The great Belzoni
The tale of the Italian strongman-turned-Egyptologist who discovered the tomb of Seti I and sold the pharaoh’s sarcophagus to Sir John Soane

The real world of Asterix
Who created the plucky little Celtic warrior and what was Gaul really like under the Romans?

Codebreakers of Cambridge
The groundbreaking work of Alan Turing and Michael Ventris changed the world
**ROMAN BRONZE APPLIQUE OF THE SHE-WOLF SUCKLING ROMULUS AND REMUS**

Extremely rare, possibly unique in a small bronze.

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According to mythology, the infant twin brothers, born of Rhea Silva and king Numitor or Mars, abandoned, were suckled by a she-wolf. Romulus was the legendary founder of Rome. The she-wolf and twins are the symbol of Rome and its people.
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Some unlikely heroes

Meet the Great Belzoni, who rose from humble beginnings to become a world-famous Egyptologist, and Michael Ventris, the architect who deciphered Linear B.

In this issue we encounter a number of unlikely heroes. The man on our cover, for example, is Giovanni Battista Belzoni. Born the son of a barber in Padua, in 1778, he was known as the ‘Pugilante Sansón’. Six feet, six inches tall, he worked as a strongman and an engineer until he went to Egypt in 1815, where he met the British consul Henry Salt who introduced him to the world of ancient Egyptian antiquities. Belzoni quickly became fascinated, sailed with his wife, Sarah, up the Nile to Thebes, and soon put all his energy and enthusiasm into excavation. He discovered four pharaonic tombs, including that of Seti I containing the king’s magnificent ‘alabaster’ sarcophagus. He brought the splendid artefact back to London where it was sold to Sir John Soane. It is the centrepiece of a new exhibition celebrating ‘the Great Belzoni’ – you can read more on pages 14 to 20.

By coincidence, another of our unlikely heroes is also a very tall man, six foot, five inches. He is King Richard I of England, better known as ‘Richard the Lionheart’. But did he really deserve this wonderfully evocative epithet and how did it come about? These are the questions Sabine Kaufmann, the curator of a new exhibition in Speyer in Germany, tries to answer on pages 8 to 13. Powerful men have often sought to connect themselves with the heroes of the past and Richard I is no exception. He and his father before him, Henry I, both traced their lineage back to legendary figures, such as King Arthur. But, according to Sabine, Richard went further than this: his troubadours were, she says, ‘paid to praise him’ in songs and poems. Was this an early form of spin? Whatever it was, it worked, and the myth of the Lionheart persists to this day, not only in history books but in literature, films, plays, opera – and in comic-books.

Talking of comic-books, we come to our next pair of unlikely heroes: Asterix the Gaul and his comrade in arms, Obelix, two plucky villagers who find endless ways to frustrate, embarrass and defeat their Roman conquerors. These cartoon characters were created, in 1951, by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo. Goscinny died 40 years ago and two exhibitions in Paris are currently honouring his memory. But Asterix lives on to this day and the latest (37th) album, Asterix and the Chariot Race, is just published.

Did the world of Asterix bear any resemblance to that of the real region of Gaul under the Romans? We asked Bijan Omrani, whose latest book, Caesar’s Footprints: Journeys to Roman Gaul, was published earlier this year, to tell us. As you will see, on pages 40 to 44, his advice to Asterix and Obelix would be to cease their fight against the occupying forces and to embrace them by learning Latin and putting on togas.

Our last pair of unlikely heroes are Michael Ventris and Alan Turing who are the twin stars of an exhibition called Codebreakers and Groudbreakers: From Breaking the Enigma Code to the Decipherment of Linear B at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Ventris was fascinated by this ancient Minoan script after seeing it, as a child, in a display of Sir Arthur Evans’ finds from Knossos. The quest to decipher Linear B became such an obsession that, eventually, he gave up his career as an architect to devote all his time to solving the problem. The brilliant mathematician Alan Turing is well-known for cracking the Enigma code during the war. Both men succeeded in their tasks, but both came to tragic ends. You can read more on pages 46 to 51.

But enough of heroes, what about heroines? Sheikha Hussa Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah could be considered as a heroine of the art world in that, with her husband, she founded the fabulous al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait. It is full of Islamic art treasures, but now she is concentrating on equally stunning pre-Islamic artefacts, as you can see on pages 22 to 26.

Finally, we move beyond the human world into the divine realms to see how God, gods, priests and prophets have been portrayed in the great world religions. From rich Christian iconography to early prophetic images have, of course, been put to political and military use, and have inspired both faith and fury, as Caroline Bugler explains on pages 28 to 33.
Minoan restoration – past and present

Archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans (1851–1941) and his team reconstructed our image of the Minoans with an eye for early 20th-century taste, even dubbing one of his Knossos finds ‘Lady in Red’. In 1929 Evelyn Waugh quipped that the restorers had ‘tempered their zeal for reconstruction with a predilection for the covers of Vogue’.

Over the last century, Evans’ assumptions, methods and reputation have fared little better than the concrete that he poured liberally over the hill of Knossos. So, Restoring the Minoans, currently on show at New York University’s Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW), is timely.

Curated by Jennifer Chu and Rachel Hershman of ISAW and Kenneth Lapatin of the Getty Museum, Restoring the Minoans takes a 21st-century view of Evans and the Minoan civilisation – and not just because it casts a critical eye over his restoration work.

More than 60 objects, some of them exhibited publicly for the first time, are on loan from Oxford’s Ashmolean Museum, where Sir Arthur was Keeper from 1884 until 1908, and Pitt Rivers Museum. The exhibits include artefacts excavated by Evans, then restored by Emile Gilliéron and his son, also named Emile.

The Gilliérons were highly imaginative, both in their restorations and their apparent involvement in the manufacture of outright fakes for the museum market. Their work for Evans was a palimpsest, layering a modern work over an older work, parts of which were still visible.

In Restoring the Minoans, Evans and his Minoan narrative become the object of another palimpsest. A Restoration, an immersive 18-minute video by artist Elizabeth Price, brings the Bronze Age and its Edwardian image into the 21st century.

Museums are dematerialising their collections by opening online archives to the public, expanding their audience and amplifying the modern significance of their holdings. Now, ironically, the digital experiment of A Restoration accompanies the first public exhibition of some of its Minoan inspirations.

It is narrated by a digital chorus of unseen ‘museum administrators’ who describe how they organise and re-imagining ancient objects, including Evans’ material from Knossos. They note that his restorations are ‘unusual’ in that they are ‘so indiscreet’. But, they are determined to recycle his energetic fictions, as they say, ‘for our own ends’, in order to ‘cultivate a further germination’.

‘We are cultivating a garden’. Accompanied by driving percussion, images tumble across the screen, to morph into new forms with a stroke of gouache, or become layered on top of each other.

Apparently, we are witnessing how the modern curatorial mind categories and reconstructs objects, and assembles a historical narrative that speaks to the present.

From the fragments of Knossos, Evans assembled an Edwardian paradise inhabited by a peace-loving, artistic and aristocratic society that ruled the waves. Price creates a digital paradise: a verdant image of the Minoans, complete with a reconstruction of the Knossos labyrinth. Her video is a modern equivalent of the Gilliérons’ interpretations in watercolours, only much more scrupulous.

‘Once discovered,’ explains curator Jennifer Chu, ‘archaeological artefacts have an active life as they are unearthed, recorded, reconstructed and, today, as illuminated in Elizabeth Price’s brilliant and compelling A Restoration, digitised.’

‘It is, in fact, a journey that takes the material evidence of ancient cultures from excavation to dematerialisation. It is an important transformation, and one that reflects contemporary culture, much as the various ways of presenting these objects in the past reflected cultures before ours.’

Restoring the Minoans casts a digital net over Evans’ fantasy. If Sir Arthur and his restorers were around now he would, doubtless, be advising the Gilliérons on the colour layers of their digital reconstructions.

Restoring the Minoans is on show at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York (www.isaw.nyu.edu/exhibitions/minoans) until 7 January 2018.

Dominic Green
Lives written in stone

All the stone inscriptions from ancient Athens in UK collections are to be made public in English translations for the first time, in a new project led by Cardiff University. Created both by Athenians and others from the surrounding region of Attica, inscriptions make up the largest number of surviving written documents from a city that has made a lasting impact on Western civilisation.

Providing evidence of the first major democracy and often decorated with relief sculpture, some inscriptions reveal in detail decisions made over 2000 years ago by the Athenian Assembly and other public bodies. Others are a rich source of information about the lives of ancient Athenians, from their financial accounts and leases, to their dedications to the gods and funerary monuments.

Among the inscriptions is the Stele of Jason, which is in the British Museum. This 2nd-century AD monument is a dedication to the healing god Asklepios by the doctor, Jason, and his family, and depicts a doctor examining an anxious patient (1).

Another, from Petworth House, is a fascinating 2nd-century BC decree of the Athenian Assembly, which honours a long list of Athenian girls who helped weave a peplos, a garment ritually draped over the wooden statue of Athena on the acropolis.

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Attic Inscriptions in UK Collections will publish all 250 inscriptions from ancient Athens and Attica, from the 6th century BC to 3rd century AD, which are held in museums across the UK. They will be available on Attic Inscriptions Online, an open access website created by Dr Stephen Lambert of Cardiff University’s School of History, Archaeology and Religion, who is leading the project.

‘The last major edition of the Attic inscriptions in the British Museum appeared in 1874,’ says Dr Lambert. ‘It is high time for a new, modern and accessible publication of these and the other Attic inscriptions in UK collections. We plan to publish them online in a series of 17 papers, each covering an individual collection or, for the British Museum, category of inscriptions. Based on the most up-to-date scholarly bibliography, supplemented by fresh autopsy of the stones, and supported by photographs, the papers will include ancient Greek texts, translations and commentaries on each inscription. The scholarly papers will be linked to translations on Attic Inscriptions Online, with notes aimed at school and university students and museum visitors.’

Dr Polly Low and Dr Peter Liddel of Manchester University, collaborators on the project, added: ‘We are excited that the project will not only benefit scholars worldwide, but will make these fascinating insights into the Classical world more accessible and engaging for students and the wider public.’

(For more information visit www.atticinscriptions.com)

Lindsay Fulcher

Quarrying the history of Massalia

In advance of a housing development in Marseille’s Boulevard de la Corderie, archaeologists from the French Institute of Preventive Archaeological Research (INRAP) have uncovered a limestone quarry that was used to build the city of ancient Massalia in the 6th century BC. Founded by Greek sailors from Phocaea, ancient Massalia in the 6th century BC.

The limestone shows imprints of tools used throughout Antiquity: hatchings left by pick-axes and long-shaft chisels, marks left by wedges and levers. It confirms that the extracting method has remained the same for over two millennium.

In view of the importance of the site for research, its discovery aroused the question of what to do next, bearing in mind that the developer had already been granted building permission. In July, the Ministry of Culture declared a protected area of 635 square metres from a total of 4,200 square metres. This decision was confirmed recently and the area is now listed as a historic monument. Fortunately, it lies right on the spot where a garden was planned in the housing project, so it will be accessible to the public. When building starts, the quarry will be buried again to avoid damage during the new construction work. In the meantime, the data collected by researchers will be analysed to provide information on the length of time over which the quarry was exploited, on extractive strategies, and the economic aspects of the quarrying activity during the city’s Greek period.

(For more information visit www.inrap.fr/boulevard-de-la-corderie-12978)

Nicole Benazeth

1. Abandoned sarcophagus left on the quarry site in Massalia (Marseille), early 5th century BC.
Looking East

It is 25 years since the elegant Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South Asia opened at the British Museum. It has been closed for refurbishment but now work has been completed and the splendid new gallery (Room 33) will re-open on 10 November.

With innovative lighting and design, the gallery presents the rich and intricate history of China from 5000 BC to the present day. Research has shown that, early on, China was joined to the rest of Eurasia across the steppes and by sea, as well as along the famous Silk Roads.

The new display gives a fresh narrative of China and South Asia, bringing the story up to the present day with the addition of different types of objects, such as paintings, prints and textiles, which need regulated conditions, which are new in place. The environmentally controlled gallery also allows fine examples of calligraphy and ink painting to be shown in regularly changing displays. So the spectacular modern work of the experimental calligrapher Gu Ganis sits alongside the earliest scroll to reach Britain, which arrived at the end of the 1700s. Objects from China of exceptionally high quality, made of jade, silk and porcelain, are displayed in their historical contexts.

On entering the gallery (1), visitors first see a set of magnificent Ming dynasty dragon tiles. These beautiful, large, high-relief tiles were used to form a series of friezes showing blue-and-yellow dragons among lotuses. For many years, they were part of a garden screen but, originally, they ran along the ridge of a building in Shanxi province, supposedly protecting it from fire as, strangely, dragons are associated with the control of the water supply.

The South Asia displays in the gallery are also presented chronologically, though regional variety is greater here than in the China exhibits. The earliest material is 1.5 million years old and, among the prehistoric displays, objects from the Indus Valley Civilisation, including enigmatic seals with still undeciphered script, are the most important. The birth, development and arrival of South Asia’s diverse religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity are all explored through artefacts from the museum’s extraordinarily rich collections.

Political and economic change is highlighted through sculpture, painting, textiles and everyday objects. New to the displays are the Mughal period, the Rajput textiles and everyday objects. New to the South Asia displays in the gallery are 120 sculptures from the site of Amaravati (a Buddhist province, supposedly protecting it from fire). These period sculptures from Asia are on show for the first time.

rulers, and India under British rule, followed by South Asia since independence in 1947. Textiles and paintings from all these periods are on show for the first time.

One highlight is the renowned stone sculptures from Amaravati (a Buddhist shrine founded in about 200 BC), the most important group of sculptures from Asia housed in the British Museum and the largest group of early Indian sculpture anywhere outside South Asia. More than 1000 sculptures from the site are in the Asahi Shimbun Gallery (Room 33a).

Among the newly-acquired works of art on display in the gallery for the first time are: the outstanding 6th-century sculpture of Lakshmi from Kashmir; the poignant 2008 installation work by the Bangladeshi artist Naeem Mohaiemen, Kazi in Noman’s Land, which records the extraordinary story of the Bengali poet Nazrud Islam (1899–1976) and also a beautiful contemporary porcelain butterfly robe.

(For further information visit www.britishmuseum.org) Lindsay Fulcher

See the Sculptor’s Cave in 3D

The Sculptor’s Cave lies on the southern shore of the Moray Firth in north-east Scotland. Excavations in the late 1920s and in 1979 produced large assemblages of disarticulated human bone and one of the most significant groups of prehistoric metalwork in Scotland.

These finds provide evidence for some complex mortuary practices, including the manipulation and curation of human bodies in the Late Bronze Age and the decapitation of several individuals in the 3rd century AD, together with the votive deposition of valuable personal items including bracelets, gold-covered hair-rings, amber beads and pins. A coin hoard from the 4th century AD – one of the most northerly – suggests that the site retained this special status for a significant time. Indeed, in the 6th century AD, a series of enigmatic Pictish symbols (from which the site derives its name) were carved on the walls of the cave’s unusual twin entrance passages, the point where daylight gives way to the increasingly dark interior.

The symbols may have served as a way to commemorate the dead, with the names of execution victims perhaps passed down the generations through oral tradition. Or, with the emergence of Christianity, it may simply have served as a warning for others to stay away from this pagan place. These symbols, including crescent and V-rods, fish, pentacles, so-called ‘mirror cases’ and an enigmatic double rectangle, are usually found on free-standing stones throughout north-east Scotland; they are much rarer in caves. The closest parallels are at the Wemyss Caves complex in Fife. The more famous Pictish carvings in the immediate locality of the Sculptor’s Cave are a series of stylised bulls from the fort at Burghhead, 10km west, which are very different in character to those in the cave.

In 2014, the Sculptor’s Cave archive went to the University of Bradford for analysis and publication. There, the project team augmented existing data with the use of new digital capture technologies, such as scanning the cave to accurately record the site and preserve it for future generations. This resulted in a 3D walkthrough animation (1), including more detailed scans of the Pictish symbols. Hosted by Elgin Museum, it allows people to experience the site – which is difficult to access and cut off at high tide – from anywhere in the world.

