic, to make squeezes of inscriptions, use the camera and develop in the darkroom. He and Lawrence became inseparable and for several years worked alongside each other most days.

Because of his ability to get by in Arabic, his youth and his empathy for the local peoples – Kurds, Armenians, Arabs and others – Lawrence had much influence in the region. William Lawrence, his young brother, who stayed with him that summer, wrote to their mother: 'You must think of him as a great power in the land for good: the Kurds apply to him continually, as arbitrator in tribal differences, and he has contrived to keep his village... sober.' Not bad for a 25-year-old.

Dahoum, Lawrence's companion, had a more passionate view: 'Who can help loving him?' he asked a mutual friend. 'He is our brother, our friend and leader. He is one of us, there is nothing we do he cannot do, and he then excels us in doing it. He takes such an interest in us and cares for our welfare. We respect him and greatly admire his courage and bravery.'

This empathy, affection and understanding might have been put to some great academic project. Perhaps Lawrence would have enjoyed the sort of fame that Woolley was to enjoy in the 1920s in Ur. Perhaps he would have fulfilled his intention to travel with a particularly primitive tribe of Arabs to hunt with salukis in the desert and write a classic account that would now stand alongside Doughty and Thesiger. But the war was coming.

In January 1914, Woolley and Lawrence were invited to join a Palestine Exploration Fund survey of the Wilderness of Zin looking for evidence of the passage of Moses and his people. This was also the
one part of the eastern approach to the Suez Canal for which Field Marshal Kitchener, then British Agent in Egypt, soon to be Secretary of State for War, did not have an accurate map. Dahoum went with them into Sinai. They were back in Carchemish in March, in time to reopen the digs. Although they had not found the multilingual inscription, they had revealed palaces and temples, gates and walls and houses.

Lawrence's expedition house was decorated with Roman mosaics and Hittite treasures, the museum he had created was packed with finds, and there was much still to be done. So when, in June 1914, he left Dahoum – for the first time in a year and a half – and headed back to England, he imagined that he would return to Carchemish in a few weeks. The assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne ensured that did not happen. After that, Lawrence went from Oxford to London, to Cairo and then to Arabia.

Woolley, who worked in the Cairo intelligence bureau in 1916, spent most of the rest of the war in a Turkish prison camp. After the armistice, he was sent to reopen the Carchemish digs. The area was still volatile, with Turks, French, Kurds and Arabs all vying for territory and influence. Under the circumstances, it was decided that Lawrence should not be allowed back. By 1920, even Woolley was forced to pull out and neither he, nor Lawrence, ever returned there.

As the Carchemish tell sits on the Turkish-Syrian border, it has remained a military zone ever since, but excavations resumed in 2011 under a joint Turco-Italian mission. Hittite hieroglyphs were translated during the First World War by the Czech scholar Dr Friedrich Hrozny. No multilingual stones were ever found. As for TE Lawrence, he died aged 46, after a motorcycle accident near his home in Dorset.

‘Our diggings are certainly in one of the loveliest spots in the world: and in one of the most memorable’
Momentous events signalled the demise of the brilliant palatial cultures of the Bronze Age, during which the rulers of the great territorial states of Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia and Egypt were referred to as ‘brothers’, with international contacts that reached the royal houses of Mycenaean Greece. This was Homer’s ‘Age of Heroes’, as expressed in works of art such as an ivory plaque depicting a Mycenaean warrior, made in the Late Bronze Age, but found centuries later in the sanctuary of Artemis on the island of Delos.

With the massive destructions and movements of ‘sea peoples’ and ‘land peoples’ that enveloped the eastern Mediterranean in an, albeit brief, Dark Age, what emerged was a dramatically different world of smaller states in unstable circumstances, under constant threat of an expanding Assyrian empire.

This is the Age of Iron – a material that replaced bronze for the weapons of war and the tools of agriculture – that is brought to life in Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age, which opens at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on 22 September. It is a time during which networks of exchange proliferated as Phoenician seafarers, who mastered the art of navigating the Mediterranean in new and improved ships, set their sails for the farthest reaches of this inland sea and beyond the Pillars of Hercules to the Atlantic. This is also the world of Odysseus and a time alluded to in the Bible, with stories such as that of Hiram of Tyre who supplied cedar-wood for Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem, and of the marriage of the Phoenician princess Jezebel and the Israelite king Ahab of Samaria, against a backdrop of confrontations with the kings of Assyria and Babylonia.

Like the Metropolitan Museum’s
previous exhibitions, *Beyond Babylon: Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium BC* (2008) and *Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium BC from the Mediterranean to the Indus* (2003), this one is based on the premise, expressed so well by the historian Jerry Bentley, that ‘networks of cross-cultural interaction, communication, and exchange are defining contexts of human historical experience... indispensable for... understanding the trajectories of individual societies and the development of the larger world’.

Spanning a vast territory that extends beyond the Assyrian heartland, and a maritime network that stretches to the western frontier of the ancient world, *Assyria to Iberia* explores the interrelations that arose during the expansion of the Assyrian empire, the spread of Phoenician trade and colonization across the Mediterranean, and the ‘Orientalizing era’ in the art of the Greek world and in Etruria, where contact with Near Eastern luxury goods had a profound impact on local art forms. It focuses attention on the strength and persistence of cultural traditions, manifest especially in the continuity or revival of potent imagery and stylistic features as well as the practice of the crafts of ivory-carving and metalworking in the Levant, Cyprus, and eventually throughout the Mediterranean basin. It also addresses the transfer of precious raw materials and perishable items and the development of industries for the creation and distribution of textiles and objects of vitreous materials.

Politically, the early first millennium BC is dominated by the rise and fall of the Assyrian empire. The ancient state of Assyria was small, an area of fertile land around the River Tigris in northern Iraq, but its kings would come to rule almost the entire Near East, a great swath of territory stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. At its height in the 7th century BC, the empire would even incorporate Egypt. The power of the king was expressed most monumentally...
in the spectacular bas-reliefs, once brightly painted, that lined the walls of palaces, with some of the most celebrated depictions of royal domination in hunting and war.

The iconography and artistic conventions of the Assyrian court made an impact not only within the enormous empire, the largest the world had yet seen, but also in bordering states such as Urartu (4). At the same time, as a result of plunder and tribute, vast quantities of luxury goods – including some of the finest Syrian and Phoenician ivories and metalwork – were brought to the Assyrian capital of Nimrud. Furthermore, an imperial policy of deporting large parts of the populations of conquered areas to the imperial core, whether to quell rebellions or to make better use of available labour, created a more cosmopolitan Near East, in which not Assyrian but Aramaic emerged as the lingua franca.

Assyrian campaigns in western Asia turned, in time, into permanent rule there. For the Assyrians, the small polities of Syria and the Levant represented potential tribute and booty. Of special interest, however, were the Phoenician city-states, clustered along the coast of what is now Lebanon and Syria, and their growing trading networks. Sailors from cities such as Tyre and Sidon ventured ever farther afield in search of raw materials, especially metals, with which to produce luxury goods for trade. The network expanded to cover the entire Mediterranean Sea, from Lebanon and Cyprus in the east to Sardinia and Iberia in the west. Phoenician colonies founded on the coast of North Africa included the city of Carthage, which would one day build an empire of its own. Appropriately, our knowledge of Phoenician art comes not so much from the Phoenician homeland itself as from this far-flung network of colonies and trading posts. The fine craft products they and other Near Eastern artisans created fed into a new, shared set of feasting practices, with their attendant material culture, that would take root across the Near East and Mediterranean.

Most iconic are bronze or gilt-silver bowls, intricately decorated in relief, and exquisite ivory inlays (6) that embellished couches, seats and tables. One unique Assyrian relief, from Nineveh, shows the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal (7), reclining on just such a couch, drinking with his queen, in a scene that appears bucolic until you notice the severed head of an enemy king hanging from the branch of a nearby tree. Less sinister banquet scenes became common across the Mediterranean, most famously as the format of the Greek symposium but also in Etruscan tombs, where fine Near Eastern gold and silver bowls and ewers also appear.

On the fringes of the Assyrian empire, in the southern Levant, small kingdoms competed with one another and tried to negotiate relations with the empire that would eventually incorporate them all. Two such states were Israel and Judah. This is the period in which much of the Hebrew Bible took shape, and many biblical connections are visible in the archaeological record and in ancient texts.

One of the most significant treasures in the show is the stele found at the site of Tell Dan (8). Inscribed in Aramaic, it boasts of victories, most probably of Hazael, the king of Aram-Damascus, and provides the only attestation of the House of David other than the Bible. Hazael’s name appears on horse ornaments that eventually found their way to sanctuaries in Greece – possibly via Assyria, after Damascus itself was conquered. The siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian ruler Sennacherib is recorded on a cuneiform prism in the show, offering quite a different perspective on the event than the one told in the Bible.