(To see the video visit: www.bradford.ac.uk/news/2017/sculptors-cave-video.php)

The Sculptor’s Cave Publication Project, directed by Professor Ian Armit and managed by Dr Lindsey Büster (University of Bradford), will be published by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 2018.

Lindsey Büster

1. The Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of China and South East Asia opens on 10 November.

1. Rachael Kershaw (University of Bradford) scans the pictoglyphs in the Sculptor’s Cave for the 3D animation video.

LINDSEY RUTHERFORD

13/10/2017 15:29
Happy birthday, Elias Ashmole

The world's first public museum, the Ashmolean in Oxford, has opened a new permanent gallery called The Ashmolean Story. It marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of the museum’s founder, Elias Ashmole (1617–92) who gave his diverse collection to the University of Oxford in 1677, and on display are many of the original artefacts, specimens and details about visitors in the 17th century.

Elias Ashmole (1) was a leading intellectual of his day who studied at Oxford and was elected a founding Fellow of the Royal Society in London in 1661. A true Enlightenment polymath, he was interested in everything – from natural history, medicine and mathematics to alchemy, astrology and magic – all were popular disciplines of his time.

In founding a new public museum, Ashmole had a vision: to create a centre for practical research and the advancement of knowledge of the natural world, which, in his own words ‘... is very necessary to humaine Life, health, & the conveniences thereof’. He recommended that the Keeper (head) of the museum should be Oxford’s Professor of Chemistry, and the first incumbent was Dr Robert Plot (1640–96), a noted scientist and naturalist.

Evoking the style and atmosphere of the original museum, the new gallery displays objects related to scientific enquiry and the quest for knowledge that would have captivated visitors in Oxford. These include a crystal ball (4), probably used by Ashmole for scrying, or ‘crystal-gazing’, and making predictions; medical equipment and samples, like kidney stones, apothecary jars and powders; and an array of natural history specimens of exotic animals, fish and birds. One such specimen that clearly confused Plot was a ‘Gigantick thigh-bone’. He recognised that it was a real bone but could not identify the species due to its enormous size, and he concluded that it must have belonged to a giant man or woman. It is now known to be part of a femur of a large meat-eating dinosaur, making Plot’s illustration the first publication of a dinosaur bone. His tenure at the Ashmolean came to end in 1689–90 when he resigned both his university posts citing an insufficient salary.

Ashmole’s gift to the University included his own extensive collection of books, manuscripts, coins, medals and antiquities. It also included the celebrated Tradescant family collection of ‘Rarities’ in South London that had been gifted to Ashmole by John Tradescant the younger. In 1683 Ashmole transferred everything to Oxford from London, sending it by barge in 26 large chests. He specified that the new museum should be housed in a building designed to promote scientific practice. In the original Ashmolean in Broad Street, Oxford, there was a repository for the collections on the first floor; a lecture theatre for natural history on the ground floor; and in the basement was a state-of-the-art chemical laboratory and anatomy room.

Ashmole also wrote down statutes of governance to guide the museum and to help it achieve its aims; the original handwritten document is on display in the new gallery. The 18 statutes include: the establishment of a board of governors; an annual inspection and audit; and the cataloguing of all objects that came into the collection. They also established procedures for the care and security of objects, the admission of visitors; and museum finances – a model for modern museums and galleries the world over.

While the collections have grown and shifted to focus on art and archaeology, the purpose of the Ashmolean is little changed today. The museum’s main aim remains the preservation and display of the collections for enjoyment and the advancement of knowledge.

The development of the new gallery has allowed the redisplay of important pieces such as Guy Fawkes’ lantern (2) which is a favourite with museum visitors. It has also created space to bring works of art, such as Ashmole’s collection of portraits of scholars and scientists, which includes the famous painting of Elizabethan astrologer and mathematician, John Dee (3) out of storage.

Dr Xu Sturgis, the current Director of the Ashmolean Museum, says: ‘Thanks to the generosity of members of the public, institutional support and private donors, we have been able to mark Elias Ashmole’s 400th birthday with this new gallery. It is a celebration of Ashmole’s vision and of the role the Ashmolean has played in the development of museums and galleries in this country and across the world.’

• For further information visit www.ashmolean.org/story-worlds-first-public-museum.

Lindsay Fulcher

Minerva
November/December 2017
An Italian Basinet, c. 1370-80

Italy. Iron.

Height: 32.5 cm / 12.8 in  Width: 20.5 cm / 8 in

Provenance: Private collection, England, since the 1970s
...pres Henry le teun regna Richard sum fiz x. auze
...emp flente paprand de la terre reyn taut pus del duk
...et otrix par eyde del royPhilippe de fraunce e taut reyn taut hos
de prison pur ecut au luiers de argent e pur cel rauntun taut
...rent les Chalix de Englerere pus des Egyttes e vendix. Pus
...fuit tret de un quartel de Albast al Chastel de Chalezun. dût
...aut vers su fer. Xpet tu aliers: prèdo sir prèda calums.
The myth of the Lionheart

Sabine Kaufmann looks at how the image of Richard I was embellished as it evolved

As Richard the Lionheart lay dying by the walls of the castle of Chalûs-Chabrol, in a last chivalrous gesture he forgave the crossbowman who had delivered the mortal shot. This did not, however, prevent his retainers from flaying the assassin alive later. This story is just one part of the Lionheart myth.

The circumstances of the king’s death are of little significance: the small castle, belonging to an insurrectionary Aquitanian noble, had been bombarded and was about to be stormed when, on the evening of 26 March 1199, Richard came to inspect the progress of the siege. A lone crossbowman on one of the turrets dared to fire at the king, who was wearing a helmet but no armour. The bolt hit its mark, deeply penetrating Richard’s left shoulder. As he tried to remove it, the shaft broke and, although a doctor managed to cut it out, the enlarged wound quickly became gangrenous. Richard I died on 6 April.

For some, this meant the collapse of the entire world order. In Chronica, the 12th-century English historian Roger of Howden wrote: ‘With his death the ant has slain the lion. Alas, such a downfall brings with it the end of the world.’ Gaucelm Faidit (1150–1205), a troubadour from the Limousin, lavished words of praise on the king in these two verses from his haunting lament, Fortz chausa es:

I. The king is dead. A thousand years have passed When there lived no man so brave, not one. Now never again shall we meet Richard’s match, So giving, so rich, so brave a provider. Alexander, himself, who conquered Darius, Never gave or spent so much of his wealth; Nor did Arthur or Charles surpass him in worth, For he provoked others, if I may be frank, To bold him in dread or to offer him thanks.

IV. O Lord and King, now what will happen To arms and tournaments, crowded and busy, To splendid courts and generous giving, Since you are gone, who will be their leader?
Richard I is presented as the perfect knight and king, whose exemplary court is a place of pomp, chivalry and courtliness. The romanticised image of Richard I as the ideal knight and a dynamic king has not diminished. Yet this view contrasts sharply with those of historical scholars since the 17th century.

Some historians refer to Richard as the 'bad king', who neglected England and whose preparations for the Crusades and raising of funds to pay his ransom, after he was captured in 1192, imposed an enormous financial burden on his people. Richard was also capable of great brutality, such as when he ordered the massacre of around 3000 Muslim hostages near Acre in August 1191. He has been condemned as a leader whose thirst for personal glory outstripped the interests of his kingdom.

It is only in recent decades that there has been a more nuanced approach to Richard I’s image, most recently through the books of historian John Gillingham, current Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

While he was still the Duke of Aquitaine, Richard began to make every effort to ensure his personal glorification as the ideal knight so that, after he was crowned in 1189, his regal aura, together with a chivalric narrative based on martial bravado, gradually fused to form a singular personal mythology.

His successful personification of the knightly ideal, his unconditional commitment in battle and his undeniably immense personal
charisma are the preconditions for the emergence of this myth.

This was helped by the fact that, according to *Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi*, a Latin prose narrative of the Third Crusade: ‘He was tall [6ft 5ins], of elegant build; the colour of his hair was between red and gold; his limbs were supple and straight. He had long arms suited to wielding a sword. His long legs matched the rest of his body.’

For the Lionheart myth to fully flourish, however, two other factors were necessary: the
preparation of propaganda (what today we would call ‘spin’) and its dissemination. For this, Richard surrounded himself with countless troubadours who were paid to praise him. One of the most important troubadours in his circle was Bertran de Born of Occitan, initially one of Richard’s foes, who changed sides and became a loyal retainer of the English king. In numerous sirenves (literally, servant songs) or lyric verses/songs he lauded the bravery and skillfulness of his lord, while taunting his adversary, Philipp Augustus, King of France:

‘And Sir Richard hunts lions with rabbits, so that not a one remains on the plains or in the woods […]
King Philipp is hunting sparrows and little birdies with falcons, and his men don’t dare to tell him the truth – that little by little they are losing lands […]’

The fable of the exemplary knight-king emerged early on and this process of myth-making only intensified after the Crusades.

The Norman trouvère Ambroise, who accompanied Richard I on the Third Crusade, colourfully portrays the heroic deeds of the English king in the Holy Land in his L’Estoire de la guerre sainte. According to his account, even the Lionheart’s Muslim adversaries admired and envied his inexhaustible strength, fighting power and daring. So it was that, early on, Richard acquired the famous sobriquet ‘the Lionheart’ by which he is still known today.

Although even before Richard’s accession to the throne, the historian Gerald of Wales had referred to Richard as the ‘lion-hearted prince’ in his 1187 Topographia Hibernica.

In one of his poems, the celebrated medieval troubadour and faithful servant Bertran de Born of Occitan used the same metaphor: ‘[…] tell Sir Richard that he is a lion, and that King Philipp looks like a lamb to me, since he is allowing himself to be dismembered.’

This juxtaposition of the lion and the lamb used to characterise the two rulers was also taken up by contemporary chroniclers, such as Richard of Devizes, and after Richard reached Acre on 8 June 1191, Ambroise referred to him as ‘le preuz reis, le quor de lion’ (‘the splendid king, the lion heart’). Around the beginning of the 14th century, when the legend of Richard the Lionheart reached its zenith, the Middle English verse romance, Kyng Rychard Coer de Lyon (perhaps based on a work from the early 13th century) gave a colourful explanation of how the sobriquet came about. It tells how Richard, held captive by the German king Modard, when forced to fight a lion, ripped the beast’s heart out of its chest with his bare hands, seasoned it with salt and consumed it ‘without bread’.

Another crucial factor in the development and elaboration of the Lionheart myth is the reference made to the idealised model of the legendary King Arthur, ‘the shining light of exemplary rule’. Richard did nothing to dispel this comparison, following in the footsteps of his father, Henry II, who had already begun this process of legitimation and consolidation of power through intensive promotion of the Plantagenets as the rightful successors of Arthur. Richard went on to build on these connections, portraying himself not only as a dynastic descendant but by establishing a personal and tangible relation to the Arthurian myth. According to Roger of Howden, Richard wielded King
Dressed as a simple pilgrim, Richard of his brother-in-law, Henry the Holy Land, heading for the territory of the celebrated hero and Crusader adversaries, which led to the capture earned him the enmity of powerful important port city. These successes deadlocked two-year siege of the proved pivotal in ending the Cyprus. Richard's arrival in Acre to conquer strategically important ruler Tancred and went on rapidly formed an alliance with the Sicilian remained unconquered. Richard followed, although Jerusalem military successes in the Crusades amid great pomp in Westminster His coronation was celebrated throne was sudden and intense. Guinevere were discovered.

Abbey, where the supposed remains were carried out in Glastonbury were at the behest of his father, and at the beginning of his rule – perhaps at the behest of his father, who died in 1189 – exhumations carried out in Westminster Abbey, where the supposed remains of King Arthur and his wife Queen Guinevere were discovered.

The accession of Richard to the throne was sudden and intense. His coronation was celebrated amidst great pomp in Westminster Abbey, and several important military successes in the Crusades followed, although Jerusalem remained unconquered. Richard formed an alliance with the Sicilian ruler Tancred and went on rapidly to conquer strategically important Cyprus. Richard's arrival in Acre proved pivotal in ending the deadlocked two-year siege of the important port city. These successes earned him the enmity of powerful adversaries, which led to the capture of the celebrated hero and Crusader as he was returning home from the Holy Land, heading for the territory of his brother-in-law, Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony and Bavaria. Dressed as a simple pilgrim, Richard was unmasked while roasting a chicken and imprisoned by the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI. He was held in detention in Trîfels Castle, between Heidelberg and the modern French border, and had to wait for his ransom to be paid. But even this unprecedented humiliation and fall from grace was deemed suitable for inclusion in his legendary tale. Observed from far-off England, the noble figure of the imprisoned king quickly attracted all kinds of idealised heroic attributes.

Richard's early and unexpected death, only a few years after his release, was also a critical factor in the building of his legendary status. In tracking the development of the Lionheart myth further, the critical connection between Richard I's real life-story and the narrative tradition associated with Blondel, the trouvère who travelled far and wide in search of his imprisoned lord, as well as stories about Robin Hood, become evident.

The earliest roots of these narrative motifs go back well into the 13th century, but are only made comprehensible much later, undergoing many changes and extensions along the way. For example, Robin Hood was not portrayed as a contemporary of Richard the Lionheart until 1521 in John Major's Historia majoris Britanniae. Tales of both Blondel and Robin Hood supplement the life of the king with additional legendary moments that become important parts of the Lionheart myth. In subsequent centuries an almost unimaginable number of ballads, poems, dramas, operas and novels followed, of which Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe (1819) proved the most important in influencing the image of Richard the Lionheart and Robin Hood. During the 20th century, films, television series and comic-books have also been made inspired by these subjects.

Richard I has, of course, also been commemorated by many artists, such as the Italian sculptor, Baron Carlo Marochetti (1805–1867) who was commissioned to produce a large-scale equestrian statue of the king for the Great Exhibition held in London in 1851. Nine years later, it was cast in bronze and placed on a granite pedestal in front of the Houses of Parliament. After a bomb exploded in its immediate vicinity during a German airstrike on 26 September 1940, the force of the blast knocked the horse and rider off the pedestal, and bent – but did not break – the sword that Richard held skyward. After this, Richard the Lionheart was used on wartime radio broadcasts to bolster the morale of the people; the king became a symbol of the strength of English democracy, ‘which would bend but not break under attack’.

Myths are made of myths. Richard I legitimised and consoli-dated his political authority by drawing on an existing tradition and, in so doing, he created a legend of his own. Today, the Lionheart myth demonstrates the conscious production of mythical narratives and their cultural re-interpretation in the collective consciousness through liberal appropriation and continual reappraisal.

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Richard the Lionheart: King, Knight, Prisoner

is on display at the Historical Museum of the Palatinate in Speyer, Germany (www.museum.speyer.de) until 15 April 2018. Works of art from the royal dynasties of England and France – the Plantagenets and the Capetians – as well as from the Houses of Hohenstaufen and Welf are on show. Sculpture, manuscripts, weapons and archaeological finds from England, Germany and France place Richard I in a European context. Central themes of the exhibition include the ruling dynasties of Richard I’s day, courtly life and literature, chivalry, the Third Crusade and castle-building.
In October 1817 the Italian explorer Giovanni Battista Belzoni uncovered an ancient rubble-choked doorway in the Valley of the Kings. In the darkness beyond, torchlight revealed a vast sequence of passages and chambers extending deep into the rock and covered with vividly painted reliefs depicting the strange denizens of the Egyptian netherworld. Belzoni had discovered the tomb of the pharaoh Seti I (circa 1290–1279 BC), the most elaborate of all the royal sepulchres in that famous valley. The completeness and beauty of the decoration astonished all who saw it, and Belzoni described the tomb as ‘the principal, the most perfect and splendid monument’ in Egypt, but he was even more deeply impressed by the ‘alabaster’ (calcite) sarcophagus, which still lay in the burial chamber.

Today, it is the most treasured object in Sir John Soane’s Museum in Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London, where a new exhibition, celebrating the bicentennial of its discovery, brings the story up to date with the results of new research and a 3-D digital scan of the sarcophagus by Factum Arte.

The discovery of Seti I’s tomb was the crowning glory of an extraordinary career. Belzoni was a larger-than-life character in every sense. Born in Padua in 1778, the son of a barber, he was exceptionally tall (6ft 6ins) and immensely strong, with a keen, enquiring mind and an adventurous personality.