Some of the most beautiful ancient Phoenician and Syrian ivories have been found at the Israelite capital of Samaria (9), evoking biblical references to Ahab’s Ivory House, and connections with Phoenicia that are suggested by his marriage to a Phoenician...
princess – namely the much-maligned Jezebel.

In the midst of the Assyrian expansion and the Phoenician maritime enterprises that reached the eastern shores of the Atlantic Ocean, imported goods, technologies, and specialists appear to have inspired an ‘Orientalizing era’ in the arts. The great sanctuaries of the Greek world were replete with votive offerings, among them Near Eastern imports and works infused with eastern imagery. Burials at the site of Eleutherna (in Crete) have produced an astounding corpus of imported and Orientalizing metalwork (3), and nearby, in the cave of Zeus on Mt Ida, Phoenician ivories and bowls were deposited, along with an impressive corpus of Cretan bronze shields and a tympanum, which adapt Near Eastern forms and imagery.

Among the exotic finds in the wealthy tombs of Etruria are Phoenician metalwork and large cauldrons embellished with sirens (human-headed birds) – many of North Syrian origin – as well as griffins and lions. Such vessels, associated with banqueting, were discovered in royal tombs, one outstanding example at Salamis on Cyprus (10), while numerous siren-, griffin- and other animal-shaped cauldron attachments were found in Greek sanctuaries, with impressive numbers on Samos, at Delphi and at Olympia.

Letters and literature, as well as the arts, were deeply affected by the cultural contacts that proliferated during the Iron Age. Arguably the most significant of all was the transmission of the Phoenician alphabet, which brought literacy to the Mediterranean. ‘Phoenician letters’ were borrowed, then adapted to create the Greek and Etruscan alphabetic scripts, and the former would soon be used to write down Homer’s epics, the Iliad and Odyssey. In these works we see the Phoenicians through Greek eyes, as sailors famed for their ships, creators of extraordinary silver vessels and textiles magnificent enough to be dedicated to the goddess Athena on the one hand, but also as ‘greedy rogues – with a whole cargo of trinkets in their black ship’ (Odyssey, 15.415).

After centuries of military dominance, the Assyrian empire collapsed at the end of the 7th century BC. An alliance between Babylon, in southern Iraq, and Media, in western Iran, led in 612 BC to the sack of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh. An Egyptian attempt to shore up Assyrian power and increase its influence in the Levant came too late and, by 605 BC, Babylon had established itself as the new ruler of Assyria’s former territories. Under Nebuchadnezzar II, Babylon itself was rebuilt on a grand scale, with palaces, temples and city walls befitting the largest and most powerful city in the world. Its grand northern entrance, the Ishtar Gate, was covered in vivid blue-glazed bricks, and relief images depicting hundreds of bulls, lions and dragons (1). Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon inherited a closely interwoven Near East, connected by the Aramaic language, by trade and administration, by the Assyrian deportations and by more under the Babylonians: the most famous of all, the removal of much of Jerusalem’s population to Babylon, took place under Nebuchadnezzar.

This event, and the period that followed, was remembered in detail in the Bible, making Nebuchadnezzar’s name infamous in later periods. At the time, the Judaean presence contributed to what was already a cosmopolitan city – and the greatest cultural and scholarly capital of its age.

In the next few centuries, efforts by foreign scholars to understand and translate Babylonian cuneiform works on mathematics, astronomy and medicine meant that this knowledge would pass into the ancient Greek world, even as literacy in cuneiform began its terminal decline. (The last securely dated cuneiform texts come from the 1st century AD.)

That this was a period of profound interconnections across the region is demonstrated by the richness of its cultural legacy. Through the Bible and the Homeric epics, memories have been preserved of the Iron Age and its interactions. From the Tower of Babel to the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and from Homeric voyages to Greek legends of the wealth of King Midas of Phrygia and King Croesus of Lydia, the world of the Iron Age has inspired art and poetry ever since. In this, and in laying the foundations for the great artistic and cultural changes that were to follow in the Mediterranean and Near East, it is a period of exciting and truly momentous change across the region – and of some of the most beautiful and breathtaking of all ancient art.
There is a local saying: ‘Happy is he who owns but a goat enclosure in Mount Lebanon’, and we can soon see why. Blessed with fertile terraces and abundant springs, the prosperity and peacefulness of the mountains of north Lebanon defy the turbulence of the wider region, and the local inhabitants, Maronite Christians, are determined to keep it that way.

Not many tourists go there these days, yet it feels perfectly safe to us. Even on the ever-cautious Foreign Office’s Travel Advice website this chunk of Lebanon is reassuringly coloured green, a whole mountain chain away from the red that forms a fringe round the skirts of the north-eastern border with Syria.

High in these Maronite heartlands lies Lebanon’s Qadisha Valley (*qadisha* is Syriac for ‘sacred’), which earned its status as a World Heritage Site in 1998 thanks to an exceptional concentration of early monastic settlements built into its caves and cliffs, together with its Forest of the Cedars of God towering above at 2000 metres. Spiritual calm, irrespective of your religion or politics, is your reward for exploring this region.

According to the 12th-century traveller Ibn Jubayr, the valley used to shelter Sufis (Muslim mystics) as well as Christians of various sects, and the sound of their prayers – in Arabic, Greek and Syriac – could be heard mingling together as they wafted up from the valley floor. A Mamluk sultan escaping persecution from his rivals was even given refuge here by a Christian patriarch, and in return the sultan later exempted the patriarchate from taxes as a token of his appreciation.

This area’s sanctity is exceeded only by its beauty, and the lush valley is alive with colourful floral exotica such as Galilean orchids and Pearl-bordered fritillaries. Waterfalls cascade through gorges and nature runs riot. Eco-tourism: thy name is Qadisha!

As camping is not allowed, my

It may not be at the top of a holiday list, but many parts of Lebanon are both secure and welcoming, as Diana Darke discovers when she and her family go on a tour from the mountains to the sea.
husband, son and I stay in the monasteries themselves. Affable Father Nabih at the Houb monastery of Mar Antonius entertains us royally at a dinner washed down with home-grown wine and spring water. He explains how he is in negotiations to set up a plant to bottle and sell the water under the monastery’s name. Like their Phoenician ancestors, these Lebanese Christians are instinctive businessmen.

Quarrels that they have had over the years with their neighbours have been less about religion than about land and money. Father Nabih tends a flock of some 50 local families who work on the monastery’s terraced fields, bound inextricably into the church community. They take the produce, the monastery takes a commission. At breakfast he spreads before us a succulent array of his homemade jams—fig, apricot, strawberry and apple—and, then as we leave, stuffs a jar into my rucksack. “Bodily sustenance,” he insists.

Well educated and well travelled, he tells us how he has visited London, Europe, America and Russia. Monks here have come a long way since the original St Maron, a 5th-century recluse after whom the Maronites are named.

Maron fled from his native Syria, where he lived on the banks of the Orontes River near Emessa, today’s...
Homs, to escape persecution from fellow Christians.

Will war come to Lebanon again? Who knows? But whatever happens in the wider region, life in the Qadisha is likely to remain immune, one small pocket of serenity. Emerging from the valley after several days spent walking, we, like the monks, felt imbued with sanctity and with a better understanding of another local proverb: ‘The wealth of the Maronites is for their priests.’

But the Qadisha Valley is not the only safe haven in Lebanon. True, UNESCO World Heritage Sites like Baalbek in the Beqaa Valley, Anjar near the Syrian border and Tyre in the extreme south are all currently inadvisable destinations because of their locations in geopolitical hotspots, but the vast bulk of Lebanon’s treasures remain easily accessible.

Byblos, the Phoenician-Roman-Crusader site on the coast less than 40 kilometres north of Beirut, has even declared itself a ‘War Free World Heritage City’ – a European Union-funded project designed to protect the ancient city from the effects of armed conflict. An essential part of the project is that, contrary to its function throughout history, when its 25-metre-thick Phoenician ramparts and robust Crusader castle defended against invaders from land and sea, it has undertaken never to be used for modern military purposes or to shield military sites.

An enlightened policy indeed, from which neighbouring Syria, with all six of its UNESCO World Heritage Sites currently in use by its own government as military strongholds, is too late to learn. In Lebanon even the military personnel themselves receive training in the importance of protecting cultural heritage.

Today in Byblos the 12th-century Crusader castle houses a museum displaying some of the earliest finds unearthed here, dating from 6000 BC onwards, although the city’s heyday began circa 3000 BC, when it traded Lebanese cedarwood in exchange for papyrus, gold and linen from the pharaohs of Egypt. Originally known as Gebal (Arabic, Jbail), the city was renamed ‘Byblos’ by the Greeks in recognition of its papyrus/paper trade, for it was here that the Phoenicians first developed the 22-letter phonetic alphabet on which our Latin script is based. Phoenician and Roman temples have been excavated, along with a royal necropolis, theatre and odeon. Immediately beside the extensive archaeological site, the restored medieval souks lead into the picturesque horseshoe-shaped harbour lined with fish restaurants, reminiscent of Kyrenia in North Cyprus.

South of Beirut, too, there are other safe havens to discover. The Chouf Mountains, historic heartlands of the Druze community, are highly scenic and heavily forested. An hour’s drive from Beirut, at 850 metres, is the imposing Beiteddine Palace built by the last Prince of Lebanon, the Emir Bashir II, between 1788 and 1840. A blend of Italianate and Arab design, its architects were brought from Damascus. The tranquil gardens, courtyards, cypress trees and vibrant flowers are Lebanon’s answer to the Alhambra, and the palace has been used as a summer residence by whoever has been fortunate – or unfortunate – enough to be the Lebanese president. The stables below the main palace house a remarkable display of Byzantine mosaics from the 5th and 6th centuries. Today, defying the ravages of the 15-year civil war, it is beautifully restored again and open to the public as a museum, thanks to funds provided by the current Druze leader Walid Jumblatt. He also helped the nearby much smaller Mir Amin Palace to be restored as a magnificent luxury hotel.

In the mountains a little below Beiteddine is a whole town that qualifies as an architectural gem. Deir Al-Qamar is the 16th-century capital of Mount Lebanon and home to the national Druze hero Fakhreddine Maan (1572-1635), who challenged Ottoman rule and unified Christians and Druze.

A beautiful collection of palaces, mosques and early churches surround the central square, which has a piazza-like atmosphere, with street cafés tucked into shady corners. The town today is overwhelmingly Christian, and still hosts an annual summer art and music festival, as does Beiteddine.

Back down on the coast barely
45 kilometres south of Beirut sits Sidon, Lebanon’s third largest city after Beirut and Tripoli, whose harbour is dominated by the Crusader Sea Castle, joined to the mainland by an 800-metre causeway. The castle rests on the foundations of a Phoenician temple to the god Melqart, later reused by the Greeks and Romans, and the Crusaders recycled many of the blocks and columns to build their walls. Some of its pillars are of Aswan’s pink granite and were clearly shipped here from Egypt centuries ago.

Immediately opposite the castle, Sidon’s souks form a maze of alleys similar to those in Damascus, the city for which Sidon once served as a port. Tucked away inside them is the lavish, but discreet, Debbané Palace, an 18th-century home until 1978, when the civil war forced the family out to make way for hundreds of refugees. After the war it was restored, and it opened to the public in 2001. Then there is the Soap Museum, a 17th-century factory that exported soap to France, and now a startlingly high-tech museum (opened in 2000), immaculately restored by the Audi family.

Nearby is the Great Omari Mosque, which was originally the 13th-century Church of the Knights of St John. Heavily damaged during the 1982 Israeli invasion, it was restored thanks to the generosity of Rafiq Al-Hariri, a native of Sidon and former prime minister, receiving in 1989 the coveted Agha Khan Award for Architecture. Today, Old Sidon, with a mingling of minarets and church towers, is reminiscent of Old Damascus, although, like the Syrian capital, its Christian residents are today heavily outnumbered by Sunni Muslims.

The highlight of our trip to Lebanon, for its sheer unexpectedness, is a visit to the Phoenician Temple of Echmoun, two kilometres north of Sidon and ringed by citrus plantations. Dating from the 7th century BC, it is the sole Phoenician site to have more than its foundations surviving, and is the closest thing to Amrit, the Phoenician site near Syria’s Tartous. Echmoun was the Phoenician god of healing, identified with the Greek Asklepios, whose name is derived from the ancient name of the nearby Awali River. Heavily overgrown and suffering from terrible neglect, the site is nevertheless highly atmospheric. You have to push through reeds and undergrowth to reach the temple sanctuary, with its series of ritual ablution basins fed by water from the river. In the centre sits the most surprising thing of all – the mighty Throne of Astarte, the Phoenician fertility goddess, cut from a single block of granite, flanked by winged sphinxes and a pair of lions. Simply too massive and weighty to be removable by looters, it sits on a podium overlooking a paved pool. Behind the throne are hunting scenes carved in relief on the rock face. The oldest building at the site, dating from Babylonian times (605-539 BC), is a pyramidal monument like a ziggurat. A monumental stairway leads up to the 5th-century BC Phoenician temple, and scattered among the undergrowth are fragments of 3rd-century Byzantine mosaics.

A 45-minute drive south-east from Sidon and into the mountains takes us to the dramatically located Crusader castle of Beaufort, rising 700 metres above the Litani River and commanding views into Israel, Syria and Lebanon. It has suffered a turbulent past, most recently when, having displaced its inhabitants (Palestinian refugees from the Lebanese civil war), Israeli soldiers occupied it until 2000. Today extensive renovations are under way and, while the upper sections have collapsed, the lower ones are surprisingly well-preserved thanks to the sheer thickness of the walls. They seem to reflect Lebanon’s resilience and determination to rebuild its cultural heritage while defying its recent history.

Diana Darke’s Qadisha Valley trek and tour of Lebanon was arranged by the London-based, ATOL-bonded and fully insured company Travel The Unknown (www.traveltheunknown.com).

My House in Damascus: An Inside View of the Syrian Revolution by Diana Darke is published in paperback and ebook by Haus at £10.49.
As Ming: 50 years that changed China opens at the British Museum, its co-curator Jessica Harrison-Hall recalls her first days in a Far Eastern land that has the ability to transform itself beyond all recognition.

It was exactly 30 years ago, in September 1984, that I first set foot in China. At 19, I was the perfect age to adapt to any situation and normalize all experiences. I had spent only a year studying the Chinese language before travelling to China. My study had included memorizing children’s fairy tales, Mao Zedong’s speeches and set-piece dialogues about how well my younger sister could order Chinese dishes. Along with a small group of fellow language students, I was given absolutely no directions as to how to get to the University of Shandong, Jinan, nor was I told what to take for a year in a country whose Cultural Revolution had ended only eight years earlier. There was no internet, no Google maps and only rare opportunities to make international phone calls. There were no direct flights and certainly no funds to fly home before the end of the year. I flew to Hong Kong, then boarded a train to Jinan, which took days puffing its way through the most beautiful countryside and the greyest of industrial towns.

Three decades later, China is transformed and I am celebrating the anniversary of this personal journey by co-curating an exhibition that includes loans from Jinan, the first Chinese city I lived in. The Shandong Museum has most generously loaned hats, a robe, a chess set and a zither that once belonged to another 19-year-old, a Ming prince who tragically died in 1389 after experimenting with drugs, ironically in an attempt to prolong his life. These tomb goods are shown alongside finds from the tombs of...
two other princes, and help to tell the story of regional court life in the early Ming.

Ming: 50 years that changed China is an exhibition that explores a crucial period at the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), when Beijing became a capital with the Forbidden City at its heart and powerful emperors sent treasure ships to the east coast of Africa.

It opens at the British Museum on 18 September, which also marks another, far more important event – the 600th anniversary of the arrival of an African giraffe at the Ming court. This remarkable incident conjures up the picture of a long-necked, gangly creature kept within the gardens of a Chinese imperial palace. It was admired by a colourful court dressed in red, blue and green robes, with the emperor perhaps wearing an imperial yellow robe emblazoned with dragons. The giraffe kept company with zebras, exotic species of deer, peacocks and other birds within the imperial zoo.

The logistics of getting the giraffe first from Malindi in Kenya to Bengal, and then from Bengal to Nanjing, must have been extremely taxing in a wooden ship. Multiple paintings of this creature with its groom were made and an inscription described the event.

When the ruling Yongle emperor first heard of the giraffe, it sounded as if it was a mythical creature called a qilin, which was only supposed to appear when a sage emperor was on the throne. Having usurped his nephew to seize power, this emperor was extremely keen to promote signs of heavenly approval. The giraffe was a special present bestowed on him partly in appreciation for his expression of condolence for Saif al-Din, the ruler of Bengal, whose father had recently died, and partly to cement Saif-al-Din’s own mandate to rule by gaining China’s support. This painting (4) brings together the dual themes of Ming courts and their global connections that are explored in the exhibition.

A single family ruled Ming China. The Ming founder, the Hongwu emperor (r 1368-1398), had multiple partners and sired 26 sons and 16 daughters. He positioned his sons to protect the rivers and borders of the new empire, like posts in a fence. The tragic 19-year-old prince was his 10th son, but his other sons including his fourth (the future recipient of the giraffe) were stationed across China’s vast...
landscape, from the eastern coast to the western desert, in areas equivalent in size to European countries.

When they were despatched to their regional courts, they were supplied with costumes and goods to help them to represent the power of the imperial court in the provinces. When they married, they and their wives received extravagant gifts from their imperial in-laws. Lady Wei (died 1451), wife of Prince Zhuang of Liang, owned a pair of gold arm bangles and bracelets (2). Archaeologists discovered them in 2001, preserved in a lacquered wooden box placed inside her cofin. Such precious jewellery was produced in the eunuch-run craft workshops of the central imperial palace. Perhaps they were bestowed on Lady Wei as a marriage gift from her brother-in-law, the Xuande emperor (r 1426-35), or from her father-in-law, the Hongxi emperor (r 1424-25).