Although he spent a relatively short period in Egypt, from 1815 to 1819, his time there was a whirlwind of activity and exploration. His methods of gaining access to tombs and temples may sound crude when judged by today’s standards, but they were actually superior to those of many of his contemporaries, and were offset by a genuine thirst for knowledge.

Belzoni’s path to Egypt was unusual. Forced to leave Italy after the French invaded, he made a living in England as a showman: audiences flocked to Sadler’s Wells and other venues to see Belzoni, ‘the Patagonian Samson’, carry a human...
pyramid on his shoulders, but this giant was also accomplished in legerdemain and large-scale visual spectaculars, particularly involving waterworks, and it was his hydraulic skills that brought him to Egypt in 1815.

The country’s Ottoman ruler Muhammed Ali Pasha, who had recently eliminated his political rivals, was receptive to Western ideas that might help him to force an undeveloped Egypt into the modern world. Belzoni demonstrated an improved waterwheel, but although it performed well, the Pasha was not sufficiently impressed and the project came to nothing. Others, however, recognised Belzoni’s talents; the Swiss traveller Jean Louis Burckhardt introduced him to the British consul, Henry Salt. A man of strong cultural tastes, fascinated by the antiquities of Egypt, Salt
had the Pasha’s firman (authorisation) to form a collection, which he hoped the British Museum would buy. He wanted to raise a huge bust of Ramesses II, which was part of a colossal statue that lay immovable at the Ramesseum temple at Thebes, and Belzoni agreed to help.

With his intrepid wife Sarah, Belzoni sailed up the Nile to Thebes and duly lifted and transported the 7.25-ton sculpture, which Salt dispatched to the British Museum. Belzoni was dazzled and inspired by the ancient monuments he saw around him and, with Salt’s support, he devoted himself to exploration, with resounding success. Among
the tombs on the Theban west bank, he dug up mummies, coffins and papyri and, at the temples of Karnak, statues of kings and deities, on which he prominently carved his name so that no one should be in doubt as to who had discovered them. Any buried temple or a blocked doorway was an irresistible challenge. Refusing to be defeated by the desert climate or reluctant local workers, in July 1817 he inspired a small team of helpers to dig through tons of sand in intense heat to gain entrance to the great temple of Abu Simbel.

Belzoni discovered no fewer than four pharaonic tombs in the Valley of the Kings. That of Seti I came to light on 16 October 1817: he remembered it as one of the greatest days of his life, marked by 'the pleasure of discovering, what has long been sought in vain, and of presenting the world with a new and perfect monument of Egyptian antiquity'.

The tomb had been robbed and the mummy of the king was gone (although, remarkably, it would be discovered in a hidden collective tomb in 1881). Everything of intrinsic worth had been removed by thieves or officials seeking to recycle precious materials – the ancient hafija-grass rope which the last person to leave had used still hung around a pillar – but Belzoni found wooden statues of gods and a huge quantity of shabti figures (magical 'deputies' placed in the tomb so that they could relieve the king of burdensome tasks in the afterlife). These, however, were as nothing to Belzoni compared with the wonder of the sarcophagus, which lay beneath a stunning painted astronomical ceiling; its lid had been shattered into pieces but the chest which had held the body was intact.

The huge sarcophagus (283cm x 108cm) was carved from a single block of calcite and completely covered, inside and out, with intricately carved figures and hieroglyphic inscriptions. They were originally filled with the pigment Egyptian Blue (calcium copper tetrasilicate) which must have created a startling effect against the creamy white background. Since hieroglyphs had not yet been deciphered, the texts were impenetrable and Belzoni speculated (not unreasonably) that the long processions of figures represented the funeral ceremonies of the dead king. Now, we know that most of the decoration consists of a composition called the Book of Gates, a description of the sun god's journey through the subterranean netherworld by night, a passage in which the dead were reanimated and the god, himself, was rejuvenated. The deceased Seti, cocooned within the sarcophagus, would share in this endlessly repeated cycle of rebirth. Belzoni spent many days

5. Bust of statue of Ramesses II, the 'Young Memnon', transported from the Ramesseum to London by Belzoni in 1816. H. 267cm. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

6. View of the sarcophagus with the lid partly reconstructed, 17 July 1825, watercolour by JM Gandy. H. 22.2cm, W. 36.6cm. © The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum.

in the airless chambers, making plans and copies of the painted reliefs and taking wax impressions from the walls. ‘Belzoni’s Tomb’, as the sepulchre quickly came to be known, would help to immortalise him in the eyes of posterity.

And the discoveries went on: in 1818 Belzoni determined to find the lost entrance to the pyramid of Khafre at Giza, and succeeded in penetrating to the burial chamber (long since plundered). He transported a granite obelisk from Philae down the Nile (today it stands in the grounds at Kingston Lacy, a fine country house in Dorset) and journeyed to the Red Sea coast where he found the location of the Ptolemaic port of Berenice.

But Belzoni had a fatal weakness – a keen desire for personal glory coupled with a suspicious and confrontational nature, which made him a very difficult man with whom to work. His Egyptian exploits had been conducted against a background of fluctuating tensions: he had many battles with local officials of the Ottoman government, and his success in digging at Thebes and in carrying off the Philae obelisk provoked intense rivalry with the agents of the consul of France, Bernardino Drovetti, the most determined collector of antiquities in Egypt. Worst of all, Belzoni’s relationship with Henry Salt became increasingly sour; whereas Salt viewed Belzoni as his employee, Belzoni indignantly rejected any such notion, considering himself an independent explorer working on behalf of the British nation and unwilling to share the credit for his discoveries with another. Their collaboration broke down and, after a final violent confrontation with Drovetti’s men, Belzoni turned his back on excavation and left Egypt in 1819.

In London, the instincts of the showman re-emerged: he sought to boost his reputation through both publication and display. At the aptly named Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly he mounted a spectacular exhibition, containing a full-scale replica of two of the
chambers of Seti’s tomb, plus models of the whole sepulchre and other monuments together with a range of antiquities. He wanted to display the calcite sarcophagus, but it had been sent with the rest of Salt’s antiquities to the British Museum, which was expected to purchase the collection. The negotiations did not proceed smoothly; there were misunderstandings and disagreements and although the museum eventually bought the other objects, the sarcophagus was refused, as £2,000 was considered too high a price. Patriots groaned that it would be sold to a foreign nation ‘after being in English possession’, but then the architect Sir John Soane stepped in. The ‘Sepulchral Chamber’ he had created in his house lacked a suitably grand centrepiece: he duly bought the sarcophagus and had it installed. The fashionable world flocked to Soane’s ‘sarcophagus parties’, where the translucency of the stone lent the monument a wonderful orange glow when illuminated from within.

In 1820 Belzoni published his Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia. This lively and entertaining first-person memoir quickly became a classic. Where else could one read such delightfully macabre descriptions of crawling through underground passages filled with mummies, or smile secretly at the author’s self-justifying criticism of rival collectors? With its irresistible account of overcoming obstacles for the glory of Britain while putting French noses out of joint, the Narrative caught the public mood and, as he had hoped, the British took Belzoni to their hearts.

In Fruits of Enterprise (1824), a digest of the Narrative written for children, an education-conscious mother recounts the explorer’s adventures, causing her young son Owen to exclaim: ‘When I am a man, mother, I mean to be a traveller, and to possess as much perseverance as our Belzoni!’ And, reminding us that Anglo-French rivalry was still a hot topic, he declares: ‘I wish that troublesome Mr Drovetti would keep his agents...’
in Alexandria, and not let them come to disturb Belzoni’s plans.’

By this time, however, ‘our Belzoni’ had performed his last exploits. Having sold most of his collection of antiquities and replicas, he had returned to Africa, this time to journey to Timbuktu in search of the source of the Niger, but he died of dysentery at Gwato, Benin, on 3 December 1823. He left his long-suffering wife Sarah to a lengthy and impoverished widowhood, but his tragically early death silenced criticism and cemented his reputation as the foremost traveller of the age.

Egypt Uncovered: Belzoni and the Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I draws on the archives of the Sir John Soane Museum and on items loaned by the British Museum, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, the Mougins Museum of Classical Art and other institutions. Visitors can examine a selection of Belzoni’s own coloured copies of the wall reliefs in Seti’s tomb, shabti figures and other objects which he found there, prints and drawings reflecting his career as showman, and personal memorabilia, such as a Masonic jewel. This exhibition provides the visitor with the ideal preparation for a viewing of the sarcophagus itself – justly famous as a monument of one of Egypt’s greatest pharaohs and a tribute to its discoverer who – unsurprisingly – carved his name on its edge to make doubly sure that posterity would remember him.


- Egypt Uncovered: Belzoni and the Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I is on show at Sir John Soane’s Museum in London until 15 April 2018.
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The Kuwaiti princess and art collector Sheikha Hussa Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah talks to Dalu Jones about the many lesser-known pre-Islamic objects in the al-Sabah Collection
The magnificent collection of Islamic art assembled by the Kuwaiti princess Sheikha Hussa Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah and her husband, the former prime minister HE Sheikh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, is justly famous worldwide. Sheikha Hussa is the Director General of the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI) and co-owner the al-Sabah Collection, which it houses. A gracious lady of boundless energy and tireless activity, she has given talks on Islamic art and culture at universities and cultural bodies in the Middle East, Europe and the United States. For her, collecting art stems from her desire to extend and spread knowledge, and what she sees as a sense of duty in trying preserve the art of the past for future generations.

The collection of some 30,000 pieces was founded by the couple in the 1970s and has been enriched in recent years by a growing number of outstanding pre-Islamic, Near Eastern antiquities, ranging in date from the 3rd millennium BC to the 7th century AD. A selection of these artefacts was exhibited in Kuwait in 2013 and a lavish catalogue, Splendors of the Ancient East, was published. This was followed, two years later, by another publication, The Arts of the Hellenised East, precious metalwork and gems of the pre-Islamic era in the al-Sabah collection in Kuwait. (Both books are published by Thames and Hudson.) The new acquisitions reflect the couple’s wide-ranging interests and desire to safeguard...
the material culture of Kuwait whose geographical position, at the mouth of the Gulf, has made of it a hub of trade and cultural exchange from the earliest recorded periods of Middle Eastern history.

Do these Near Eastern objects help to chart the long, complex and still little-known cultural history of the Gulf with its many connections to distant regions, even as far away as the Indus Valley and Bactria? Yes, they do, and we are happy that objects in the al-Sabah Collection are contributing to this effort. We expect that upcoming books on Iron Age objects in the collection by Dr Trudy Kawami of the Arthur M Sackler Foundation in New York, and Bronze Age objects in the collection by Henri Paul-Francfort of the French National Center for Scientific Research, will add further information to the history of cultural and trading interactions in the region.

Some of these objects are visually arresting because of their size and beauty, and they shed light on early rituals and beliefs. They also illustrate the sophisticated techniques of their manufacture, such as cire perdue (the art of lost-wax casting of bronze sculpture). DAI’s team of experts on those techniques have provided evidence for the objects’ authenticity and dating. Which are the most important discoveries that they have made?

It is amazing how much impact advances in technology have had on the study of objects and the information that is revealed as a result. For the exhibition, Splendors of the Ancient East: Antiquities in the al-Sabah Collection, we asked Dr Pieter Meyers, the noted American research chemist, to conduct thorough technical studies on each artefact. This allowed us to check their physical condition and revealed not only the materials used but also showed details on the methods of manufacture. In the absence of any archaeological context a special emphasis was also given to the objects’ authenticity.

The Gulf is a new frontier for archaeologists: there is increasing evidence here of the existence of important cultural centres located on trade routes linking Mesopotamia and the Indian subcontinent. Of these, the Dilmun civilisation (dating from circa 3rd millennium BC) would have included Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia. You have taken part in archaeological excavations in the region both as a field-worker and as a patron. Is the DAI involved in multi-national archaeological excavations?

While we have been involved in such excavations in the past, as in Raya/al-Tur area on the Sinai Peninsula and Bahnasa in Upper Egypt, at present we are concentrating on activities rather closer to home.

Among the many intriguing objects in the DAI there is a striking chlorite bowl decorated with a tightly coiled snake, that possibly comes from south-eastern Iran (below). Hundreds of chlorite vessels were found on Tarut Island in Saudi Arabia in a cemetery of the same period unearthed during a construction project. Fragments of these vessels were also found on Failaka Island in the Bay of Kuwait, which has been continuously inhabited from the Bronze Age until modern times. In the 4th century BC Failaka Island was known as Ikaros, an important Hellenistic settlement, which is under excavation. Minerva November/December 2017

4. Standing nude male supporting an openwork basket, copper alloy and silver, Mesopotamia, Early Dynastic 1, 2900–2700 BC. H. 115cm.

5. Chlorite bowl decorated with a single tightly coiled serpent, mid 3rd millennium BC, possibly from south-eastern Iran. H. 8.15cm.
present. Has the DAI developed a long-term project for the archaeology of Kuwait?
The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) is responsible for directing all the archaeological activities in Kuwait. I know they are working with teams from several countries at different sites on the island of Failaka and the discoveries are significant.

You have in your collection magnificent objects from the Hellenistic and Sassanian empires, but a large, 87cm-high, bronze, 2nd- or 3rd-century AD sculpture of a young man in the dress of a Roman soldier from South Arabia (right) is a surprising and compelling validation of the far-reaching influence of the Roman Empire in the Arabian peninsula. Is this a unique piece? South Arabian objects in our collection include several objects like the sculpture you mentioned. In addition we have many other objects that reflect a Graeco-Roman influence on art works created in the region. Archaeologists Dr Sabina Antonini and Dr Christian Robin are currently working on a book on the South Arabian objects in the collection that will explore the full impact of Graeco-Roman influence.

You are actively involved in architectural preservation, working to ensure that traditional buildings in Bahrain, Syria, Egypt and France are protected and restored to their original design. Did the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Architecture Visiting Committee come to Kuwait in 2016 as part of your programme concerning the preservation of the architectural heritage of Kuwait?
The restoration of old buildings is a passion of mine. The reason I am involved with the MIT committee, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and other organisations stems from a deep conviction that we must protect and promote a better appreciation and understanding of material culture.

Kuwait suffered heavy losses in terms of human lives and heritage during the Iraqi invasion in 1990. Your own collection was looted and priceless artefacts were lost. I know that you are personally concerned about the fate of the people as well as the buildings that you have painstakingly restored in Syria. You have recently been appointed representative to the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Armed Conflict Areas (ALIPH) by the government of Kuwait. Can you tell us more about ALIPH?
I am honoured to represent Kuwait on the ALIPH committee. The group, supported by Kuwait, the UAE, France and other countries, has an important mission to protect cultural heritage in war zones.

The DAI museum has an excellent gift-shop with unusual objects on sale. I heard that they were designed by the DAI to encourage the revival of traditional crafts in various Middle Eastern countries. Is this part of a concerted project to revive ancient crafts in Kuwait?
The merchandising in our shops, especially those inspired by objects in the al-Sabah Collection, reflect the traditional aesthetics of the region. Reviving an interest in and appreciation for the designs of the past and craftsmanship, is an important part of our mission.

Launched more than 20 years ago, the DAI Annual Cultural Season has proved to be a vibrant forum for discussing the many and
various aspects of Islamic art history. The series of lectures that were subsequently published (in Arabic and English) in Hadeeth al-Dar, the museum's journal, have become an authoritative reference on a host of different topics. What are the objectives and highlights of the Cultural Season this year?

The 23rd Cultural Season, which runs until May 2018, includes 29 lectures by renowned scholars, 60 concerts, 13 adult courses, 24 films, more than 200 children's activities, two festivals, two theatrical productions, an international conference on modern architecture and an exhibition, Post-Oil City: The History of the City's Future. There is tremendous diversity in the lectures, both in the speakers and the subjects. Contemporary art in the Middle East will be discussed by the director of The Museum of Modern Art (New York). Other subjects covered include: 14th-century Deccan architecture; ancient nomadic jewellery; Yemeni music and architecture; the origin of the Arabic language; motifs in Islamic art and objects in the al-Sabah Collection. Similar diversity can be found in the musical and cinematic events. The Arab world, Europe, the United States, Asia, even South America, are all represented in the Cultural Season.