As we approached the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, our thoughts were naturally drawn to stories of soldiers and survival. Until recently, Ming military history has been rather understudied. This is partly because very few weapons survive from the period covered by the exhibition, 1400-1450, yet at that time the Ming army consisted of at least one million professional soldiers who all received a state wage. The early Ming princes had their own personal guard and troops, commanding forces of between 3000 and 15,000 men. The tomb figure of Zhenwu was part of a model army found in the tomb of Zhu Yuelian, the Crown Prince of Shu (died 1409). The soldier is represented (5) wearing stout boots, a helmet, layered robes and armour. He would have been armed with a pike-staff, a bow and arrows.

In addition to these weapons, the army would also have had guns and cannon at their disposal. The Battle of Agincourt took place on Friday 25 October 1415 and 8000 British troops famously defeated 15,000 French fighters. However, this great land battle was on a far smaller scale than the contemporary battles in China, where 100,000 men could be involved in a single confrontation. These were the largest land battles ever fought until those of the First World War.

Nevertheless, despite the enormous power of the armed forces, the early Ming also marks a permanent shift in power between the old guard of the military and the new guard of the bureaucrats. Yang Hong (1) (1381-1451) was an important military commander in the early Ming period. He was posted by the court to take charge of the Xuanfu garrison along the Great Wall, north-west of Beijing, on Ming China’s most sensitive frontier. This commemoratory portrait of him is inscribed by Yu Qian (1398-1457), Minister of War. Yu Qian’s inscription on the painting described Yang Hong as possessing ‘intestinal fortitude of iron and stone’. He is further praised for wielding his sword and halberd ‘like the sparkling rays of the stars’. This beautifully decorated sword handle (3), made of iron, gold and silver, belongs to a weapon from the Yongle era, circa 1420.

Talented men entered government service by passing imperial examinations, or were recommended by those already in office. Great numbers of scholars were employed at courts across Ming China. This painting on silk (7) celebrates a garden party held in the Apricot Garden of the high official Yang Rong (1371-1440) to mark an official holiday on 6 April 1437. Paintings of the event may have been copied and handed out to participants as souvenirs.

Religion was also important in Ming China, with many different beliefs peacefully coexisting. This pure white porcelain ewer (6) is of a type often called a monk’s cap ewer, because the zigzag rim is similar to those on the tall hats worn by some Tibetan priests, and also because the form is taken from Tibetan metalwork. In China, white is a symbol both of mourning and of Buddhist purity.

The design of this ewer was commissioned by the Yongle emperor; such vessels were used in a requiem ritual for the emperor’s dead parents held in Nanjing in 1407. In all, religious services were performed over 14 days by Halima (1384-1415), a feted miracle-worker who had travelled for hundreds of miles with a vast entourage of priests. Records from the time show that the ceremonies were
accompanied by the appearance of extraordinary multi-coloured clouds, glorious rays of light and showers of flowers, as well as various deities and auspicious creatures such as cranes, white elephants and lions. Although no flowers will rain down to mark the opening of our exhibition, the British Museum has arranged a wonderful programme of events, including a film season linked to the main themes of the exhibition: courts; the arts of war; the arts of peace; belief; trade and diplomacy. Musicians from Beijing will perform ancient temple music and there will be demonstrations of early Ming cooking by internationally renowned chefs. A stellar cast of speakers will present papers at a conference and throughout the four months that the exhibition lasts.

**Ming: The Golden Empire** is on show at National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh (www.nms.ac.uk.ming) until 19 October.

**Ming: 50 years that changed China**, edited by Craig Clunas, Professor of the History of Art at the University of Oxford, and Jessica Harrison-Hall, Curator of the Chinese Ceramics Collection at the British Museum and the Sir Percival David Collection, is published in hardback by the British Museum Press at £30.
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IN THE SALEROOM SOTHEBY’S NEW YORK

A sensitive marble portrait head of a girl (1), Augustan period (H. 29.8cm), the cover-piece of the Sotheby’s New York sale of 4 June, was once thought to be a portrait of Octavia, sister of Augustus, or Livia, his consort, due to its similarity to both. Originally in the collection of Sir D’Arcy Osborne (1884-1964), it passed to Prince Johannes von Schwarzenberg (1903-1978), who acquired it from Sir D’Arcy Osborne in 1950. It was exhibited in the Glyptothek in Munich from 1991 to 2014. The estimate of $800,000-$1,200,000 did not deter two determined telephone-bidders from sending its selling price to a surprising $2,225,000 (£1,330,821) from an anonymous collector.

The Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, de-accessioned a monumental marble ram (2), circa early 1st century AD (H. 104cm), with 18th-century restorations probably done by Francesco Franzoni. Almost certainly from the collection of Pasquale Janniello, a Neapolitan antiquarian, it was sold in Rome in 1911, in New York in 1921, and in 1926 to the Toledo Museum of Art, where it has been off display since 1976 except for an exhibition in 2004-2005. Estimated at $2,000,000-$3,000,000, it brought in $1,805,000 with a telephone bid from an American collector.

The same buyer also acquired a headless Roman marble figure of Apollo (3), probably

Ancient bodies, modern prices

Dr Jerome M Eisenberg reports on some exceptional antiquities sold during the summer in New York and London – and in France

Minerva September/October 2014
Pan, Roman Imperial, circa early 1st century AD, with 18th-century or earlier restoration, based on a Hellenistic work of the 2nd century BC. H. restored 80.6cm. (Lot 13: $281,000).

2. A monumental marble ram, Roman Imperial, circa early 1st century AD, with 18th-century restorations. H. 104cm. (Lot 14: $1,805,000).

3. A marble figure of Apollo, Roman Imperial, probably Hadrianic, circa AD 130, after a Roman Imperial, probably early 1st century AD (H. 80.6cm), with 18th-century or earlier restoration, based on a Hellenistic work of the 2nd century BC. H. restored 80.6cm. (Lot 13: $281,000).

4. A marble fountain figure of Pan, Roman Imperial, circa 1st century AD, with 18th-century or earlier restoration, based on a Hellenistic work of the 2nd century BC. H. restored 80.6cm. (Lot 13: $281,000).

5. A marble Torso of Aphrodite, Roman Imperial, circa 1st Century AD, inspired by the Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles, circa 350 BC. H. 33.7cm. (Lot 5: $197,000).

6. A marble figure of a sleeping satyr, Roman Imperial, circa 1st century AD. L. 98cm. (Lot 10: $197,000).

7. A marble figure of a satyr carrying a wineskin, Roman Imperial, circa mid 2nd century AD, after a Hellenistic prototype of the 1st Century BC. H. restored 108cm. (Lot 11: $106,250).

8. Egyptian limestone relief panel, Sakkara, 5th Dynasty, reign of Neferirkare, circa 2500-2480 BC. 66 x 191.13cm. (Lot 44: $785,000).

9. An Egyptian bronze figure of Nefertum, 26th Dynasty, 664-525 BC. H. without tenons 32.4cm. (Lot 45: $155,000).

10. An Egyptian polychrome and gilt cartonnage mummy mask, Late Ptolemaic period, 100-30 BC. H. 40.6cm. (Lot 48: $106,250).

Minerva September/October 2014

Hadrianic period (H. 150cm), also from the Toledo Museum of Art, originally from the famous collection of Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi (1595-1632), listed in its 1633 inventory, Toledo purchased it at the May 1961 Münzen und Medaillen sale, Basel, for 25,000 Swiss Francs. Now estimated at just $700,000-$1,000,000, an anonymous telephone-bidder secured it for $785,000.

A Roman marble satyr carrying a wineskin (7), circa second third of the 2nd century AD (H. 108cm – including the restored right arm and top of wineskin) was found by Francesco Capranei in Rome, before 1837, at which time it was first published. Bearing an estimate of $100,000-$150,000, it was obtained for $106,250 by an anonymous commission bidder.

A group of 16 undistinguished Attic and South Italian vases from the well-known Nostell Priory collection in Yorkshire were bought for modest prices, their provenance far overpowering their desirability. A very large (66cm x 191.1cm) Egyptian limestone relief panel of Nikaure from Sakkara (8), 5th Dynasty (circa 2500-2480 BC), was brought to France from Egypt in 1829 by Count Alexandre Louis Henry de Vaucelles. It was sold most recently at Sotheby’s New York in June 2004, when it brought in $624,000. This panel was probably the lintel over a false door but it is unusual in that it portrays the owner twice— at both ends of the panel. With an estimate of $700,000-$1,000,000, an anonymous telephone-bidder secured it for $785,000.

An Egyptian bronze figure of Nefertum (9), 26th Dynasty (H. 32.4cm) from the Kervorkian Foundation first sold at Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, in November 1966 for a mere $650. Next time, again at Parke-Bernet, in April 1970 it brought in $1500. (The writer, an active bidder at both sales, fondly remembers the prices at that time!) Now estimated at $30,000-$50,000, it was acquired for a stunning $155,000 from the buyer of the ram, who acquired four of the top 10 pieces in the sale.

Finally, a choice Egyptian polychrome and gilt cartonnage mummy mask (10), late Ptolemaic Period (H. 40.6cm), was sold by Royal-Athena Galleries four times – from 1967 to 1992, the list price increasing from $10,000 to $38,500. Currently estimated at $50,000-$80,000, it was sold by phone to a US collector for $106,250.

This sale of just 57 lots realized a healthy $7,951,876, with 94.7% sold by number of lots (only three unsold lots!) and 98.4% sold by value. These excellent results were no doubt in great part due to the exceptional research and cataloguing done by Florent Heintz, the head of the department. It is interesting to note that nine of the top 10 lots were obtained by telephone-bidders. (All prices include the buyer’s premium.)
The Christie’s New York sale of 5 June distinguished itself by offering seven Cycladic marble sculptures and vases from four different collections. First, an outstanding large marble head from a reclining female figurine (1), Early Spedos variety, circa 2600-2500 BC (H. 12.7cm) was acquired from Uraeus, Paris, before 1980. Its ears are carved in relief, which is relatively rare. Estimated at $150,000-$250,000, it sold to a private buyer by phone for a healthy $485,000.

A smaller head, but with a long neck (2) (H. 15cm), Late Spedos variety, circa 2500-2400 BC, attributed to the Goulandris Sculptor, was originally sold by Simone de Monbrison, Paris, during the 1970s. With an estimate of $80,000-$120,000, it was bought for $197,000 by a European dealer.

A fine Cycladic marble reclining female figurine (H. 25.4cm) with a lyre-shaped head (3), Early Spedos variety, circa 2600-2500 BC, from a French collection, was sold in 1976 by N Koutoulakis, Paris. The estimate of $200,000-$300,000 did not deter a US collector from acquiring it for $437,000.

A superb Cycladic marble kandila vase (4), circa 2800-2700 BC (H. 13.5cm) from the Christos G. Bastis collection was acquired by Mr Bastis prior to 1987. Exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1987 and in the Early Cycladic Art in North America exhibition in 1988, it was sold by Sotheby’s New York in December 1999 for $96,000. Estimated at $150,000-$250,000, a commission bid of $269,000 secured it for an American collector against two telephone-bidders.

A large (H. 33.6cm) headless female figurine (5) of the Late Spedos to Dokathismata variety, circa 2400 BC, attributed to the Schuster Sculptor, from the same collection, acquired from Koutoulakis in 1980, estimate $70,000-$90,000, was won by another American collector for $185,000.

A late Hellenistic marble goddess draped
in a chiton and himation (6), 2nd-1st century BC (H. 53.4cm), was once with Bruce McAlpine, London, from 1974 to 1978. It was purchased by a US collector with a telephone bid of $149,000, well over the estimate of $60,000-$90,000.

An over-lifesize (H. 33cm) Hellenistic marble head of a goddess (7) of the same period, from a New England collection, acquired in the 1970s, was converted into a Madonna head with the addition of wavy hair and a veil of brown alabaster. In spite of the estimate of only $20,000-$30,000, a European dealer paid $115,000 with a telephone bid from a European dealer.

The cover-piece of the sale was an outstanding Egyptian painted mummy portrait of a young woman (9), circa AD 150. H. 40cm. (Lot 35: $341,000). Es-

A finely proportioned Egyptian bronze cat (10), Ptolemaic period, 304-308 BC, (H. mounted 23.5cm), belonged to the American opera singer Russell Roberts (1910-1989), who purchased it from G Sangiogi in Rome in 1948. (The remains of a mummified cat are still inside.) Estimated at $120,000-$180,000, it sold by telephone to an American collector for $197,000.

The sale of just 125 lots totalled $4,612,625 with 75% sold by number of lots and also 75% sold by value. (All prices included in these reports include the buyer’s premium.)

On a personal note: we will miss Molly Morse Limmer, head of Christie’s New York’s Antiquities Department, who will be relocating with her family to Chicago after 17 years with the company under the leadership of G Max Bernheimer, International Head of the Antiquities Department.
Christie’s London: important sets world record

A major Egyptian Old Kingdom painted limestone statue of Sekhemka, Inspector of the Scribes (H. 75cm), 5th Dynasty, circa 2400-2300 BC, was offered at the Exceptional Sale 2014 at Christie’s London on 10 July.

The finely sculpted seated figure wears a short wig and a short pleated kilt and holds a partially opened papyrus scroll incised in hieroglyphs with 22 offerings. To his right, on a much smaller scale, his wife, Sitmerit, kneels and embraces his right leg with her right hand. To his left, Seshemnefer, most probably his son, is sculpted in raised low relief. The other three sides of the cubic seat depict a procession of offering-bearers also executed in raised low relief. The relief decoration on the sides and back of the seat is known from just five other examples in the Cairo Museum and the Brooklyn Museum. The offering-bearers are rendered in unusual detail and in rich colours. Only one other statue is known of Sekhemka, a headless and fragmentary seated figure in the Brooklyn Museum that was brought out of Egypt at about the same time as this one – in the mid-19th century.

Probably from the Royal Cemeteries at Saqqara, it was acquired by Spencer Joshua Alwyne Compton, the 2nd Marquess of Northampton (1790-1853), in Egypt in 1849 or 1850. It was presented to Northampton Museum and Art Gallery by the 4th Marquess in 1880 and exhibited there till 1899, then put on show at Christie’s London.

Sotheby’s London: Northumberland Aphrodite sets European record

A magnificent large (H. 203.2cm) Roman marble statue of Aphrodite, early 1st century AD (after a Greek prototype of circa 430-420 BC), from the collections of the Dukes of Northumberland, was the star offering at Sotheby’s London Treasures sale on 9 July.

The majestic goddess wears a long chiton and cloak and her wavy hair is bound in a braided diadem. Her illustrious provenance begins with her ownership by the Cardinals Paolo Emilio Cesi (1481-1537) and Federico Cesi (1500-1565), in the garden of the Palazzo Cesi on the Janiculum, Rome. It was purchased by the English architects and dealers Robert and James Adam of Rome and London in the mid-18th century, then auctioned by Christie’s in 1773, when it was purchased by Sir Hugh Percy, the 1st Duke of Northumberland. He placed it in the Robert Adam-designed Great Hall at Syon House, his home in Middlesex, where it remained until now.

The 18th-century restorations include both forearms with their attributes and parts of the drapery. It was only recently discovered that the head was original and belonged to the statue and was never broken off from the body. Only one other Aphrodite statue of this type is known with its original head, and that was found only 12 years ago at Pozzuoli near Naples.

The estimate of £4,000,000 to £6,000,000 appeared to be optimistic, but it sold for a healthy £9,378,500, including the buyer’s premium, to a private collector bidding in the saleroom.

This was a record for a Classical antiquity sold at auction in Europe.

Ancient Egyptian

An over-lifesize (H. 24cm) head of an Egyptian dignitary (1) from the 18th Dynasty reign of Horemheb (circa 1321-1293 BC) was the single ancient lot in the sale of Jack-Philippe Ruellan in Vannes on 31 May. This impressive quartzite head, with its melancholy expression and wig of undulating locks of hair, has a fragmentary dorsal pillar with three columns of hieroglyphs. It was acquired by a Parisian collector during the 1930s; the wooden base was signed by Kichizo Inagaki (1876-1951), who was well-known for his base-making in the 1930s. Estimated at a mere €100,000-€150,000, it soared to a hammer price of €760,000 from a Swiss collector.
In the antiquities sale of Pierre Bergé in Paris on 21 May, a monumental 26th Dynasty granodiorite head of the pharaoh Apries, 589-570 BC (H. 39cm), most probably the head of a sphinx, was featured. It came from the collection of Olivier Clément Cacoub (1920-2008), purchased in the 1970s from a Brussels gallery. Its mutilations were carried out in its later reuse. The estimate of €180,000-€200,000 was quickly surpassed, resulting in a hammer bid of £645,000 from a Parisian dealer. A rare Egyptian limestone chapel-stele of Kemes, superior of musicians, from the 13th Dynasty, circa 1770 BC (H. 73cm), in the form of a quadrangular naos resting upon a base carved with façades, was purchased from the Luxor dealer Tawadros during the 1960s. The cover-piece of the sale, it was estimated at £300,000-£400,000, but brought in a hammer-price of just £200,000 from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The expert for both sales was Christophe Kunicki.
The Last Trojan Hero: A Cultural History of Virgil’s Aeneid
Philip Hardie
IB Tauris
236pp, 24 figures, 15 colour plates
Hardback, £25

‘No day shall erase you from the memory of time’ (Aeneid, IX.447); Virgil’s words are to be found engraved on the memorial wall at the National September 11 Museum in New York, that opened this May. It is a clear indication that the great Augustan epic is still a part of how we perceive events today. Philip Hardie’s new book shows that perhaps this verse is true of the Aeneid itself.