Post-Oil City: The History of the City's Future looks at innovative projects in Asia, Africa and America that address urgent questions, such as how the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy will affect the process of urban-planning. The MAK II (Modern Architecture Kuwait) conference is a continuation of a dialogue that began in 2016 with the Modern Architecture Kuwait exhibition. Scheduled over three days from 7 to 9 December, visitors will be able to participate in discussions and workshops and to visit many of the buildings highlighted in the exhibition.

- Post-Oil City: The History of the City's Future is on show at the Americani Cultural Centre (www.darmuseum.org.kw) until 15 December 2017. It is sponsored by, the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (IFA), Stuttgart, Germany, the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah and the National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters, Kuwait.

Minerva November/December 2017
AN IZNIK POLYCHROME POTTERY DISH
Turkey, circa 1580 A.D.
34 cm. diameter

IZNIK POTTERY FROM THE COLLECTION OF SIR ALAN BARLOW, BT. (1881–1968)
Exhibition 1 – 8 December 2017
Over the first millennium, the great religions of the world, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, developed a series of images and symbols that would proclaim their identity and make them stand out – both to their followers and to those of other faiths, inspiring devotion as well as discord. This legacy lives on today and, as religious controversy and conflict and mass migrations continue to dominate the headlines, the Ashmolean Museum’s new exhibition, Imagining the Divine: The Rise of World Religions, comes as a timely reminder that our major religions evolved as people and their sacred objects moved freely across Asia and Europe. Their visual traditions, which assimilated local pagan beliefs that predated them, gradually coalesced as the result of a fluid interaction between faiths and cultures. The result of a three-year collaborative research project, based at the British Museum and at Wolfson College, Oxford, the new show uses objects from the Ashmolean’s own collection and loans from other museums and individuals to paint a multi-faceted picture revealing the full complexity of how the five religions developed.

Art was central to that process, and every object on display – whether it is a statue, a carving, a manuscript, a vessel or a strip of cloth – tells a story of changing beliefs and cultural exchange. One of the earliest items is a...
perfect example of how two distinct visual traditions merged into each other as countries were colonised and new faiths were adopted. Made during the Roman Imperial period, when the Empire embraced swathes of North Africa, the marble bust of a mature, bearded male figure marries the typical attributes of the Roman deity Jupiter with those of the Egyptian god Serapis, crowned with a bushel (a tall, dry corn measure) symbolising fertility.

In the early Christian era, Jupiter provided the prototype for representations of Jesus, as Christian artists built upon the visual language of Roman art. An Eastern Mediterranean ivory panel, showing Christ enthroned, from circa AD 500–600, is clearly based on Classical representations of the pagan god on his throne, absorbing some of the powerful attributes of the earlier deity by association.

Similarly, early representations of Christ as the Good Shepherd, carrying a lamb on his shoulders, owe something to statues of Hermes the ram-bearer; just as Christ’s association with the flourishing vine (in St John’s Gospel Jesus states: ‘I am the true vine’) connects him with the cult of the wine-loving Greek god, Dionysus, or his Roman equivalent, Bacchus.

This blending of Christian and pagan motifs also extends to architectural features. One of the most famous mosaic floors in Britain, uncovered on the site of the early 4th-century Roman villa in Hinton...
St Mary in Dorset, shows mythological scenes ranged around an unmistakably Christian symbol. The central roundel of the mosaic shows the head and shoulders of a clean-shaven young man in Roman dress and with the swept-back hairstyle of the time but, behind his head, the Greek letters ‘X’ and ‘P’, or the ‘chi-ro’ symbol, spell out the beginning of the name ‘Christ’, which reveals his true identity. Other scenes surrounding this portrait illustrate the exploits of the Greek hero Bellerophon slaying a mythical monster called the Chimaera – a popular subject in Roman art – although perhaps this story was invested with a new significance by Christian viewers. This would not have been problematic as, at this time, deities from different religions were often worshipped simultaneously. A 4th-century biographer of the Roman emperor Severus Alexander (r AD 222–35) describes how the ruler would ‘worship the sanctuary of his Lares [household gods], in which he kept statues of the deified emperors... and also of certain holy souls, among them Apollonius, and... Christ, Abrahams, Orpheus and others of this same character’.

The early rulers of the British Isles seem to have adopted a similar practice: writing in 8th-century Northumbria, the Venerable Bede criticised Raedwald, the king of East Anglia, for retaining his pagan beliefs after his conversion to Christianity by maintaining both pagan and Christian altars for sacrifice in the same temple, and for offering up victims to what Bede viewed as the devil. Perhaps King Raedwald was simply hedging his bets, as were all the people who, at the time, carried amulets and coins bearing Christian images on one side and pagan ones on the other.

In the first millennium the world was globalised much as it is today, even if the pace of communication was infinitely slower. People and

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4. Brooch with cross and Islamic seal, gilt copper alloy and glass, circa AD 700–900, found in Ballycottin, Ireland. H. 4.4cm. © Trustees of the British Museum.

5. The St Chad Gospels, tempera and ink on parchment, circa AD 725–50, West Midlands, Northumbria or Wales, H. 30.8cm. © Image produced by Division of Writing, Rhetoric & Digital Studies, University of Kentucky. Used by permission of the Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral.
objects travelled, often surprisingly long distances; conquerors, traders and pilgrims took new beliefs and images to foreign lands.

A small gilt brooch (4), made


7. Ewer with dancing girls, parcel silver-gilt, circa 6th–7th century, Iran. H. 32cm. © Private Collection UK.


circa AD 700–900 and found in Ballycottin in Ireland, reveals how objects could acquire new meaning as they were adapted by users in different cultures. Manufactured in Central Europe, it has an Islamic glass seal at its centre with an Arabic inscription that probably reads 'God wills'. The Carolingian artist who made the brooch may have chosen the seal for its exotic associations, yet the cross shape marks it out as a Christian object. Somehow it ended up in a bog in Ireland, perhaps brought there by pagan Vikings who may have acquired it through looting or trade, and who probably thought it possessed the protective properties of an amulet.

The multiplicity of meanings that gathered round this little brooch is partly accidental, but the monks who illuminated the beautiful, early Christian manuscripts in the British Isles deliberately chose motifs that related to native visual traditions. The monastic scribe who produced the St Chad Gospels (5) (previously known as the Lichfield Gospels) in the 8th century illuminated the opening pages of St Luke's Gospel with a combination of swirling, intricate Celtic designs of key patterns and interlaced beasts, derived from Anglo-Saxon metalwork, arranging them around a large cross.

In the pagan world, animal imagery and knotwork designs were used as talismans to ward off evil, so their incorporation into a Christian book would have given it additional resonance. The words on the facing page, although they are in the Latin language of the early Christian church, have the angular character of northern European runes. This beautifully produced Gospel, which transforms a sacred text into a work of art, is one of a number of manuscripts where the message is also embodied in the design and layout.

Another of these is a surprising paper scroll of the Buddhist Heart Sutra (8). Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese during the 9th century, it was found in one of the painted Buddhist caves in Dunhuang, along the Silk Road. The text itself is
laid out in the shape of a stupa, a Buddhist religious monument, its black characters linked by thin red lines.

In the Islamic tradition the very letters that form the words used in a design are held to be sacred. They 'replace' the figurative images, used in other religions, that are prohibited because they are thought to lead to idolatry.

The refined calligraphy seen in Quranic texts, or on ceramics (6) illustrates how, by turning its back on other religious figurative traditions, Islam created its own, highly distinctive, visual identity. Transcribing the written word in exquisite script was an act of piety, and elaborate and costly abstract decoration was applied to many Qurans as a way of indicating their spiritual value, transforming the book itself into an object of veneration. Anyone who presented a Quran as a gift ensured the continuity of blessings that it was thought to embody.

This, of course, is the broad narrative of one of the aspects of Islamic art, but the subject is inevitably more complicated, and the exhibition also argues that attitudes to imagery varied across the territories conquered by the followers of Muhammad, despite the prophet's own reported views on the subject. A graceful silver ewer (7) dating from circa AD 500–700 and decorated with dancing female figures is the type of object that was highly prized by the Islamic elite, demonstrating how such motifs, drawn from Sasanian art, managed to persist in the early Islamic period.

One of the most surprising manuscripts on show, and a further demonstration of the interconnectedness of cultures, is a Book of Exodus (11) produced by the Jewish Karaite community living in Egypt, written in Arabic and enhanced with gold ornament like a Quran. The Book of Exodus itself inveighs against 'graven images', which later became an Islamic attitude. Early Jewish art also displays an unease with figurative images, frequently employing symbols such as the menorah and the Torah shrine to suggest God.

Several other faiths, too, represent the Almighty symbolically. The earliest depictions of the Buddha in art did not actually show him in person, but indicated his presence through symbols such as his footprints, the Bodhi tree under which he sat when he was enlightened, an empty space surrounded by a parasol, or the Wheel of the Law. A slab sculpture of the Buddha's footprints (9) produced in India in the 2nd century AD is incised with wheels and other symbols that reflect the Buddha's superhuman nature.

The exhibition reveals that the images of the Buddha we are more familiar with today were developed in the 1st or 2nd century AD, when Buddhist artists came into contact with Gandharan art, which was heavily influenced by Greece and Rome, and the divine cults that became Hinduism in the Mathura area of India. Some of the statues of Buddha produced in Mathura workshops were simply adapted from prototypes already used to represent Hindu or Jain gods, and it is interesting that the Buddha was even absorbed into Hindu mythology as one of the 10 avatars, or physical manifestations, of the Hindu god Vishnu.
along with others, including a boar (10). Sculptures of Vishnu were an essential part of the devotional experience. As they were carried in religious processions, they offered viewers a tangible form of the divine as they listened to chants, smelled sweet incense and tasted offerings during temple rituals.

In many other religious cultures too, statues of gods and religious figures have been seen as embodiments of sacred beings, animated by the subjects they depict. It naturally follows that defacing such statues robs them of their power. Outbreaks of iconoclasm have occurred throughout history and there is plenty of evidence that such acts were carried out in the first millennium as rival religious cultures sought to neutralise others. Mutilating a statue’s nose, ears or hands deprived it of its ability to become animated (to ‘breathe’, ‘hear’ or ‘act’) or, on the other hand, demonstrated that it never had any such power in the first place.

Medieval statues in niches, colourful wall-paintings and carved wooden pew-ends were destroyed in English churches by Cromwell’s troops during the Civil War. More recently, such acts of iconoclasm as the Taliban’s destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan and the wanton vandalism of ISIS in Syria and Iraq are, in a curious way, testimony to the continuing potency and relevance of the sacred image. The image may be broken but its power endures.

The adventures
The year is 50 BC. Gaul is entirely occupied by the Romans. Well, not entirely...’ so begin the 37 comic-books (or albums) about an indomitable Gaulish village and its leading inhabitants, Asterix and Obelix, by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo, which first rolled off the presses nearly 60 years ago. Since then more than 370 million Asterix albums have been sold around the world and the stories have been translated into 110 languages and dialects.

Now, marking the 40th anniversary of the death of the series’ original writer, Goscinny, and the publication of the latest album in the series, Asterix and the Chariot Race, fans are celebrating two of France’s most famous fictional sons and their creators with exhibitions, films and conferences.

For many, whose interest in the ancient world was informed (and hilariously misinformed) by tales of the ancient Gaulish villagers who take on the might of Julius Caesar, this will be a golden opportunity to return to the Armorican forest, cheer on the David-versus-Goliath conflict, delight in the running gags and groan at those appalling puns all over again.

The story of the creation of Asterix and his comrades is set out in a new exhibition, devoted to René Goscinny, at Musée d’art et d’histoire du Judaïsme in Paris. Together, Goscinny and his colleague Albert Uderzo produced the celebrated bande dessinée, or cartoon strip, for 18 years. But how did it all begin?

In 1959, the pair were faced with a deadline to produce a graphic storyline for the magazine Pilote, which they, together with two cartoonist colleagues, had founded as a sophisticated comic journal aimed at both older children and adults. Their only brief was that...
it had to come out of some aspect of French history or culture. First, they created a character based on Reynard the Fox, but this had to be scrapped when they discovered that another cartoon strip was already using this fictional figure. So they turned to a subject familiar to all French schoolchildren, namely the legends of the tribes of pre-Roman France (or ‘nos ancêtres les Gaulois’ as they are known) who were subjected by the Romans following the defeat of the Gaulish chief Vercingetorix by Julius Caesar at the Battle of Alesia in 52 BC.

According to Goscinny and Uderzo’s version of history, however, the inhabitants of one small, unnamed village ‘held out against the Roman invaders’. By dint of the resourcefulness and courage of its warriors, its unity in the face of the forces of oppression, and armed only with a superhuman strength-giving, magic potion and truly atrocious puns, these plucky villagers repeatedly outwit the Roman soldiers. The strip’s stories of the resistance of local people against hordes of heavily armed imperial invaders struck a chord in post-Occupation France and it became an immediate success.

Translations followed, as well as a series of book-length stories, published between 1961 and 1976, and feature-length animated films, until Goscinny’s sudden death at the age of 51, in 1977, left Uderzo devastated. Yet, despite his reluctance to continue the series without his partner, he was compelled to finish the drawings for *Asterix* and the Belgians because he was under contract with his publishers, Dargaud, to do so. An acrimonious split with Dargaud (which owned *Pilote*) followed and led Uderzo to found his own company, Les Éditions Albert-René (a combination of his and Goscinny’s first names). He went on to publish a further 12 *Asterix* albums, the first nine of which were written, as well as illustrated, by Uderzo himself.

From the outset, insists Céleste Surugue, who is publisher of

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1. (Previous page) A scene from *Asterix and the Chariot Race*, published in October 2017, in which the indomitable Gauls set off on their latest adventure. © 2017 Les éditions Albert-René.


4. Obelix’s dog, Dogmatix, also sports fine Gaulish moustaches. Dogmatix was a hit with readers from his first appearance in 1963. © 2017 Les éditions Albert-René.

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Editions Albert-René, Goscinny and Uderzo were cartoonists rather than Classicists or historians, relying on popular tradition and cliché to make the characters and storylines recognisable, relevant and amusing to modern readers, embracing anachronism if it made for a good joke. As he says: ‘They never let accuracy get in the way of a good story.’

But the Asterix strip always shows a level of understanding of historical evidence – delivered, of course, with a hefty dose of slapstick and knockabout irreverence – for its creators took history seriously and, buried within the running jokes and visual wit are nuggets of fact, mined from respected sources.

According to Surugue, Goscinny and Uderzo acknowledged their debt to Julius Caesar’s *Commentaries on the Gallic War*, a first-hand account of his nine-year campaign in Gaul against the Celtic tribes, written between 58 BC and 49 BC. The opening chapter of this work, a standard text in French schools, gave Asterix’s creators the material for *Asterix in Belgium*, in which the Gaulish villagers, offended by Caesar’s statement that the Belgae were the bravest of the tribes, attempt to outdo the Belgians by beating up the Roman armies. In best Asterix tradition, this friendly rivalry all ends in feasting under the stars. *De Bello Gallico* has

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continued to provide inspiration for the strip’s creators, as recently as 2015, when the new writer-and-artist team, Jean-Yves Ferri and Didier Conrad, created Asterix and the Missing Scroll. The plot of this story revolves around a hitherto unknown fictional chapter in De Bello Gallico detailing Caesar’s failure to conquer Asterix’s village.

The jokes have been brought up to date with references to Wikileaks and social media, censorship and freedom of the press. Will it matter in 20 years’ time if younger readers are too busy enjoying the story to grasp the historical references?

Also on Goscinny’s bookshelf was La Vie Quotidienne à Rome, written by the historian Jérôme Carcopino, Director of the French School in Rome, and published in 1939. This description of life in Imperial Rome during the 2nd century AD, drawing on contemporary writing by both historians and poets, offered a vivid, if slightly romanticised, portrayal of how people at all levels of society carried out their daily lives, working, worshipping, eating and relaxing. Its detailed accounts of Roman streets, shops and markets, domestic interiors and public spaces find visual form in many of the Uderzo’s drawings, but they are delivered with a freedom from pedantry and frequent winks to the reader as a reminder that these are not history books.