The Last Trojan Hero is the Roman counterpart to Edith Hall’s earlier book, The Return of Ulysses (IB Tauris, 2008). Such investigations into the reception of Classical texts are popular today, apparently with good reason. It is clear to see from the scope of the work the immense influence Virgil’s epic has had, and it is certainly convenient to have these millennia of Aeneid-inspired works compacted into one cohesive volume.

There are other works on the reception of the Aeneid, such as Part 1 of Charles Martindale’s The Cambridge Companion to Virgil (Cambridge, 1997) and Craig Kallendorf’s The Other Virgil (OUP, 2007), but Hardie’s book outshines them both. In it he deals with the reception of Virgil’s epic from antiquity to the present day (and even tentatively the future: as he remarks pessimistically: ‘I do not foresee a time when the Aeneid could again be labelled the central classic for contemporary culture’). Philip Hardie surveys the Aeneid’s diverse international influence, referring to a range of works—drama, poetry, opera, painting, even psychoanalysis. Cinema and television make an appearance, too, albeit briefly, showing that Virgil has not had the same impact on these media as Homer. But Hardie’s treatment does not merely focus on the later reception; he first introduces an aspect of the Aeneid and explains its importance. This approach means that this book is suitable for those without a detailed knowledge of Virgil, or those who need a reminder of the Aeneid’s key themes—and any Latin cited is translated into English.

The themes examined are not uncommon: the Underworld, Dido’s role as a woman, Aeneas’ status as a hero, empire, conquest and exile, and religion all appear. The usual suspects are all present in Hardie’s choice of later works, too, with detailed discussions of Dante, Petrarch and Milton. Nevertheless, his treatment of more familiar works is engaging and thorough, and they are all considered within their own wider cultural and political contexts.

This broad cultural approach can be seen in the discussion of Dido (or Elissa) and Elizabeth I (or Eliza/Elisa). Dido has been viewed as either chaste or unchaste, but it is her chastity that prompts a comparison with the Virgin Queen. Both queens take on a man’s role, and the two are linked in art and literature. William Gager’s play Dido uses the Virgilian queen as a guise for praising Elizabeth, a pillar in the ‘Sieve’ portrait of Elizabeth I by Quentin Matsys the Younger (circa 1583) shows scenes from the story of Dido and Aeneas, and coins depicting the defeat of the Spanish Armada bore the legend Dux Foeminae Fatti (‘A woman was the leader of the exploit’), the words used by the disguised Venus to describe Dido in the Aeneid.

In his final chapters Hardie takes a different approach, looking at specific modes of interpretation rather than the reception of certain ideas or characters. His chapter ‘Parody and Burlesque’, containing James Gillray’s delightful cartoon of Lady Hamilton as ‘Dido in despair’ (1801), shows how the Aeneid has been such a significant part of mainstream culture that it can be referred to easily for the purposes of topical humour. Art is the topic of the concluding chapter. This includes Pompeian wall paintings, ‘Dido’s Cave’ at Stowe, and the work of Turner. And, of course, no discussion of Virgil and art is complete without Laocoön (the priest who warned Aeneas to flee from Troy) immortalised wrestling with sea-serpents in the 1st century BC sculpture. Hardie’s book achieves a great deal: a rich cultural history it can be enjoyed by anyone interested in the relationship between the ancient world and later cultures. It also serves as an inducement for the reader to return to the Aeneid (if not in Latin, then in one of the fine translations, such as that by Robert Fagles, Penguin, 2006). A true classic is regarded as such because it addresses timeless, universal themes that are as relevant today as in the 1st century BC.

Today the ancient Greeks are famous for many things – Athenian democracy, tragedy, philosophy, bravery in warfare, the Olympics and much more. Edith Hall’s new book, an overview of the entire Greek civilization, deals with the topic of Greek greatness, but rather than just listing the achievements that are familiar to us all, she explores the Greek mentality in an attempt to explain how it made them capable of such feats.

Although the work clearly praises the Greeks, Hall also plainly states how they were influenced by other societies, such as the Phoenicians and the Lydians, from whom they derived their alphabet and currency. She pays more than lip service to other advanced civilizations, both in the ancient Mediterranean and further afield in the Near East.

As is well known, ancient Greece was not just one nation, but rather a collection of different kingdoms and city states. There were a number of Greek colonies, too, in Spain, Italy and Egypt among other places. Hall writes that these distinct communities did more than share a language; they shared a number of characteristics that made up the Greek mindset.

According to Hall, there are 10 Greek qualities that allowed them to achieve greatness and, while acknowledging that some of these were present in other civilizations, she writes that they were possessed by most of the Greeks most of the time. The Greeks
were seafaring, mistrustful of authority, individualistic, curious, open-minded, witty, rivalrous, appreciative of excellence, articulate, and addicted to pleasure. Of these attributes, the nautical nature of the Greeks is considered the most important.

Each of the book’s 10 chapters tackles one of these characteristics in a particular group of Greeks, starting with the Mycenaeans whose civilization began circa 1550 BC and who demonstrate the importance of sailing. The book surveys Greek civilization progressing chronologically across the centuries, and ends with the reaction of the pleasure-loving pagan Greeks to the early Christians in the 4th century AD.

Along the way, in the second chapter, we encounter a suspicion of authority, which, starting in the 8th century BC, led to the establishment of the Greek ethnic identity based on the principles of equality of Greek-speaking free men. Hall uses Homer’s Iliad as well as Hesiod’s Works and Days and Theogony to show how the early Greeks viewed their identity as Hellenes.

While these works are familiar to many, Hall helpfully introduces and contextualizes these poems, as well as other texts she refers to throughout the book, making it accessible to readers with no prior knowledge of the ancient Greeks.

Elsewhere in the book, she describes how the inquisitive Ionians of the 6th century BC developed natural science and philosophy. The 5th-century and 4th-century BC Athenians possessed all of the 10 Greek qualities but, says Hall, above all they demonstrated open-mindedness, not least by welcoming immigrants and foreign ideas into the city and, of course, establishing democracy. Add to that Alexander the Great’s ambitious energy and numerous conquests, which indicate the competitive spirit of the Macedonians, and you are bound to have a winning formula.

The organization of the history of the Greeks according to individual characteristics gives the book a clear focus. Hall has almost two millennia of Greek civilization through which to guide us, but with her schematic approach, she avoids the potential tedium and complexity of recounting and analyzing such a long passage of time.

She also gives us a concise, but comprehensive, timeline of Greek civilization from around 1550 BC to AD 395, which serves as a useful reference tool and companion to the main events in the historical period of any given chapter. The inclusion of maps, too, help to give a sense of the vast geographical span of the Greek world.

In all, Edith Hall’s lucid book focuses on the Greek mind and presents us with a fresh approach to a familiar subject. It also serves to remind the reader why the ancient Greeks still matter to us today.

Lucia Marchini

Minerva September/October 2014

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**CLASSICAL CONUNDRUMS**

Adam Jacot de Boinod poses a vocabulary quiz from Latin and Ancient Greek

Can you guess the correct definition for each word from the following three options?

1. mango (Latin)
   - A) a single ear of corn
   - B) a slave trader
   - C) the lower part of a rainbow

2. parebos (Ancient Greek)
   - A) impulsively; without deliberation
   - B) anything badly formed or out of shape
   - C) being past one’s prime

3. physooemai (Ancient Greek)
   - A) to be excited by eating garlic
   - B) to blow with a gentle sound (of the wind)
   - C) to work underneath or root around in the ground like a pig

4. emax (Latin)
   - A) having a pearly lustre
   - B) fond of buying
   - C) a small cavity found in a rock

5. enkoniomai (Ancient Greek)
   - A) to round before lying down, as an animal often does
   - B) to sprinkle sand over oneself as an animal often does
   - C) to attract the opposite sex at breeding time

6. marilopotes (Ancient Greek)
   - A) adulterated wine
   - B) the pendulous skin found under the throat of cattle, dogs, etc
   - C) a gulper of coal dust

7. sortes (Latin)
   - A) the seeking of guidance by the chance selection of a passage in a book
   - B) a state of depression
   - C) the socket for a precious stone, an ornament or a jewel

8. paukikape (Ancient Greek)
   - A) the period in which a cow gives milk
   - B) being full of small air bubbles
   - C) the projecting collar worn by slaves while grinding corn in order to prevent them from eating it

9. haruspex (Latin)
   - A) a priest who practised divination by examining the entrails of animals
   - B) anything very rickety and unsafe
   - C) uncomfortable, bothered, uneasy

10. euischios (Ancient Greek)
    - A) eminently embraceable
    - B) adept at engaging in polite behaviour
    - C) with beautiful hips

11. xenodaites (Ancient Greek)
    - A) a devourer of guests or strangers
    - B) a rhetorical device
    - C) a soldier with little knowledge of foreign lands

12. formica (Latin)
    - A) random, by chance, hit or miss
    - B) an ant
    - C) a dead tree still standing

**ANSWERS**

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<th>Word</th>
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• Adam Jacot de Boinod has worked as a researcher on the BBC television quiz programme QI. He is the author of The Meaning of Tingo and creator of the iPhone App Tingo.
BATH
New World, Old Maps
This exhibition of the historic map collection formed by Dallas Pratt, co-founder of the American Museum in Britain, illustrates the changing shape of the Americas as Renaissance cartographers, working from ancient and medieval sources, learned more of the New World. Of particular interest is America novus orbis... (America or the New World), Frankfurt, 1596 (above) by Theodor de Bry (1528-1598), who was born in the Spanish Netherlands to a family of engravers and jewellers. This map is based on a world map made by Peter Plancius two years earlier.