In Mansions of the Gods, the delightfully and appropriately named architect, Squareonthelhypotenus, presents Caesar with plans for apartment blocks several storeys high, which are to be built next to the Gaulish village in an attempt to drive out its inhabitants. The size of these urban developments was not as anachronistic as it may seem, since remains of insulae, or apartment blocks, of at least six storeys have been excavated in Rome, near the Basilica of St Mary of the Altar of Heaven (Ara Coeli), and at Ostia Antica, although these date from the 2nd century AD – which is somewhat later than the 50 BC setting of the Asterix stories.

When it came to writing funny storyline, another tool in the authors’ kit was to use stereotypes to create recognisable characters and situations but, as Céleste Surugue points out, the humour was directed not at the group stereotyped but at the stereotype itself. In these more racially and culturally aware times, some may find this national typecasting hard to stomach: Spaniards are universally haughty, the Swiss are tidy and women are either airheads or battleaxes. This led to the books briefly being banned by London’s Brent Council in 1983 – on the grounds of racism. Classical authors were, however, as susceptible as anyone to the temptation to stereotype nations for the purposes of propaganda in the narration of history, and some of the conventions included in Asterix are derived from these original texts.

The Greek historian and geographer Strabo (64 BC–after AD 21), in his description of an encounter between Alexander the Great and a group of Celts near the River Danube, characterises the Celts as fearing nothing but the heavens falling on their heads. Goscinny and Uderzo picked up on this
observation and made it Chief Vitalstatistix's rallying call to the villagers, inciting them to charge off to attack the Romans.

Writers such as the 1st-century Greek historian Diodorus Siculus perpetuate the notion of the stroppy, barbarian Gauls, always up for a fight. 'It is their custom, even during meals, to seize upon any trivial matter as an occasion for keen disputation and then to challenge one another to single combat,' he wrote. The cheerful all-in village brawls depicted in the Asterix books clearly have pedigree, by Gauls, a feature which, together with the winged helmet of the luxuriant moustaches sported then. Diodorus also comments on books clearly have pedigree, Asterix all-in village brawls depicted in the combat, ' he wrote. The cheerful It is their custom, stroppy, barbarian Gauls, always perpetuate the notion of the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus to attack the Romans. Vitalstatistix's rallying call to the observation and made it Chief.

That was an odd detour... from Asterix and the Chariot Race by Jean-Yves Ferri and Didier Conrad. © 2017 Les editions Albert-René.

But that’s not fair, they’re vital! I know, we can’t cope without them... It could have been the death of us!

10. ‘That was an odd detour...’ from Asterix and the Chariot Race by Jean-Yves Ferri and Didier Conrad. © 2017 Les editions Albert-René.

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10. ‘That was an odd detour...’ from Asterix and the Chariot Race by Jean-Yves Ferri and Didier Conrad. © 2017 Les editions Albert-René.


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savage image of the Gaulish warrior that was popular currency in the early 20th century. The convention of the distinctive breeches, or braccae in French, as worn by the men in Asterix's village, are drawn from descriptions of braecai, the long breeches or trousers worn by Celtic and Germanic tribes, distinguishing their wearers from the tunic-wearing Romans, remarked on by Classical writers including Strabo. When it came to other aspects of Gaulish culture, Goscinny and Uderzo mixed and matched truth and myth, although this came as much from popular tradition and convention as from primary sources. It is known that Druids did play an important part in Gaulish society as the priestly class that presided over the religious life of the community, dispensing justice and carrying out rituals. In Asterix and the Goths, Getafix sets out for the annual Druids’ meeting in the Forest of the Carnutes (near Orleans, or Chartres), an event described in De Bello Gallico by Julius Caesar as being where the Druids 'sit in conclave in a consecrated spot'. But at this point history and story part company, with Getafix winning the Druid of the Year competition and being snatched by Goths wearing pickelhaubes (spiked, Kaiser-style helmets) but, then, this is Asterix, after all. According to Pliny the Elder's Natural History, written in the 1st century AD, Druids cut their sacred mistletoe with a golden sickle, which happens to be a key piece of Getafix’s equipment when he is brewing his magic potion. Bards, who were poets as well as singers, were described by Strabo as being held in ‘exceptional honour’, although the unfortunate musician Cacofonix, who longs for his creative genius to be appreciated, would probably disagree. A 1st-century BC Celtic sculpture discovered at Paule-Saint-Symphorien in Brittany (now in the archaeological museum in St Brieuc), shows a figure holding a lyre that is much along the lines of those depicted widely in Roman frescoes, and similar to Cacofonix’s own instrument. This said, the Celtic tribes’ belief system is obscure, but their devotion to Toutatis/Teutates, Belisama and Bellenos is widely recorded (as is their not-so-amusing ritual of human sacrifice).

As Uderzo commented to Peter Kessler in 1995 (reported in the fans’ bible The Complete Guide to Asterix): ‘The only historical limits that we put on ourselves were countries visited by the Gauls – or simply existing at the time of the Gauls – but we allowed ourselves to use anachronisms, which I continue to do, with great care. No historian has ever complained.’ And it is unlikely that any sensible historian ever would.

The relationship between the Gauls and the Romans in the annals of Asterix is not particularly complicated. An encounter between Asterix, Obelix and a band of legionaries will have only one conclusion: the pitiful return of the battered Roman soldiery to a contemptuous centurion, infuriated that yet again his men have been bested by the cunning of Asterix, or else the magic-potion-aided brute strength of Obelix.

But what of the historical relationship outside the comic-book? Was there any real way in which the culture of the Gauls persisted in the face of Roman encroachment? Is there some historical or metaphorical truth in the idea of dazed Roman soldiers staggering away from a confrontation with the Gauls, confused and not knowing what had hit them?

There are difficulties in asking such questions. The first is: who do we mean by the Gauls? This is by no means cut and dried. We recall the famous words of Julius Caesar at the beginning of De Bello Gallico (Commentaries on the Gallic War, his account of the conquest from 58–50 BC): ‘Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres’ (All of Gaul is divided into three parts) implying that the whole territory which he conquered (corresponding to modern-day France, with parts of Belgium, Holland and Germany) was indeed part of Gaul.

However, a closer consideration of the historical context suggests that this statement is a brilliantly underhand piece of propaganda. The northern and western regions of Aquitania and Belgica (two of those three parts) appear to have been diverse in language and customs, and it is doubtful whether they were ever a single political unit before Roman times. It is generally only the region as far as the centre of France, up to modern-day Lyon, which the Romans commonly described as ‘Gaul’ before Caesar’s time; so Asterix, in his Armorican forest, would probably not have even qualified as a Gaul.

It seems that Caesar might well have been the first to call the whole area ‘Gaul’ to justify his conquest. His formal position was governor of Cis-Alpine Gaul and Trans-Alpine Gaul, the small sliver of the Mediterranean French coast that the Romans occupied in 124 BC. Caesar’s declaration that the whole territory up to the Atlantic coast and English Channel was also ‘Gaul’ implied that he wasn’t acting so far outside his area of authority by deciding to conquer it.

More broadly than this, it is difficult to be definite about the cultures throughout the region Caesar called ‘Gaul’. The extreme trauma of the conquest draws a heavy curtain across Gallic history before 50 BC. The Roman historian Pliny the Elder estimated that a million Gauls were killed during

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What did the Romans ever do for Gaul?

Julius Caesar conducted a brutal war against the Gaulish tribes but, says Bijan Omrani, Asterix and Obelix would have done better to put on togas, learn Latin and join a local council rather than to endlessly plot and fight against the Roman invaders.

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2. Map of Gaul showing the original Roman province of Trans-Alpine Gaul (marked as Narbonensis), and the three provinces conquered by Julius Caesar: Aquitania, Lugdunensis and Belgica. Wikimedia.

Caesar’s conquest, and that another million were enslaved. Many more were displaced. Tribal groupings were abolished or re-ordered, and old settlements were destroyed or abandoned in favour of new Roman foundations.

The Druids, who were the repository of higher learning, philosophy, religious ideas and customs, were extirpated in the century or so after the conquest, accused of conducting human sacrifices, abhorrent to the Romans. According to Caesar they never committed their knowledge to paper, preferring to rely on their memory. As such, aside from a few scantly Gallic inscriptions made in Greek characters and the evidence

Roman perceptions of the Gauls were a mix of terror and disgust and they were portrayed as quintessential barbarians, in every way anti-Roman
of archaeology, the Gauls have left no witnesses of themselves from before the Roman conquest. Later literature from the ‘Celtic fringe’ of Ireland and Wales, written down centuries afterwards, is considered by scholars as just the imagining of an earlier heroic age, of no real use in understanding pre-Roman Gaul. As such, the Gauls cannot speak for themselves. We can only turn to the accounts of them left by the Romans and Greeks.

Unfortunately, the Romans had a primal horror of the Gauls. In 390 BC, a band of Gallic migrants swept through the Italian peninsula, and then besieged and burned an unwary Rome. It was the only time such a thing had happened before Alaric and the Goths in AD 410. The event nearly extinguished the nascent power of Rome, and it took decades for the city to recover from the shock. From that time onwards, Roman perceptions of the Gauls were a mix of terror and disgust, and they were portrayed as the quintessential barbarians, in every way anti-Roman.

In the battles waged between the two sides for domination of northern Italy (or Cis-Alpine Gaul) writers, such as Livy, contrasted the behaviour of Roman soldiers, disciplined, never breaking rank, and dispensing brutality without ostentation or flamboyance, with that of the Gallic warriors who were a chaos of individuals, garishly adorned with gold, boasting of their prowess. Yet, once they had exhausted themselves in a powerful first onslaught, they would immediately forget their vaunted bravery, turn their backs, and flee.

The theme was constant among Classical authors. Polybius, the Greek historian of early Rome, wrote that the Gauls trusted in battle to *thumos*, an unrestrained heroic battle-fury, rather than *logismos*, working out their tactics coolly and rationally.

Marcus Porcius Cato, writing around the 2nd century BC, conceded that the Gauls were brave, but also given to endless disputes, superstitions and an obsession with eloquence. The poet Silius Italicus similarly wrote in the 1st century BC that the Gauls were loquacious and impulsive.

Caesar’s own brief account of the customs of the Gauls suggests a society based on warrior chiefs obsessed with building prestige. Such prestige would be developed by leading successful inter-tribal raids and accumulating looted wealth. This was used in ostentatious display and the support of retainers, or ‘vassals’ (a word derived from pre-Roman Gaul). A leader’s prestige increased with his wealth, reputation in conflict, and the number of his followers.

One particular Gallic
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practice seemed to epitomise these ideas. In the 2nd century BC, a Greek writer, Posidonius, who travelled through Gaul, reported that it was common for the severed heads of enemies to be hung outside Gallic houses. Others might be stored in boxes indoors, or carried about like necklaces on horses.

His reports were no exaggeration. Door lintels adapted with head-shaped niches have been found in the Gallic settlements of Roquepertuse and Entremont, not to mention skulls embedded with iron hooks, ready for display.

But Caesar’s conquest of Gaul by 50 BC presented Rome with a serious challenge: how to assimilate a thoroughly different, barbarian, severed-head-loving people into the orderly structures of Roman government and society. It was not an insignificant problem.

The conquest had added 30 percent to the landmass of the empire in around eight years. Rome did not have the manpower for a heavy occupation. Although it used military force, roadbuilding, and the enlistment of Gallic warriors into the Roman army and their posting elsewhere to remove them from their native power bases, ultimately Rome had to win over the support of the Gallic hierarchies to hold on to Gaul. Some of this was done by bribery and tax rebates for supportive chieftains, yet the most important effort was a Roman adaption of Gallic culture.

In 12 BC, the Romans ordered the magnates of the 60 tribes of the three Gallic provinces to assemble in Lugdunum (Lyon) for the inauguration of a new shrine. This was the ‘Altar of the Three Gauls’, which had been instituted by a member of the imperial family, Drusus. It is known from later accounts that the altar was around 50 metres in length, flanked by porphyry columns and inscribed with the names of all the Gallic tribes. Here, the Gallic chiefs were required to offer sacrifices to the spirit of Rome and the genius of Emperor Augustus (r 27 BC – AD 14). At an annual festival to be held on the first of August, the chiefs were to elect priests and officials of the shrine to administer the worship, and to make laudatory orations on the emperors and Rome.

This may seem at first sight the most dismal sort of cultural oppression by the Romans, and self-abasement by the Gauls. However, from a Roman point of view it was calculated to accommodate and sublimate what they understood to be the cultural practices of the Gauls. The Roman conquest had put an end to inter-tribal raiding. However, the Romans understood that the urge to display prestige within Gallic tribal structures would not subside. The Altar of the Three Gauls, with its competition for the priestly offices, and the chance to make grand orations and display eloquence, allowed space
for the pre-existing cultural inclinations of the Gauls for displaying prestige, whilst incorporating them into the Roman hierarchy. The holding of such annual inter-tribal assemblies also seems to have been a pre-Roman custom, and it is a sign of Roman self-confidence that they continued to allow such assemblies to occur when they could easily have become forums for dissent and unity against the invader.

To win the annual priesthood of the altar at Lugdunum became the highest accolade amongst the Gallic chiefs. However, similar Roman-style local offices for Gallic magnates proliferated through the provinces: positions on the town council, the chairmanship of trade guilds, priesthoods of local cults of Augustus and the Roman emperors.

A vast number of inscriptions survive, particularly from the first three centuries of Roman rule, recording the career of Romanised Gauls and boasting which offices they held. Thus, the possession of a seat on the town council and an inscription marking the fact replaced the urge to display severed heads at one’s door.

It is notable that in these inscriptions the subjects are not described as Gauls, but as members of their original Gallic tribe: ‘Julius Severinus of the Sequani’, ‘Caius Ullatius… of the Segusiavi’. The ultimate conclusion was that the more one succeeded in imitating the Romans, the more prestige one would have among one’s own native tribe. The two identities worked in tandem: the better one was being Roman, the greater one was as a Gaul.

A major part of Gallic culture was *potlach*, or the chance for conspicuous public display and distribution of wealth. This continued, but under the new Roman framework. Rather than treasure being handed out to retainers at banquets, Romanised Gauls would show off the wealth they had accumulated in the early empire by the patronage of Roman-style buildings. The Arch of Germanicus in Saintes, built circa AD 16, declares on every wall that it was funded by a Romanised Gaul, Gaius Julius Rufus. Many other Roman structures may not have been paid for centrally, but funded by Gauls eager to display their eminence through public benefactions.

These local public offices allowed and required the Gauls to maintain their reputation for eloquence. Yet, speeches now had to be made in Latin rather than in any Gallic dialect. The Romans set up schools especially aimed at the sons of Gallic nobility to train them in Latin language and rhetoric. The most famous, at Bordeaux and Autun, survived until late antiquity.

Before long, Gallic eloquence became a byword in Latin literature. The 1st-century AD historian Tacitus, himself perhaps of Gallic origin, wrote a dialogue on oratory where all but one of the speakers were Gauls. Earlier Roman writers, such as Catullus and Virgil, seem to have come from Cis-Alpine Gallic stock, and some argue that their poetry bears a Gallic stamp. However, later writers such as Pompeius Trogus or Ausonius, both born in Gaul and proud of their regional as well as Roman identities, showed clearly that the Gallic capacity for eloquence prospered under the Roman regime.

There are many unknown unknowns about the culture of ancient Gaul. Most of its concepts of religion, philosophy, literature, language and the fine details of its original social organisation are lost beyond recovery. However, the Romans at least allowed and encouraged the persistence of a number of cultural traits which they nevertheless perceived to be Gallic.

Thus, in real life Asterix and Obelix might have best shown their cunning and determination to preserve their Gallic way of life not by running rings around the legionaries whilst topped up with their magic potion, but by swapping their winged helmets for togas, mastering Latin, and finding a place on the local town council.

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*Caesar’s Footprints: Journeys in Roman Gaul* by Bijan Omrani is published in hardback by Head of Zeus at £25.

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On 1 July 1952, the architect-turned-linguist Michael Ventris, announced on BBC radio that he had finally deciphered Linear B, a script that had puzzled scholars for over 50 years. The ability to read Linear B script, preserved on some baked clay tablets, first excavated at Knossos and, later, at other Mycenaean sites, changed forever our understanding of the Late Bronze Age world and, eventually, of Ancient Greece itself.

A little more than a year earlier, on 15 May 1951, mathematician Alan Turing (1912–54) had stated, also on the BBC Third Programme (now BBC Radio 3), that ‘It is now not altogether unreasonable to describe digital computers as brains.’