The American Museum in Britain
+44 (0) 1225 823 019
(www.americanmuseum.org)
Until 2 November.

CAMBRIDGE
Buddha’s Word: The Life of Books in Tibet and Beyond
Historians, anthropologists, art historians, linguists, chemists and material scientists have all contributed to give an insight into the complex world of the book in Buddhism. On display are some of the oldest Sanskrit and Buddhist manuscripts, as well as a gift from the 13th Dalai Lama. Extremely rare exhibits include manuscripts from the first decades of the 11th century, specimens of skilfully illuminated wooden covers and a quartet of scroll paintings brought back from the controversial Youghusband Expedition of 1903-4. Pictured below are fragments of 12th-century Tibetan illuminated manuscripts from Keu Lhakang Temple in central Tibet.

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
+44 (0) 1223 333 516
(www.maa.cam.ac.uk)
Until 17 January 2015.

JARROW
Bede’s Great Bible
This exhibition gives visitors the rare opportunity to see the only full-size complete replica of Bede’s Great Bible. It tells the story of how Abbót Ceolfrid of the Wearmouth-Jarrow Monastery set out on a journey to Rome, his spiritual home, taking with him this precious gift – a masterpiece of its kind. He died en route in AD 716. His companions decided to continue the journey on his behalf, but then the Bible disappeared. Visitors are invited to discover what happened to the lost Bible and how it survived in the place that became its home for more than 1000 years. Christ in Majesty (below right) is one of the Great Bible’s beautifully illuminated pages.

Bede’s World
+44 (0) 191 489 2106
(www.bedesworld.co.uk/codex-amiatinus)
Until 21 September.

LIVERPOOL
Nasreen Mohamedi
Born in Karachi and raised in Mumbai, Nasreen Mohamedi studied art at St Martin’s School of Art in London, before going on to become one of the most significant artists in the Modernist tradition. Most of her peers in India favoured a figurative narrative style, but Mohamedi’s lineage can be traced back to an earlier generation of Indian artists, such as VS Gaitonde, who were engaged with abstraction. This exhibition charts the development of her love of abstraction, looking at possible relationships between her work and her perception of the world. Mohamedi’s photographic practice is particularly intriguing – she continually documented her experiences, capturing images of desert landscapes and seascapes, modern architectural buildings, and the Islamic architecture of Fatehpur Sikri. Her paintings and photographs are displayed alongside archival material reflecting how she gradually departed from symbols and markers in the external world to re-envision line interactions and three-dimensional space.

Tate Liverpool
+44 (0) 151 702 7400
(www.tate.org.uk)
Until 5 October.

LONDON
CRW Nevinson
To mark the centenary of the First World War, Mayfair gallery Osborne Samuel is presenting a landmark exhibition of works by the Modern British artist CRW Nevinson. An exceptional selection of prints from all periods illustrate the evolution of the artist’s vision and highly distinctive style that have made him one of the finest British printmakers of the first half of the 20th century. His iconic war imagery includes works such as Loading the Ship, which shows soldiers handling cargo, as well as scenes of London, New York and Paris.

Osborne Samuel
+44 (0) 20 7493 7939
(www.osbornesamuel.com)
From 25 September until 18 October.

SAN FRANCISCO, California
Masters of Fire: The Copper Age in the Holy Land
An exhibition devoted to the art of the Chalcolithic Period (Copper-Some Age, circa 5500-3500 BC) in the lands that today include Israel, Jordan and their surrounding areas. Before the Pyramids were built, and before writing had been introduced in Mesopotamia, people of the southern Levant were employing sophisticated methods of smelting, alloying and casting to produce small copper objects as ornaments and simple tools. Examples of these works on display at the museum include oddly shaped zoomorphic ossuaries, basalt stands with human faces, hoards of copper ritual objects, linen and wool textiles and carved ivory human figures. The often beautiful objects illustrate how
the technical, social and aesthetic developments of this period laid the groundwork for later cultural expansion. Geographical areas examined are the Golan Plateau, the north-central plain, the Beersheba Valley/northern Negev, and the Jordan Valley.

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
+1 415 750 3614
(www.famsf.org)
Until 2 November.

SANTA ANA, California
China's Last Civilization: The Mystery of Sanxingdui
In 1986, construction workers at Sanxingdui, near the Sichuan Province capital of Chengdu, accidentally uncovered an astounding cache of tools, burned animal bones, over 60 elephant tusks, more than 200 jade objects, monumental bronzes, and a life-sized statue of a nobleman. Most of the contents had been ritually destroyed. This chance discovery of two ‘sacrificial pits’ turned out to be one of the most important archaeological finds of the 20th century, forcing scholars to rewrite early Chinese history. The objects dated from about 1300 BC, a time when it was thought that the hub of Chinese civilization was 1200 kilometres to the north-east, on the Yellow River in China’s central plain. In 2001, another archaeological discovery, this time in the city of Chengdu at Jinsha, revealed possible clues to the mystery of where they may have gone. This exhibition relays both stories and displays the most important archaeological treasures, including three large masks that look like human heads with supernatural features and animal ears or trunks.

Bowers Museum
+1 714 567 3600
(www.bowers.org)
From 12 October until 22 March 2015.

WASHINGTON DC, Washington
Nasta’liq: The Genius of Persian Calligraphy
Nasta’liq is a calligraphic script that developed in the 14th century in Iran and remains one of the most expressive forms of aesthetic refinement in Persian culture to this day. Visitors are invited to learn the story of the script’s transformation from a simple conveyor of the written word into an artistic form in its own right. The exhibition comprises 20 works dating from 1400 to 1600 (the height of Nasta’liq’s development) and focuses on four of the greatest master calligraphers. All the folios and manuscripts on display are both aesthetically and technically impressive.

Freer Sackler Gallery
+1 202 633 1000
(www.asia.si.edu)
From 13 September until 22 March 2015.

DENMARK
COPENHAGEN
Transformations: Classical Sculpture in Colour
The wealth of colour in Antiquity is not really news, even if it is a well-kept secret in broader circles. Early on, colours were clearly visible on ancient sculptures, for instance during the excavations in Pompeii from the mid-18th century, and later still on that citadel of Antiquity, the Acropolis. But the prevailing narrative of the white marble of Antiquity was too strong. From the Renaissance on, artists, art historians and philosophers viewed pure white sculpture and architecture as an ideal and guide for their own age and thoughts. White marble became synonymous with the noble and the spiritual – a guarantee of aesthetic, ethical and political superiority. The concrete evidence of Antiquity’s widespread use of colour was therefore typically ignored, denied, and even brutally purged from Greek and Roman sculptures. This exhibition presents the results of interdisciplinary, almost detective research methods such as laser, x-rays, infrared reflectography and electron-microscopic examination of colour sections from original sculptures. Spectacular works are set against experimental reconstructions in their original wealth of colour.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek
+45 33 41 81 41
(www.glyptoteket.dk)
From 13 September until 7 December.

FRANCE
LILLE
Sensuuset III: Legendary Pharaoh
In a special collaboration with the Musée du Louvre, the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille presents the first exhibition in the world dedicated to this king of Egypt. Pharaoh Sensuusret III was one of the most emblematic monarchs in Ancient Egypt. At the peak of the Middle Kingdom his reign marked a turning point in the history of the civilization. This strategist and visionary sovereign conquered Nubia, where he had a network of fortresses built, set the first boundaries of his kingdom and established trade and strong diplomatic relations with his eastern neighbours. Discover the artistic riches of this key reign, considered to be a golden age of ancient Egypt. The exhibition includes around 200 loans from major international museums including the Louvre, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum and the Berlin Egyptian Museum.

Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille
+33 (0) 3 20 06 78 00
(www.pba-lille.fr)
From 10 October until 25 January 2015.

PARIS
Masques, Mascarades, Mascarons
This exhibition presents some 100 objects showing the paradoxical function of the mask, an emblem of illusion that has the effect of ‘disguising and producing a double’. Highlights include works of art that illustrate the mask’s religious role in ancient Greek theatre and the light-hearted part it played in Italian feasts, balls and comedies. Its presence in funerary sculpture and on tombstones strikes a more sombre note. The duplicitous nature of the mask in allegory is also explored. The use of the mascaron, widely found in architectural decoration, is compared to Medusa’s head, which was cut off by Perseus and placed on Athena’s shield yet still retained its astonishing power.