This broadcast had followed the publication of an important paper, in which Turing had speculated about the possibility of creating machines that think. After his death, he became famous as the most influential codebreaker of the Second World War. Today, many mathematicians and computer scientists consider him one of the 20th century’s greatest mathematicians.

These two fascinating stories – the decipherment of an Aegean Bronze Age script and the work of British codebreakers during the Second World War – are brought together and explained in Codebreakers and Groundbreakers, an exhibition jointly organised by the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Faculty of Classics, Cambridge.

The exhibition, which is divided into two main sections, begins with the era of the discovery of the Linear B clay tablets by the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans (1851–1941), followed by an analysis of the script’s decipherment process. The second part deals with the birth of modern cryptography, exploring the relationship between codebreaking and the dawn of early computer science, followed by Alan Turing’s contributions to Bletchley Park and his ideas that made the breaking of the German Enigma code possible.

The story of Colossus, a machine built to break Lorenz, a cipher machine used by top level members of German High Command including Adolf Hitler, is told through archival evidence, revealing how a small group of mathematicians, engineers and
linguists worked in collaboration. The exhibition closes with a section on ‘codebreaking’ today and the extent to which cryptography is relevant to our lives. The decipherment of Linear B occurred less than a decade after the decryption work at Bletchley Park was taking place. Many of the mathematicians, Classicists and linguists recruited to work at Bletchley were academics educated at Cambridge University. Some of the most important documentary evidence for the decryption of the Enigma code and the decipherment of Linear B are kept in Cambridge. The Archive Centre at King’s College, Cambridge, holds the papers of Alan Turing, and the Faculty of Classics in Cambridge houses both the AJB Wace Archive of Mycenaean Archaeology and the Chadwick Archive, which includes correspondence between Michael Ventris and John Chadwick (1920–98), a lecturer in Classical linguistics at Cambridge.

Michael George Francis Ventris was born on 12 July 1922 in Wheathampstead, near St Albans in Hertfordshire. His interest in ancient scripts and languages began when he was young. In 1936, he visited the exhibition that the 85-year-old Arthur Evans (3) had curated in Burlington House, as part of the British Archaeological Discoveries in Greece and Crete. Ventris, then aged 14, became particularly fascinated by the Minoan Room, which displayed Evans’ finds from Knossos, including specimens of the Linear B script. So began his life-long fascination with Linear B and his dogged determination to decipher it.

Ventris went on to study at the Architectural Association School, before serving in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War. After the war, he worked as an architect and devoted his spare time to the study of Linear B. When Arthur Evans died in 1941, the task of publishing *Scripta Minoa*, the corpus of Linear B documents from Knossos, fell to John Myres (1869–1954), Evans’ travel companion to Athens and Crete. Recognising the limitations of his own knowledge, Myres promptly sought help from other Linear B specialists. Meanwhile Ventris had temporarily given up on trying to decipher Linear B and was focusing on architecture, but he soon returned to it more determined than ever and, in 1950, quit his job to work full-time on the ancient puzzle.

During late 1949 Ventris had circulated a questionnaire among scholars who were working on Linear B, and their responses, together with his own views, were collected and circulated in 1950 in what became known as the Mid-Century Report. Early in 1952, Ventris made a series of inspired guesses that proved essential for
cracking the code. The publication of the Pylos tablets by Bennett in 1951 and of the Knossos tablets by Myres in 1952, also allowed Ventris to proceed to a detailed analysis of the available Linear B documents. He noticed that certain words on the Knossos tablets, often appeared in headings. Ventris looked in the tablets for ‘Amnisos’, one of the harbour-towns of Knossos (‘a-mi-ni-so’ in syllabic form). Putting in the sound-values he had already guessed (‘a’ and ‘ni’), he guessed further for the missing ‘mi’ and ‘so’ and was able to deduct these were Cretan place-names.

In February 1952 Ventris wrote a cautiously optimistic letter (6) to Myres saying: ‘A possibility struck me over the weekend...’ and, just a few weeks before his announcement on the BBC’s Third Programme on 1 July 1952, he wrote to him again saying: ‘I’m now almost completely convinced that the Pylos tablets are in GREEK’. The next year, Ventris co-authored with John Chadwick the first scholarly work on the decipherment. This fundamental book, Documents in Mycenaean Greek, was completed shortly before Ventris’ death; he was killed in a car crash near Hatfield at the age of 34 on 6 September 1956.

Alan Mathison Turing (8) was born on 23 June 1912. At the age of 13 he was sent to school at Sherborne in Dorset, where he evolved into a bright student, but sometimes struggled to see the value in subjects outside mathematics and science. Alan’s teachers began to recognise him as a potential maths genius. After leaving Sherborne, he studied mathematics at King’s College, Cambridge. In 1936, Turing went to Princeton to start on his PhD but, even during this time, he maintained an interest in codes.

In a letter addressed to his mother from Princeton in October 1936, he mused on what would be the most general type of code, thinking his ideas might be of interest to the UK government. When he returned to Cambridge in 1938, he turned his attention to one of the other great unsolved problems in mathematics, the zeros of the Riemann Zeta Function. He produced a blueprint for the Zeta Function Machine (1). Unfortunately, the project was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War and, the day after war was declared, Turing reported for duty at Bletchley Park. Initially, he was part of a small team of codebreakers, including linguists such as John Tiltman and Dilwyn ‘Dilly’ Knox. This group was made up of academics from Oxford and Cambridge both young and old and the question they faced was simply: ‘Could Enigma be broken?’

This question was answered a few weeks before the war when British representatives met with the Polish codebreakers. Not only did they receive information about how the Poles were breaking Enigma, but also two Polish replica Enigma machines. However, there were still some problems. The first was that...
the Polish methods relied on the six-coded letters at the beginning of each message, which was the repetition of the message key. If the Germans stopped repeating this setting, then the Polish methods no longer worked. The second problem was that the German navy did not use Enigma to encrypt the message key; instead they used a separate code-book that the Poles had not broken.

What the British needed was a new method to break Enigma (7), one that would be able to replace the Polish methods if the Germans changed procedures and, ideally, one that would work for army, navy and air force messages. Soon, the work was divided up and Turing was put in charge of Hut 8, the section responsible for breaking the navy Enigma. He managed to work out the navy procedure and reconstructed the code-books German sailors were using. He also developed a statistical method for determining which rotors were being used each day. This reduced the number of potential rotor orders from hundreds to just a few, vastly speeding up the codebreaking process. Now the problem was how to discover the other Enigma settings, such as the plugboard and rotor positions.

Turing immediately started working on the design of the Bombe (10), a machine that was designed to deduce the daily Enigma settings in a way that did not rely on the repetition of the message key. Instead, the codebreakers would guess a word or a phrase that might appear in the code; these guesses were known as cribs. A good source of cribs was the early morning weather forecasts that were transmitted to German ships. For example, you might like to discover how they tried to find the phrase ‘weather forecast’ (‘wettervorhersage’ in German) in the code shown below (9).

Although there seems to be no clue to find the correct position for the crib, there was a small flaw in the machine. Because of the way Enigma was designed to code and decode, a letter could never become itself. That means no letter of the crib can match the code, as that would be impossible. Once you have found a position that works, you need to find the Enigma setting...
Exhibition

that makes that part of the code say ‘wettervorsage’. This is what the Bombe essentially did, working on a process of elimination. Essentially, the Bombe machines could check through the Enigma settings in under 20 minutes.

The exhibition also reveals some aspects of Alan Turing’s eccentric personality. For example, it gives accounts of him cycling into work wearing his gas-mask as a way to avoid pollen as he suffered from hay-fever, and of him chaining his mug to the radiator so no one else could use it. Despite being only 28, he was nicknamed ‘The Professor’, and his treatise on Enigma, which was required reading for new members of the team, was known as ‘Prof’s Book’.

Turing, who was also an accomplished long-distance runner (11), would run from Bletchley Park to London, a distance of 40 miles, to attend a meeting. He was seriously considered for entry into the 1948 Olympics, until an injury prevented him from continuing.

Turing continued his research into computing, artificial intelligence and mathematical biology. In particular, he found a mathematical model to describe the chemical reactions that create animal DNA patterns. But his work was interrupted in 1952 when he was arrested under a law used to prosecute practising homosexuals.

Two years later, at the age of 42, Turing died of cyanide poisoning. An inquest determined he had committed suicide; however, some have argued that his death was accidental. In 2014, Turing received a personal posthumous pardon; accidental. In 2014, Turing received a personal posthumous pardon; however, some have argued that his death was accidental. In 2014, Turing received a personal posthumous pardon; however, some have argued that his death was accidental.

Turing’s contributions to the work at Bletchley Park cannot be overstated. A first-class account of his work comes from Hugh Alexander, his deputy in Hut 8. Speaking about the part Turing played he has said: “There should be no question in anyone’s mind that Turing’s work was the biggest factor in Hut 8’s success... It is always difficult to say that anyone is ‘absolutely indispensable’, but if anyone was indispensable to Hut 8, it was Turing... many of us in Hut 8 felt that the magnitude of Turing’s contribution was never fully realised by the outside world.”

This exhibition reveals not just the connections that exist between the mathematicians and early computer scientists and linguists and Classicists, but also the similarity between the two disciplines and the joy experienced by those who managed to break the codes.

One reason that we sometimes still find it very difficult to read codes is because we have limited understanding of their intended use, or of the societies that produced them. Visitors to Codebreakers and Groundbreakers may find that they leave more enlightened than when they arrived – even if they cannot crack the codes and scripts that Alan Turing and Michael Ventris so brilliantly deciphered.
Life in the Assyrian Empire
A view from the frontier

Ziyaret Tepe
Exploring the Anatolian frontier of the Assyrian Empire
Timothy Matney, John MacGinnis, Dirk Wicke, Kemalettin Köroğlu

Ziyaret Tepe, the ancient city of Tuşhan, was a provincial capital of the Assyrian Empire, in its day the greatest empire the world had ever seen. The excavations captured in this innovative book uncovered the palace of the governor, the mansions of the elite and the barracks of the rank and file, charting the history of the empire from its expansion in the early 9th century BC to its fall three centuries years later.

Cornucopia Books, £16.95

CORNUCOPIA BOOKS — WWW.CORNUCOPIA.NET
The Senate of Rome sentenced traitors, those who had disgraced the state and sometimes also those who had offended the emperor, to damnatio memoriae, (‘condemnation of memory’), an official amnesia, in which the human image was scrubbed or hammered from the historical record. When Caracalla murdered his brother and co-emperor Geta in AD 211 – Geta was stabbed to death by centurions in his mother’s arms – the damnatio erased Geta’s image so successfully that only his coins show what he looked like during his year as emperor.

Since its founding in 1879, New York’s Metropolitan Museum has collected more than 17,000 pieces of Greek and Roman sculpture. Roman Portraits, a lavish and beautifully illustrated guide to the collections is a preservatio memoriae. The Romans, by adopting the Greek style in sculpture in order to preserve the images of their gods, emperors and patrician families, preserved Greek techniques, images and faces. When Augustus restored the forms of the Republic in AD 27, he commissioned a portrait statue of himself as princeps. The statue, known as the Prima Porta type after its discovery there in 1863 and now in the Vatican Museums, reflects Augustus’ metempsychosis from Octavian Caesar into emperor. In earlier portraits, Augustus’ expression is emotional, the representation bears traces of the naturalism of the late Republican period. In the Prima Porta marble, Augustus’ expression is neutral – like a fair judge, or an unchanged principle of rule. The features of his ageless face are based upon Greek sculptures from the 5th century AD. This is a portrait of a historical position – the imperial duty to be august, the need to marshal historical authority.

There is no surviving written account of the process by which an imperial image was commissioned and its ‘prototype’ disseminated. Zanker suggests that a ‘court sculptor’ made the prototype under close instruction from the sitter. The emperors, despite their incipient divinity, seem to have paid very human attention to their age and their ‘new hairdo or type of beard’. Perhaps surprisingly, sculpture workshops made the replicas without close supervision from the imperial house. Though no prototypes have been identified, archaeologists can trace the reproduction process by mapping small deviations in the copies. Political history sometimes caused larger deviations in the processes of production and memory. Three of the Met’s portraits of Augustus are of the Prima Porta type. All three were created posthumously, early in the reign of Claudius (AD 41–54). These three heads began as portraits of Caligula, who deserved the dubious honour of being the first emperor to receive the sentence of damnatio memoriae. Many of Caligula’s heads were reworked into those of Augustus, now a state god, Divus Augustus, or Claudius. In the nose and left eye of the Met’s bust of emperor Severus Alexander (AD 222–35), smashed with an axe after his assassination, we see the fall from power as the fall from memory. There are plenty of mortals among the emperors and generals. The unnamed speak for themselves, and often more clearly than the great. The sculptor of Bust of an Older Man (circa AD 100) nods to idealisation (there are hints of Nerva and Trajan in the physiognomy), but the signs of ageing are too explicit. There are deep circles under his eyes, and a hint of a stoop in his neck. His thinning hair is combed forward in the ‘fork’ and ‘tongs’ style, unlike Trajan who, blessed with more follicular coverage, attempted an imperial pudding basin look. The balance of resolve and decay are all too human. In Roman Portraits, the human personality emerges from the stylised image, and the stroke of the sculptor and the axe contend for memory. 

Dominic Green

How to be a Roman: A Day in the Life of a Roman Family
Paul Chrystal
Amberley Publishing
96pp, 30 colour, 18 black-and-white illustrations
Paperback, £9.99

What did the Romans do all day? Visions of senatorial debates, rowdy gladiatorial contests and bawdy aristocratic banquets come to mind. Now Paul Chrystal, author of numerous books on Roman history, such as In Bed with the Romans and Women in Ancient Rome, has produced what he describes as a ‘one day snapshot’ of the day-to-day life of a typical, rather well-to-do Roman family. We meet the Priscus family – father, mother, son and daughter – and we follow their routine daily activities and those of their slaves in their home on the Palatine, from the moment they rise before dawn until they retire at night.

The time is AD 80 during the early empire when, as Chrystal reminds us, the reigning emperor is Titus, Rome is recovering after the eruption of Mt Vesuvius and the Colosseum is being inaugurated with 100 days of free games and a welter of bloodshed. Meanwhile in Britannia, Gnaeus Julius Agricola has reached the River Tyre-Solway Firth frontier. He has also circumnavigated Britannia, establishing that it is an island, and is launching the invasion of Caledonia. There is a useful introduction to the Roman calendar – and its reformation by Julius Caesar – and the way in which the Romans divided up their day and the months of the year.

Chrystal’s device of using a day in the life of a family as the fulcrum of his guide is a handy one, enabling him to appraise many aspects of Roman society, domestic and public, within an engaging personal narrative. We become acquainted with an array of subjects, including the arrangement and accoutrements of the home, clothing and personal grooming, occupations and trades, the education of children, slavery, religion, the legal system, popular entertainment and dining. He examines these subjects broadly showing us how they form part of,
and drive, the Priscus’ domestic life. We can join Javolenus Priscus, a lawyer, as he goes off to do battle in the law courts; his wife, Caecilia, as she sallies forth on a shopping trip; and the whole family as they go to watch the races at the Circus Maximus, or enjoy their evening meal – a quiet affair in contrast to some of the more extravagant dining that goes on in Rome.

Reinforced by ample quotations from Martial, Juvenal, Horace, Pliny the Elder, Seneca, Cicero and others, Chrystal brings their world to life with a vividly striking and contemporary feel. Aided by these sources, he conjures the hubbub and mêlée of ancient Rome with its haves and have-nots, and its many everyday conventions and preoccupations, some of which are rather alien to us but many of which seem very familiar.

Simply and clearly told, this work is ideal for students, but anyone with an interest in ancient Rome will find it an informative, entertaining journey into a world which so greatly influenced our own times, and which continues to intrigue us.

Diana Bentley

In Search of the Phoenicians
Josephine Quinn
Princeton University Press
360pp, 75 black-and-white illustrations, 11 maps
Hardback, £27.95/$35.00

We know who the Phoenicians were. In the 12th century BC, as the late Bronze Age civilisations declined, the Phoenicians launched a trading empire from the ports of what is now Lebanon. Their exports, it is said, included their Semitic alphabet, which the Greeks reworked for the Hellenic market; and Europa, abducted from the beach by Zeus in the form of a bull. Closer to home, the Bible records that a Phoenician ‘king’, Hiram of Tyre, supplied both the cedarwood and the artisans who built the First Temple in Jerusalem for Solomon. Further away in time and place, in the 3rd century BC, Hannibal and the Phoenician colony of Carthage nearly defeated the Romans in the Punic Wars. But did the Phoenicians know who they were? Josephine Quinn thinks not. Nothing, she believes, ‘did in fact unite the Phoenicians in their own eyes or those of their neighbour’. There is no evidence to suggest that they called themselves ‘Phoenicians’ or ‘Canaanites’. The noun ἐφέσσις is a Greek word for ‘people from the Levant’. The ‘Phoenicians’ shared elements of their language, a religious cult, trading activities and a geographical habitat with peoples that were not and still are not designated as Phoenicians. Like Hiram of Tyre, they derived their collective identity from their home-port, or their family.

Furthermore, Quinn argues that the modern idea of ‘the Phoenician people’ is not ‘a real historical object, but rather a product of… scholarly and political ideologies’ dating from the Renaissance, and inseparable from the definition of modern nationhood. The oldest self-descriptive use of ‘Phoenician’ dates to 5th-century BC Sicily – after the ‘traditional’ terminus of Phoenician history, but contemporary with the rise of Carthage. The Carthaginians do meet the criteria of nationhood, not least because they possessed a common myth of origin: they believed themselves to be descended from ‘Phoenicians’. This does not mean that they were. The same goes for the 19th-century Lebanese Maronites who called for a modern ‘Phoenicianism’, oriented towards Europe and away from Arabia; and the nautical and dynastic pretensions of Hannibal Gaddafi, son of the late Libyan leader, who commissioned a giant yacht called Phoenicia.

Quinn’s analysis of how ideas of modern nationhood have corrupted our understanding of past identities is expert and wide-ranging. On the evidence, the Phoenicians were not a nation ‘in their own eyes’. But the evidence is thin. One of the oddest aspects of the Phoenician enigma is that while their Israelite neighbours made prolific use of the Canaanite scripts as they created their nationhood, the Phoenicians left little written evidence.

Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. As Quinn says, ‘The identity of the same person could be conceptualised differently in Greek and Phoenician’. There is more emphasis on family and ancestry in the Phoenician inscriptions. Yet the Phoenicians did not create Greek-style ‘communal institutions’. Perhaps they understood collective identity differently from the Greeks or Hebrews.

A couple of odd identifications in mapping the Near East demonstrate the ease with which geography can slip into anachronisms of nation and state. An 1861 map of what was then the Ottoman Empire includes the Palestine Mandate. A 1920 map includes a state called ‘Palestine’. Modern Palestinians claim descent from the ancient Philistines, but the word pelesthim is an Israeltie term for the invading Sea Peoples, who were of Aegean, not Canaanitic, origin. Did Goliath see himself as a Philistine? Did Hiram of Tyre know that he was a Phoenician?

Quinn, by using documentary absence to open the entire field of ‘Phoenician’ history, significantly widens the range of interpretation about a people, if that is what they were, whose story, if it was singular, is at the heart of our own origin myths.

Dominic Green

The Crucible of Islam
GW Bowersock
Harvard University Press
220pp, three black-and-white illustrations, two maps
Hardback, £18.95

A quarter of the world’s population is Muslim, and the crisis of Islam resounds in global and local politics, yet little is known of Islam’s origins in the chaotic Arabia of the 7th century. There are no contemporary Muslim accounts of the most dynamic period in Muslim history: the earliest date
from two centuries after Muhammad’s death. For obvious reasons, contemporary Christian and Jewish accounts are not sympathetic. And the inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, once believed to be the oldest Quranic inscriptions and datable to AD 691–92, vary from the canonical Quranic text.

In _The Crucible of Islam_, Glen Bowersock describes what can be known and inferred about the Arabian ‘dark age’ in which Islam originated. The Emeritus Professor of Ancient History at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, is an ideal guide. An expert on the complex interactions of Late Antiquity and the post-Classical world, his recent books include studies of the Roman mosaics at Lod, Israel, and the mixing of Jews, Christians and pagans in the ancient city of Dura-Europos.

Arabia in the early 6th century was a different kind of mosaic, an arid crossroads between empires and religions. Mecca, where Muhammad, according to tradition, was born in AD 570, belonged to an area of Arabia recently conquered by the Ethiopian Christian king Abraha, and ruled by Abraha’s descendants. But _circa_ AD 570, the Persian Sassanids invaded and took Mecca and western Arabia from Abraha’s heirs. In AD 602, the region was further destabilised by the death of Maurice, the emperor of Byzantium. In AD 614, the Persians had taken Jerusalem.

Arabia was no less complex in religion. The Ethiopians had arrived in the 3rd century AD as pagans, but had converted to Christianity in the late 4th century. At the same time, the Ethiopians’ partial withdrawal had allowed Arab pagans to build the kingdom of Hinyar. These tribes converted to Judaism, perhaps due to ‘an all but invisible spread of monotheism earlier in the fourth century from Jewish settlements in the peninsula’, and then converted again to Ethiopian Christianity when Abraha invaded in AD 525.

In this zone of imperial competition, the Zoroastrian Persians supported a tribal confederation called Nasrids; as the name suggests, they were Christians, probably descended from earlier Jewish settlers. The Byzantines tried to revive the Roman system of client kings, and backed the Hellenised Christians of the Ghassanid confederation. And while the ‘state-sponsored monothelism’ of Hinyar swung between dispensations, the pre-monotheistic cults survived. Bowersock prefers ‘polytheistic’ to ‘pagan’; the Latin _paganus_ evokes a rustic person, but the Greek equivalent, _ethnikos_, denotes only ethnic or national differences. The names of pre-Islamic gods are recorded in the Quran, and in the later account of Ibn al-Khaled. One name, Allah, went back ‘at least to the 5th century BC, when Herodotus mentioned a feminine form of the name, Allat’, later contracted to Allat and probably the consort of Allah. A statue of Allat from Palmyra suggests that Allat was worshipped as ‘an Arab Athena’; a remarkable blending of Greek and Arab polytheism.

The Qur’an describes the suppression of the Arabian goddesses, and Muhammad’s campaigns of conquest between his revelations (AD 610) and his death (AD 632). After AD 632 and the beginning of the four wars of _riddā_ (apostasy), the mark returns, with a moment of clarity in AD 661, when the Ummayyads established the first Islamic dynasty at Damascus.

Though the absence of evidence cannot fill the ‘disquieting emptiness’ from which Islam originates, _The Crucible of Islam_ is a clear and lucid guide to the arena and context into which Muhammad was born, and the ‘volatile components’ from which Islam developed.

Crucially, Bowersock writes, Islam ‘arose on ground shared by the three great monotheists’, but ‘offered no path to coexistence with the other two’.

Dominic Green

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30-Second Mythology: The 50 Most Important Classical Myths, Monsters, Heroes & Gods, Each Explained in Half a Minute

Edited by Robert A Segal

Ivy Press

139pp, 63 colour illustrations

Paperback, £9.99

Many of us know the compelling, haunting narratives of the great Greek and Roman myths. Who can forget Theseus, braving the dark labyrinth and slaying the terrifying Minotaur, or Odysseus and his epic journey home from the Trojan war, or the unfortunate Prometheus, bound and tortured daily for angering mighty Zeus, or the enraged Medea, killing her offspring to avenge her betrayal by Jason? Now Robert A Segal, Sixth Century Chair in Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, in conjunction with an impressive array of six colleagues, has provided us with a handy quick fix to revive our memories and re-acquaint us with the essentials of 50 of these myths.

Segal starts by reminding us that there is no agreed or uniform definition of myths and a myth may not even be a story. Yet many of them are, and since the Classical myths are the best known of them all, they form the subject matter of this book. As Segal points out, we may no longer believe in these great myths literally, as most ancients did, but they remain important to us. We still embrace them as symbols and references to them abound in our lives. We also find them continually in the theatre, in films and books, in psychology, in art and in our everyday language.

The myths are presented under seven subject headings: Creation, Olympians, Monsters, Geography, Heroes, Tragic Figures and Legacy. Each section starts with a two-page glossary of terms relevant to the subject with a profile of a figure linked to the topic, such as Hesiod, Homer and Ovid. Each person or event is presented in short paragraphs, soundbites of 300 words that can be digested in 30 seconds, along with a picture, over two pages. Those two pages also contain what is called a ‘3-second muse’, which is an even briefer description of the person or event, along with a ‘3-minute odyssey’, another paragraph that fleshes out the 30-second soundbite with an explanation of the origins or symbolism of the subject. There are also brief references to related myths and biographies with imaginative colour illustrations that complement the drama of the text.

Expertly focused and taken all together, more information is conveyed than you might imagine in a short space of time. Living up to its claims, the book is a handy reference work. If you need to brush up on mythology in a hurry, or just want to remind yourself in an easy, enjoyable way of ancient myths you may have become hazy about, then this is the book for you.

Diana Bentley

The Classical Debt: Greek Antiquity in an Era of Austerity

Johanna Hanink

Belknap Press

310pp, 26 black-and-white illustrations

Hardback, £23.95

Credited with the birth of democracy and influential accomplishments in the arts, the Greeks, specifically the Athenians, have left their mark on the modern world. But to
what extent is the West indebted to our ancient predecessors? This new book by Johanna Hanink, Associate Professor of Classics at Brown University, explores the idea of 'Classical debt' in a time when debates over the Parthenon marbles are still raging and when the government of Greece is dealing with a financial crisis. But rather than setting out to establish the validity of our debt to the Greeks, Hanink considers the concept at various points in history, beginning with Classical Athens when the brand of the civilised, artistic city-state was developed.

In the early modern period, we encounter travellers to Greece who were ultimately disillusioned with the once-great ancient land they found, with Athens little more than a village, which could never live up to the country of their imaginations. Those 19th-century philhellenes wanted to rescue the now fallen Greece from the Ottoman Empire and help her rise once more, and the ideal of Classical Athens was at the forefront in establishing the newly independent Greek nation.

Hanink is dismayed by Europe's obsession with the glories of ancient Greece, and is highly critical of contemporary pundits in thrall to an ancient Greece as the birthplace of every virtue. She cites many contemporary references, including political cartoons and headlines that feature the Trojan horse, ill-fated heroes and ruined temples, and concludes that the realities of our own century have revealed just how untenable the Greek ideal is.

This is a timely book, dealing with a complex concept that has been invoked at various challenging periods in Greece’s past.

Lucia Marchini

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

Can you guess the correct definition from the following three options for:

1) turliegus (Latin)
   A) cheese-making
   B) a recruit
   C) incense-gathering

2) piairos (Ancient Greek)
   A) sad, sullen
   B) the youngest of a litter of pigs
   C) fat, rich

3) demeto (Latin)
   A) to beat, to thump
   B) to mow, reap, cut off
   C) to distribute or apportion by measure

4) storestes (Ancient Greek)
   A) one who lays low, a calmer
   B) a leather strap
   C) a pole slung across a stream to stop cattle passing

5) exheredo (Latin)
   A) to chirp (of a cicada)
   B) to disinherit
   C) to bray (of a donkey)

6) mespha (Homeric Greek)
   A) till dawn
   B) ivy
   C) a sacred place high on a mountain

7) pumex (Latin)
   A) an over-ripe peach ready to fall to the ground
   B) a pumice-stone
   C) silvery grey approaching white

8) plunoi (Homeric Greek)
   A) raindrops
   B) wash-troughs, basins
   C) twin lambs

9) delumbo (Latin)
   A) to enervate, to weaken
   B) to destroy, obliterate
   C) to step down

10) ouranothi (Ancient Greek)
    A) the fruit of the cyprus tree
    B) ill-starred
    C) in heaven, in the heavens

11) ligamen (Latin)
    A) wool taken from a dead sheep
    B) a tree bare of leaves or twigs
    C) a band, tie, bandage

12) tittheia (Ancient Greek)
    A) a suckling by a nurse, fostering
    B) a horse that is apt to shy
    C) in the opposite direction, the wrong way

ANSWERS

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.

Minerva November/December 2017
UNITED KINGDOM

BRISTOL

Grayson Perry: The Most Popular Art Exhibition Ever!

Featuring more than 25 of this popular artist’s latest works in a variety of media, Grayson Perry’s show explores how contemporary art can speak to a diverse cross-section of society. Ceramics, such as Puff Piece, 2016 (above), bronzes, cast iron, tapestry and prints are all used to tackle themes of masculinity, sex, class, religion, popularity and art, and contemporary political issues like Brexit. After a highly successful summer stint at the Serpentine Gallery in London, the exhibition is on show outside the capital for the first time.

Arnolfini
+44 (0)117 917 2300
(www.arnolfini.org.uk)
Until 24 December 2017.

LIVERPOOL

John Piper

Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral was consecrated 50 years ago and this exhibition marks the occasion by honouring British artist John Piper (1903–92), who designed many of its stained-glass windows, including the centrepiece of the cathedral. More than 40 of his works, particularly painting and collages, chart Piper’s career, his relationship with major international artists, such as Jean Arp and Georges Braque, and his influence on British art from the 1930s. His work shows a fondness for his native landscapes and an understanding of earlier art forms, such as Anglo-Saxon carving and medieval stained-glass windows.

Tate Liverpool
+44 (0)15 1702 7400
(www.tate.org.uk)
From 17 November to 18 March 2018.

EDINBURGH

Splendours of the Subcontinent: A Prince's Tour of India 1875–6

As part of the 2017 UK-India Year of Culture, gifts presented to Edward, Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, on his 1875–76 tour of India, Sri Lanka and Nepal are on show. It is the first time the gifts – exquisite examples of Indian craftsmanship, including gold and silverware, ceremonial arms and jewellery such as the sirpech (turban ornament) presented by Sajjan Singh, Maharaja of Udaipur (below left) – have been displayed together since the late 19th century. Watercolours and photographs help to tell the story of the royal visit.

The Queen’s Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse
+44 (0)303 123 7334
(www.royalcollection.org.uk)
From 15 December to 15 April 2018.

LONDON

The Business of Prints

Drawing from the UK’s national collection of more than two million prints, this exhibition focuses on their use as objects of trade before the invention of photography, their production, their lettering, how they were used and collected, and their quality. Works by Dürer, Rembrandt and Goya are displayed alongside those by less familiar artists, offering a range of interesting and varied images. Highlights include: sundials to cut out and assemble, a prompt for an early form of karaoke and an anonymous etching by a 16th-century Flemish artist of a rabbit, used for target practice (above).

British Museum
+44 (0)20 7323 8181
(www.britishmuseum.org)
Until 28 January 2018.

Poor Art/Arte Povera: Italian Influences, British Responses

Turin and Rome during the late 1960s, witnessed a period of social and economic change, artists were experimenting and rejecting traditional practices and materials in favour of everyday materials and the unconventional. This movement was dubbed Arte Povera (Poor Art) in 1967 by the critic and curator Germano Celant. Now, 50 years on, this show explores the emergence of Arte Povera and how it influenced the remarkable nature of these festivals, celebrating the birth of the founders of particular Sufi orders.

Brunei Galley, SOAS
+44 (0)20 7898 4915
(www.soas.ac.uk/gallery)
Until 16 December 2017.

Tove Jansson (1914–2001)

Most famous for her creation, the Moomins, Finnish artist Tove Jansson was also a prolific painter of landscapes, still lifes and self-portraits. This retrospective brings together 150 works in diverse media to show her wide-ranging talent. As well as Surrealist-inspired works from the 1930s and abstract compositions from the 1960s, her illustrations, sketches for the Moomin characters, and book jacket designs are on display. Among the highlights are her bold anti-war cartoons for the liberal political satirical magazine Garm. Jansson started drawing for Garm when she was only 15, and went on to produce more than 500 caricatures and over 100 covers for the publication.

Dulwich Picture Gallery
+44 (0)20 8693 5254
(www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk)
Until 28 January 2018.