Musée du Louvre
+33 1 40 20 50 50
(www.louvre.fr)
Until 22 September.

Medieval Morocco: An Empire between Two Shores
This presentation of medieval Moroccan rich civilization and history looks at the dynasties that held sway between the 8th and 15th centuries.

Musée du Louvre
+33 1 40 20 50 50
(www.louvre.fr)
From 1 October until 1 January 2015.

Maya
This wide-ranging exhibition presents 400 masterpieces from different periods that mark the extraordinary longevity of Mayan civilization (below). It presents the different aspects of Mayan culture, its creative capacity and technological advances. Learn about their gods and rituals, the governing elite, their interpretations of cosmology, and their architecture. It is curated by the writer, historian, academic and Maya specialist Mercedes de la Garza, the former director of the Mexican National Museum of Anthropology.

Musée du Quai Branly
+33 1 56 61 70 00
(www.quai Branly.fr)
From 7 October until 8 February 2015.
African art, giving due weight to its aesthetic principles and proper acknowledgement to its talented artists. On view are works by the great masters of the Baule, Dan, Senufo, Lobi and Lagoon people; these include masks of intense power and beauty. While it mainly features pieces from pre-colonial and colonial periods, also on show is the work of three internationally successful contemporary artists as examples of current artistic trends in Africa.

Bundes Kunsthalle
+49 228 91710
(www.bundeskunsthalle.de)
Until 5 October.

ITALY

FLORENCE

Pure, Simple and Natural: Art in Florence Between the 16th and 17th Centuries
As the cinquecento turned into the seicento, art, music, language, religion and the sciences underwent great changes in Italy, particularly in Florence. This period in art is missing a name or categorization. Eschewing the terms Romanticism, Gothic, Renaissance and Mannerism, Caravaggism and Baroque, the curators of this exhibition have categorized this short period by the star painters and their style – pure, simple, natural. The exhibition is divided into five chronological periods, then four thematic sections (72 paintings and sculptures in all), presenting a whole series of masterpieces, many of which have been specially restored. There are works by Andrea della Robbia and Andrea Sansovino and by their 'students', Franciabigio, Bugiardini and Sogliani.

Uffizi Gallery
+39 055 238 8651
(www.uffizi.com)
Until 11 November.

NETHERLANDS

AMSTERDAM

Dining with the Tsars: Fragile Beauty from the Hermitage
Eight magnificent porcelain and creamware services from the collection of the Hermitage in St Petersburg exhibited in a setting that conveys what the balls and banquets of the Russian court were like. No fewer than 1,034 pieces tell the story of the lavish ball and banqueting culture that reached its zenith under the reign of Catherine the Great, Queen of Feasts (1762-1796). One somewhat surprising exhibit is the service given to Stalin by the Hungarian people in 1949. Never exhibited before, it shows how dinnerware played an important diplomatic role into the 20th century. Aesthetic highlights include a pair of porcelain and gold candelabras (below left).

Hermitage Amsterdam
+31 20 530 8755
(www.hermitage.nl)
From 6 September until 1 March 2015.

SWEDEN

STOCKHOLM

Baroque
Baroque masterpieces are set against contemporary painting, installation, video and theatre performances and music. So masters such as Rembrandt and El Greco are seen against work by Isaace Julien, Sam Taylor-Johnson (née Wood) and Joana Vasconcelos, drawing comparisons between Baroque art and all that followed. The exhibition seeks to highlight the fact that contemporary artists grapple with the same fundamental principles - fear of the unknown, religion, death and identity.

Kulturhuset/Stadsteatern
+46 (0) 8 506 20 200
(www.kulturhusetstadsteatern.se)
Until 19 October.

SPAIN

MADRID

El Greco and Modern Painting
To mark the 400th anniversary of the death of El Greco, the Prado is holding an exhibition that examines the Cretan-born artist's influence on modern painting. The year is also being celebrated at various venues in his adopted city of Toledo, south of Madrid, but the strength of this exhibition comes from the loans from more than 70 international institutions and private collections. Here, some 26 works by El Greco (including Laocoon, pictured above, who according to Greek and Roman mythology was strangled, with his sons, by sea-serpents) are shown with paintings, drawings and prints by modern artists, such as Manet, Cézanne, Picasso, Chagall, Saura, Modigliani and Pollock.

Museo del Prado
+34 91 330 2600
(www.museodelprado.es)
Until 5 October.

SWITZERLAND

BASEL

Roma Etern: 2000 Years of Sculpture from the Santarelli and Zeri Collections
More than 70 sculptures spanning the Roman Imperial era, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque and Neo-Classical ages have been loaned by two leading Italian collections, the Santarelli and the Zeri. These works have never been shown in Switzerland before. The sculptures have been arranged according to themes such as religion, power and myth. The workshop of a marble sculptor shows visitors that the materials, tools and techniques of sculpting have barely changed over thousands of years. Roman art has continued to influence artists and sculptors ever since.

Antikenmuseum Basel
+41 (0) 61 201 12 12
(www.antikenmuseumbasel.ch)
Until 16 November.

Minerva September/October 2014
GREECE: Athens Masterpieces in the Acropolis Museum
This lecture series covers a selection of masterpieces from the Acropolis on display in the museum and discusses the contexts in which they were created, including art, aesthetics, religion and society. The lectures, in Greek, English and French, are held at the following times:
Greek: every Sunday at 12.30pm, every Friday at 8pm.
English: every Sunday at 1.30pm, every Friday at 6pm.
French: every last Sunday of the month at 1.30pm.
Visitors limited to 30 per session. Tickets available every day on a first-come-first-served basis.
Acropolis Museum +30 21 0900 0900 (www.theacropolismuseum.gr).

TURKEY: Istanbul
20th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists
A record 76 countries and more than 3,000 academics are expected to attend this EAA event, making it the most extensive archaeological meeting held in Europe since the 1979 UISPP Congress in Nice. It will cover a wide range of subjects and all periods by exploring the following themes:
• Connecting seas: across the borders
• Managing archaeological heritage: past and present
• Ancient technologies in social context
• Environment and subsistence: the geosphere, ecosphere and human interaction
• Times of change: collapse and transformative impulses
• Retrieving and interpreting the archaeological record.

UNITED KINGDOM: Oxford
The Emergence of Sacred Travel, Art University and The Classical Art Research Centre, Oxford University: Special Joint Seminar
Sacred Landscapes in Classical Art
How the sacred was constructed by means of landscapes in Graeco-Roman art and literature.
Haldane Room, Wolfson College +44 (0)1865 278083 Contact carc@classics.ox.ac.uk to register. (www古典artox.ac.uk/events) 21 November, 10am to 6pm.

London’s Hill Street. Specialists in Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Eurasian, Byzantine and Medieval antiquities, they will exhibit masterpieces, such as this Roman marble torso of Aphrodite (above right), from the 1st century AD. London dealer Rupert Wace Ancient Art, whose clients include major international museums such as the British Museum, the Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, will offer this striking South Arabian standing figure alabaster stele (above left) from 3rd century BC to 1st century AD.
Regent’s Park, London +44 (0)20 3372 6111 (www.friezemasters.com) From 15 to 19 October.
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Melanocratic Gabbro stone head of a male.
Egypt, Ptolemaic Period.
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Hundreds of tiny scales are individually soldered to the writhing forms of two confronted dragons on this magnificent gold Scythian torc.

Artifact: 4149
Date: 2nd century BCE – 1st century CE
Medium: Gold
Subject: Torc/Necklace
Size: 7 21/32” wide
Analytical Tests Performed:
Tool Marking, Construction, Patination Study
XRF Analysis
Uranium, Thorium – Helium dated
Dragons have captured the imagination of virtually every major culture for millennia. In Asia, being the divine and ultimate representation of the forces of mother nature, the Dragon is often the chosen guardian symbol for fisherman and farmers as well as being emblematic of the power and strength needed to ward off evil spirits of all sorts.
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“This book should be required reading by every serious collector and curator of Asian antiquities”

Courtesy of Gordon A. Lewis Jr - Senior Director & Vice President
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“A Meaningful Guide to the Scientific Authentication of Asian Antiquities”. Written in both English and Chinese, this updated guide offers a in depth look at some of the techniques most commonly used in the study of artifacts and the detection of forgeries.

“This book is fascinating reading for anyone interested in archaeometry. It is destined to become a standard reference for collectors and curators who must confront ever more skillful makers of fake antiquities.”

Courtesy of amazon.com/product-review - hoffmanjade(dot)com

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Sixth century BC
Bronze
Provenance: Private Collection, New York, 1992-2013
The Simkhovitch Collection
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Sotheby’s, New York, 16 December 1992, lot 44

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