Surrealism in Egypt: Art et Liberté 1938–1948

Surrealist art in Egypt, produced by a collective of artists and writers in Cairo, has often been overlooked, but it is a distinct episode in the story of the movement. The majority of this material – comprising more than 100 paintings, photographs, film and archival documents – has not been seen before in the UK, and it reveals the socio-political motivations that drove the Art et Liberté group. They published their manifesto Long Live Degenerate Art in 1938, in response to the local rise of fascism and, in the following decade, young intellectuals eager for reform created a variety of work. Themes explored include women’s issues and police brutality.

Tate Liverpool
+44 (0)15 1702 7400
(www.tate.org.uk)
From 17 November to 18 March 2018.

Fairgrounds of the Faithful: Moulids – the Sufi Festivals of Egypt

For nearly three decades now the award-winning photographer and documentary maker, Tim Coleman, has been recording festivals called Moulids held by Sufis in Egypt. This exhibition brings together a collection of his images that reveal...
British artists who graduated from art schools in the 1970s and 1980s.

**Estorick Collection**
+44 (0)20 7704 9522  
(www.estorickcollection.com)  
Until 17 December 2017.

**Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael around 1500**
A selection of eight choice works by Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael tell the story of the complex and, at times, rivalrous relationship between these three Renaissance artists, and how they revolutionised art at the start of the 16th century. The centrepiece of the display is Michelangelo's sculpture *The Virgin and Child with the Infant St John*, 1504–05 (below), also known as the *Taddei Tondo*, on loan from the Royal Academy of Arts. It will return there in 2018 and go on show in an exhibition marking the 250th anniversary of the RA and the redevelopment linking Burlington House with Burlington Gardens.

**National Gallery**
+44 (0)20 7747 2885  
(www.nationalgallery.org.uk)  
Until 28 January 2018.

**Monochrome: Painting in Black and White**
This exhibition sets out to show that, in art, colour is a choice, not a necessity. More than 50 painted works on glass, vellum, wood, ceramic, silk and canvas produced over a span of seven centuries introduce different aspects of painting in black, white and grey or *grisaille*, the grey shading often used to imitate sculpture, as in the oil painting by Ingres, *Odalisque in Grisaille*, circa 1824–34 (above). Pieces range from medieval stained glass to Olafur Eliasson's light installation. The work of Düer, Rembrandt and other masters is shown with that of contemporary artists, such as Gerhard Richter, Bridget Riley and Chuck Close.

**National Gallery**
+44 (0)20 7747 2885  
(www.nationalgallery.org.uk)  
Until 18 February 2018.

**Reflections: Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites**
The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood admired Jan van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Portrait* of 1434, acquired by the National Gallery in 1842, and the painting shaped their views on draughtsmanship, colour, technique and the symbolic meanings of objects. Now, for the first time, this 15th-century masterpiece will be shown alongside works that it inspired by Rossetti, Holman Hunt, Millais and others. Their representation of domestic scenes and the use of convex mirrors to depict real and illusory spaces, as in *The Bath of Venus*, 1898–1904, by Charles Haslemwood Shannon (above), were all influenced by Van Eyck.

**National Gallery**
+44 (0)20 7747 2885  
(www.nationalgallery.org.uk)  
Until 2 April 2018.

**Charles II: Art & Power**
After years of puritanical rule under Cromwell, the Restoration in 1660, brought renewed interest in the arts in England. King Charles II was a great patron of the arts, but the works he acquired not only served to adorn the royal apartments, but also reinforced his position and glorified the monarchy. Fine portraits, Old Master paintings, such as Orazio Gentileschi’s *A Sibyl*, circa 1635–38 (below), tapestries, furniture and silver-gilt objects reveal how all the arts served to enhance the king’s image.

**The Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace**
+44 (0)303 123 7301  
(www.royalcollection.org.uk)  
From 8 December to 13 May 2018.

**Matisse in the Studio**
Henri Matisse was a great collector of different types of art, including: Buddhist statues from Thailand;
Bamana figures from Mali; Chinese calligraphy; textiles and furniture from North America. These objects were displayed in his studio and, as this exhibition shows, influenced his work. Paintings, such as The Moorish Screen, 1921 (above), sculptures, and drawings are displayed alongside the objects that inspired them.

Royal Academy of Arts
+44 (0)20 7300 8000
(www.royalacademy.org.uk)
Until 12 November 2017.

Jasper Johns: 'Something Resembling Truth'
Paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints by the American artist Jasper Johns (b 1930) chart his career over the past six decades, focusing on continuity and change, and experimentation. The works feature familiar images, such as Flag, 1958 (below), targets, numbers, maps and light bulbs, reflecting his distinctive treatment of everyday objects.

Royal Academy of Arts
+44 (0)20 7300 8000
(www.royalacademy.org.uk)
Until 10 December 2017.

From Life
Both life drawing and drawing from Classical and Renaissance sculpture used to play an important part in an artist’s training, as can be seen in Thomas Rowlandson’s Drawing from Life at the Royal Academy, 1808 (above). From Life surveys these practices – from the earliest days of the Royal Academy to today, with a range of media by contemporary artists experimenting with new technologies.

Royal Academy of Arts
+44 (0)20 7300 8000
(www.royalacademy.org.uk)
From 11 December to 11 March 2018.

The EY Exhibition: Impressionists in London, French Artists in Exile (1870–1904)
During the Franco-Prussian War, some of the great French artists of the 19th century sought refuge in Britain. Here, they were interested in differences in social life: in parks, for example (walking on the grass was prohibited in formal French gardens), at regattas and in social codes. Monet’s and Sisley’s Thames riverscapes, Pissarro’s suburban scenes and Tissot’s fashionable events, such as The Ball on Shipboard, circa 1874 (above right), all show an outsider’s view of British society.

Tate Britain
+44 (0)20 7887 8888
(www.tate.org.uk)
From 2 November to 7 May 2018.

Red Star over Russia: A Revolution in Visual Culture 1905–55
Nina Vatolina’s Fascism – The Most Evil Enemy of Women. Everyone to the Struggle Against Fascism, 1941 (below) is among the revolutionary material drawn from the collection of graphic designer David King (1943–2016). Together it provides an exciting visual history of Russia and the Soviet Union – from the overthrow of the last Tsar to the Civil War and the rise of Stalin. This show of dynamic posters, paintings, photographs and books marks the centenary of the October Revolution.

Tate Modern
+44 (0)20 7887 8888
(www.tate.org.uk)
From 8 November to 18 February 2018.

Winnie-the-Pooh: Exploring a Classic
As well as providing an insight into the creation of the beloved bear and the interplay between AA Milne’s storytelling and EH Shepard’s illustrations, this show looks at the lasting popularity of Winnie-the-Pooh. Original drawings and manuscripts are shown alongside a range of items, such as ceramics and clothes, all featuring Winnie-the-Pooh and his companions Christopher Robin, Eeyore, Piglet and Tigger.

Victoria and Albert Museum
+44 (0)20 7942 2000
(www.vam.ac.uk)
From 9 December until 8 April 2018.

Minerva November/December 2017
El Greco to Goya: Spanish Masterpieces from The Bowes Museum

The Bowes Museum in County Durham is home to one of the largest collections of Spanish art in the UK. Now works from this collection are on show at the Wallace Collection – this is a collaboration between two museums both established, for the good of the nation, by the illegitimate sons of aristocratic fathers. Spanning three centuries of social, political, and religious change, as well as developments in style and subject matter, this exhibition includes works by El Greco and Goya, as well as by less familiar figures such as Antonio de Pereda.

Wallace Collection
+44 (0)207 563 9500
(www.wallacecollection.org)
Until 10 December 2017.

LOS ANGELES, California
Golden Kingdoms: Luxury and Legacy in the Ancient Americas

As part of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, a programme of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles, this show looks at the development of luxury arts, which were key-bearers of meaning, through more than 300 exquisite artefacts, from about 1200 BC to the start of European colonisation in the 16th century. Metals were used mainly for ritual objects and regalia, with gold most often associated with gods and rulers. The gold, turquoise and wood, Moche earspool (above) dates from AD 640–80 and depicts a warrior. Yet jade was more precious to the Olmecs and the Maya, and feathers and textiles were important to the Incas and their predecessors.

Getty Center
+1 310 440 7300
(www.getty.edu)
Until 28 January 2018.

NEW YORK, New York
Proof: Francisco Goya, Sergei Eisenstein, Robert Longo

Although produced centuries apart, prints by Goya, films by Sergei Eisenstein and charcoal drawings by the contemporary artist Robert Longo have similarities in form, content and purpose. The works in this exhibition – which are all monochromatic – depict moments of social, cultural and political importance over the centuries. They also highlight the pivotal role of the artist as a powerful, but emotive, witness to dramatic events – ranging from a mutiny on a battleship to the brutal behaviour of riot police at a protest.

Brooklyn Museum
+1 718 638 5000
(www.brooklynmuseum.org)
Until 7 January 2018.

Leonardo to Matisse: Master Drawings from the Robert Lehman Collection

Over the course of 60 years, banker Robert Lehman acquired 2,600 works of western European art (dating from the 14th to the 20th century) and he bequeathed this substantial collection to the Met. Some 55 drawings by acclaimed artists from the Renaissance to the early 20th century, including Leonardo, Dürer, Rembrandt, Seurat and Matisse, have been selected to represent a vast array of styles, genres and techniques.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
+1 212 535 7710
(www.metmuseum.org)
Until 7 January 2018.

Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer

Dubbed Il Divino (The Divine One) by his contemporaries because of his extraordinary, wide-ranging artistic abilities – in drawing, design, sculpture, painting and architecture, Michelangelo Buonarroti is one of

Minerva November/December 2017
the most esteemed Renaissance artists. This show brings together drawings, sculpture, his earliest painting and a wooden architectural model to show why Michelangelo earned such a lofty epithet.

Metropolitan Museum of Art  
+1 212 535 7710  
(www.metmuseum.org)  
From 13 November to 12 February 2018.

SAN FRANCISCO, California  
Teotihuacan: City of Water, City of Fire  
The most visited archaeological site in Mexico, the city of Teotihuacan is still yielding fascinating discoveries, such as a previously unknown tunnel beneath the Feathered Serpent Pyramid. Mural fragments such as one depicting a bird with shield and spear, AD 500–50 (above), obsidian blades and finds from new excavations offer a glimpse of life in this vast Mesoamerican cultural, political, economic and religious centre.

de Young, Fine Art Museums of San Francisco  
+1 415 750 3600  
(deyoung.famsf.org)  
Until 11 February 2018.

Gods in Color: Polychromy in the Ancient World  
The familiar white marble of ancient sculpture belies their original appearance, as this touring exhibition, now with new discoveries, shows with its colourfully painted replicas of Classical sculpture, such as the lofty (6ft 7in) plaster Athena (right), copied from an original of 480 BC from Aegina. Traces of paint can here be seen with the naked eye on some Greek and Roman sculpture while, in other cases, advances in technology have allowed researchers to get a fuller picture of ancient polychromy. Alongside the replicas, original statues and reliefs from Egypt, Greece, Rome and the Near East give a comprehensive view of the use of colour in the ancient Mediterranean.

Legion of Honor, Fine Art Museums of San Francisco  
+1 415 750 3600  
(legionofhonor.famsf.org)  
Until 7 January 2018.

WASHINGTON DC  
Encountering the Buddha: Art and Practice across Asia  
Buddhist art from a diverse range of Asian countries has been brought together for this exhibition, which considers how sacred objects and artworks are an integral part of Buddhism. More than 250 remarkable artefacts, including a 14th-century, gilt-copper Buddha from central Tibet (above), are on display. They reveal the power they embody and the relationships between objects, people and ritual. This exhibition also contains two experiential spaces. One is the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room from the Alice S Kandell Collection, in which many objects are displayed as they would be in the shrine of a noble family.

Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution  
+1 202 633 1080  
(www.nga.gov)  
Until October 2020.

In the Library: Jost Amman and 16th-Century Woodcut Illustration  
The work of Europe’s leading printmakers and book illustrators, is examined in this installation which draws together woodcuts by Jost Amman (1539–91), his predecessors, and his contemporaries, such as Heinrich Vogtherr, both the Elder and Younger, whose depictions of helmets (above) were published in 1545. These economical woodcuts commissioned for Bibles, history, ancient texts and literature, combined simplicity with imagination.

National Gallery of Art Library  
+1 202 37 42 157 15  
(www.nga.gov)  
From 5 January 2018.

CHINA  
SHEKOU, Shenzhen  
Values of Design  
Design Society, a new cultural hub in Sea World Culture and Arts Centre, is opening this December with a set of exhibitions. The inaugural exhibition in the V&A Gallery draws on the V&A’s own collections to examine the concepts of value and design through more than 250 objects from 31 countries, dating from AD 900 to the present. They explore performance, cost, problem solving, materials, communication and identity. Much of the focus is on 20th- and 21st-century designs, but earlier artefacts, including an Egyptian waterfilter, decorated with a hare, from 900–1200 BC (below) and a late 17th–18th-century Iranian astrolabe, show designers have long been concerned with environmental context and multifunctionality.

Design Society  
(www.designsociety.cn)  
From 2 December 2017.

FRANCE  
BOULOGNE-BILLANCOURT  
Maria by Callas  
Forty years after her death, the great soprano Maria Callas takes centre stage in this exhibition, part of a wider project (including books and a film) investigating her work. Callas starred in many operas on stage and also acted in one role on screen – as Medea in Pasolini’s 1969 film. This show offers an insight into the diva’s life through private photographs, interviews, Super 8 films, costumes and other objects.

La Seine Musicale  
+33 1 74 34 54 00  
(www.laseinemusicale.com)  
Until 14 December 2017.

MOULINS  
Artisans and Craftsmen of the Performing Arts  
The exceptional and often unsung skills of those who work backstage are celebrated in 250 costumes, accessories, stage sets, videos, designs and prototypes. Together, they reveal the talent and hard work of costume and jewellery designers, stylists, hairdressers, shoemakers, and wigmakers.

Centre National du Costume de Scene  
+33 4 70 20 76 20  
(www.cnacs.fr)  
Until 11 March 2018.
the Rabbula Gospels
the highlights of the show are the political and cultural history of as well as telling the religious, social, during the past two millennia. As the diverse experiences of Christians religious communities, are on show of History of Strasbourg. There was much urban ideas and art forms flourished in 1880–1930
Aeneas from his fallen home city and his voyage to establish a new city in Italy. Using Robert Fagle’s translation, this two-day course serves as an introduction to this great epic poem. The course costs £75. To book, contact Isabel Raphael before 17 November. The Stonemasons Arms 6–7 December (isabelraphael16@gmail.com)
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza +34 917 91 13 70 (www.museothyssen.org) Until to 21 January 2018.
LAUSANNE Lausanne: 2,000 Years of History
PARIS Paris, 1880–1930 Between 1880 and 1930, many new ideas and art forms flourished in Strasbourg. There was much urban development, the decorative arts thrived and a world-class university emerged. This exhibition, which is a collaboration between the University of Strasbourg and Strasbourg Museums, celebrates this city’s role in European arts and science and shows how its institutions acquired their important collections. Satellite exhibitions at Strasbourg’s other museums explore the city’s contribution to other fields such as zoology and music. Musée d’Art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg +33 3 68 98 51 55 (www.musees.strasbourg.eu/musee-d-art-moderne-et-contemporain) Until 25 February 2018.
SPAIN Madrid Picasso/Lautrec Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901) never met Picasso (1881–1973) but the younger artist felt the impact of his predecessor’s radical work and his interest in the relationship between art and advertising, and in high and low society. A selection of 100 works by both artists have been brought together for a comparative study, centring around caricature portraits, brothels, cafe night-life, cabarets and theatres, the circus and those who live on the margins of society. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza +34 917 91 13 70 (www.museothyssen.org) Until to 21 January 2018.
SWITZERLAND Lausanne Ai Weiwei: It’s always the others More than 30 works by Ai Weiwei, from 1995 to the present day, can be found around the museums of the Palais de Rumine. In the Zoology Museum, for example, a 50 metre-long dragon hangs high above visitors’ heads. The artist makes use of a variety of media – porcelain, silk, wood, marble, jade, bamboo, aluminium, wallpaper, photography, videos and also 10 tonnes of hand-painted porcelain seeds – showcasing his extraordinary versatility and his relationship with traditional Chinese and other materials. Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts +41 21 316 34 45 (www.mcbz.ch) Until 28 January 2018.
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